

WNW Book Club Question- 1

- 1) When the story begins, Patient 541 is in the Jacksonville Psychiatric Facility after being declared NGI (not guilty by reason of insanity). He has PTSD with dissociative episodes. What do you think of this plea and do you think it was a fair plea for him? *See notes below to learn more about NGI.
- 2) Why did Patient 541 start avoiding Toby while in Iraq? Why did he have to align himself with stronger characters such as Shane and Marshall?
- 3) How did Shane's death affect Patient 541 and the rest of the marines?
- 4) What did Dee represent to the patient and why did he kill her?
- 5) What did the challenge coin represent to the killer? Why was this the token he chose to leave with his victims? *See note below.
- 6) Toby, Marshall, Shane, and Patient 541 all represented stereotypes. What were they? Why was it important that several stereotypical personalities were depicted?
- 7) How did the patient's relationship with his parents affect how he mentally handled the war?
- 8) At what point in the story did you figure out who the killer was and what gave it away?
- 9) In your opinion, should Patient 541 ever be released from the psychiatric ward?
- 10) Should there be a sequel and where do you think the story should go?

Non-Book Specific Discussion Topics Related to White Noise Whispers:

- 11) Recruitment for the military is very low. Knowing what is going on in the world today, would you encourage or discourage your child to enlist?
*See Note Below
- 12) Do you believe that serial killers can ever be cured of the desire to kill?
*See Note Below
- 13) Do you think you would sense that a coworker or a neighbor was a serial killer? Some serial killers have led completely normal lives when not killing people?
*See Note Below
- 14) Do you think there should be more mental training to prepare our military men and women for battle? Should we have a better system for people returning to the real world after fighting in a war? Should this be mandatory? Many people could have a hard time admitting that they are struggling with the transition.
*See Note Below
- 15) The military trains men (specifically) that the behaviors during war are admirable and these behaviors in some way make them a real man. Many young men that enlist are still learning what it means to be a man. The formative years spent in the war environment can create a conflict when they return and many military men and women later end up arrested at some point. Do you feel the imagery used when persuading young people to enlist is fair?
*See Note Below
- 16) Many men and women who fight in wars may not completely understand the history of what the war is about. Once they return, if the media attacks the war, the guilt of war can become worse. Should there be more education about the history of the people/country and the cause they are fighting for before being deployed?

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- 17) Do you feel a better understanding of world religions would bring about understanding or more troubles? *See Note below
- 18) Nature vs. Nurture. Patient 541 did not suffer severe abuse as a child as many, but not all, serial killers have. Ted Bunny, Dylan Klebold (one of the Columbine shooters), and Johanna Dennehy (Great Britain), for instance had normal upbringings. Do you believe that some people are born killers or did circumstances, however small, trigger something inside of them?
*See Note Below

Notes for each question:

Question 1: When the story begins, Patient 541 is in the Jacksonville Psychiatric Facility after being declared NGI (not guilty by reason of insanity). He has PTSD with dissociative episodes. What do you think of this plea and do you think it was a fair plea for him?

"The laws that govern the practice of committing people who are acquitted because of mental illness dictate that they be hospitalized until they're deemed safe to release to the public, no matter how long that takes.

According to a 2017 study conducted by the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors, more than 10,000 mentally ill Americans who haven't been convicted of a crime — people who have been found not guilty by reason of insanity or who have been arrested but found incompetent to stand trial — are involuntarily confined to psychiatric hospitals. Even a contributor to the study concedes that no one knows the exact number. While seemingly every conceivable data point in America's prison system is meticulously compiled, not much is known about the confinement of "forensic" patients, people committed to psychiatric hospitals by the criminal-justice system. No federal agency is charged with monitoring them. No national registry or organization tracks how long they have been incarcerated or why."

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/27/magazine/when-not-guilty-is-a-life-sentence.html>

"What Happens to Defendants Who Are Not Guilty by Reason of Insanity?

The common misconception is that after a defendant is found to be not guilty by reason of insanity, they are free to go home. This couldn't be further from the truth. In California, the defendant is sentenced to the Department of State Hospitals (DSH).

According to PC 1026, the defendant is sentenced to DSH for the maximum term allowed for their crime. After they have served the maximum term and are deemed by DSH to continue to pose a substantial danger to the community, their sentence can be extended every year for the rest of their lives.

Given the lengthy sentence they can face when committed to DSH, generally, the only time that defendants use an NGRI plea is when they are facing serious charges such as murder, rape, kidnapping, etc.....

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A defendant might have been “insane” during a commission of a robbery or burglary. These crimes don’t carry the same lengthy sentences as murder or rape so it is very unlikely that the defendant will enter an NGRI plea and risk spending the rest of their lives in DSH.”

