

THE HIDDEN HABITS OF GENIUS

by Craig Wright

READING GROUP GUIDE

1. How did you define genius prior to reading *The Hidden Habits of Genius*? How has your thinking about this term changed after reading the book?
2. In his research, Wright has identified 14 key “drivers” of genius. Which of these traits do you believe are most crucial to creative output and accomplishment? Which do you think are least important?
3. Wright argues that our focus on traditional metrics of achievement like grades, standardized test scores, and elite education, is faulty because these measures do not nurture the kinds of citizens we want to lead our society. Do you agree or disagree with this?
4. Wright reveals that female geniuses throughout history have often been overlooked or underrecognized. What factors have contributed to this lack of recognition for women historically? Do these same obstacles still exist for women today? If so, what can we do to combat them?
5. Wright argues that prodigies are not true geniuses because geniuses “create” and change the world through original thinking, whereas prodigies only mimic. Can you name some prodigies who have been celebrated in our culture, versus true geniuses who have changed society?
6. Discuss examples of how childlike imagination can be used to cultivate genius. Why is it important for us to hold onto our sense of imagination? How might Wright’s insights cause you to think differently about your own parenting philosophy?
7. Wright mentions a quote attributed to the rapper Kanye West: “Great art comes from great pain.” Do you agree that the source of great art is pain? What can we learn from the fact that many brilliant individuals, past and present, have struggled with mental illness?
8. Wright argues that neurological differences may be hidden enablers of genius, and that rather than thinking of mental disorders or differences as disabilities, we should view them as opportunities from which original thinking can emerge. Do you agree with this argument? Why or why not?
9. Why do geniuses rarely arise from economic extremes? How would things be different if we lived in an economically egalitarian society? How might this affect achievement and creative output?
10. Wright states, “We forget that the standard for genius is based on accomplishment, not character. We fail to see that accomplishment and morality may operate independently.” Why do geniuses often get a free pass for poor behavior? If an artist’s behavior is objectionable, should this change the way we regard his or her work? Or can we love the art, but despise the artist?
11. In the Epilogue, Wright cites a number of unexpected outcomes surrounding genius that have emerged from his research. Which of these outcomes did you find most surprising? Why?