<https://verdugopsych.com/not-guilty-by-reason-of-insanity-evaluating-criminal-responsibility-at-the-time-of-the-offense/#:~:text=>

Question 2:

“Claims of crime-related amnesia are not uncommon: offenders of violent crime report total or partial amnesia for their criminal activities with some frequency. In a 1984 study of 203 men charged with both violent and non-violent crimes, 19 reported having only partial or no memory of the incident. Similarly, in a more recent study, 23 per cent of men charged with violent crimes reported partial or total amnesia of the criminal event. While crime-related amnesia claims most frequently occur in murder or manslaughter cases, claims of amnesia also regularly occur in sexual crime, domestic violence, and fraud cases.”

<https://academic.oup.com/jlb/article/4/1/194/3098427>

Question 5: What did the challenge coin represent to the killer? Why was this the token he chose to leave with his victims?

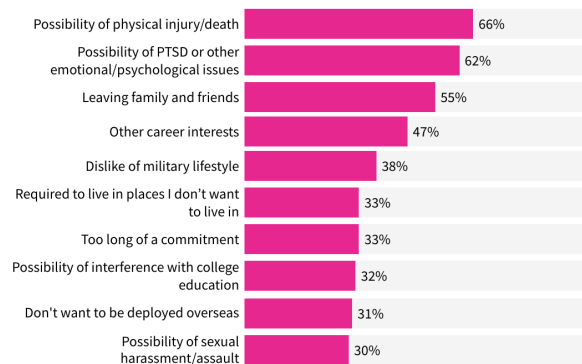
Challenge coins are medallions that represent different organizations, units, and groups. They are a symbol of belonging and pride, and are used to identify allegiance with a particular team or organization. The Marine Corps challenge coin is a special coin that is used to identify both active and retired personnel, and it is a tribute to the Corps' history in the armed forces.

<https://customchallengecoins.net/what-are-marine-corps-challenge-coins/>

Question 11: Recruitment for the military is very low. Knowing what is going on in the world today, would you encourage or discourage your child to enlist?

Physical and emotional trauma are the most common reasons for not considering joining the military.

Top 10 reasons selected by surveyed youth when asked, "What would be the main reason(s) why you would not consider joining the US Military?"



Youth ages 16–21. Respondents could select multiple reasons.

Source: Department of Defense Youth Poll (Spring 2022)

USA FACTS

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Question 12: Do you believe that serial killers can ever be cured of the desire to kill?

“If the spontaneous firing of neurons in the psychopathic brain unduly influences the psychopath toward violence, then controlling the spontaneous neuronal activity would be critical to controlling the harmful decision making of psychopaths.

The above referenced study from Japan gives hope to changing or rehabilitating the psychopathic mind. If the spontaneous firing of neurons can be controlled in the future with pharmacological interventions, it could be possible to change the negative influence these spontaneously fired neurons have on the decision making process in psychopaths. According to the National Institute on Health (4) for example, some drugs are known to interfere with the way neurons send, receive and process signals in the brain and some drugs can impair neuronal circuits. Drugs can also affect stress reactivity, mood and behavior (4). Further research is needed, but the new studies are hopeful in how science can learn to rehabilitate the serial killers by using drug therapy to impede the firing of neurons in the prefrontal cortex.”

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/forensic-files/202202/can-serial-killers-be-rehabilitated>

Question 14: Do you think there should be more mental training to prepare our military men and women for battle? Should we have a better system for people returning to the real world after fighting in a war? Should this be mandatory? Many people could have a hard time admitting that they are struggling with the transition.

“According to U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, At some point in their life, 7 out of every 100 Veterans (or 7%) will have PTSD. In the general population, 6 out of every 100 adults (or 6%) will have PTSD in their lifetime. PTSD is also more common among female Veterans (13 out of 100, or 13%) versus male Veterans (6 out of 100, or 6%).”

“Research shows that deployment increases risk of PTSD. In some studies, PTSD is 3 times more likely among Veterans who deployed compared to those who did not (of the same service era). Some factors in a combat situation may contribute to PTSD and other mental health problems, including military occupation or specialty, the politics around the war, where the war is fought, and the type of enemy faced. Another cause of PTSD in the military can be military sexual trauma (MST). This is any sexual harassment or sexual assault that occurs while you are in the military. MST can happen to anyone and can occur during peacetime, training or war.”

https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/common/common_veterans.asp#:~:text=

Service Area	PTSD in the Past Year	PTSD at Some Point in Life
Operations Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Enduring Freedom (OEF)	15 out of 100 (15%)	29 out of 100 (29%)

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Persian Gulf War (Desert Storm)	14 out of 100 (14%)	21 out of 100 (21%)
Vietnam War	5 out of 100 (5%)	10 out of 100 (10%)
World War II (WWII) and Korean War	2 out of 100 (2%)	3 out of 100 (3%)

<https://usafacts.org/articles/military-recruitment-is-down/#:~:text=>

“Through the stimulus of war and concerns about neuropsychiatric disability, the U.S. military developed methods to rapidly screen the mental health of World War I and II draftees. Intelligence testing and brief psychiatric screening expanded the accession physical examination and underwent revision to identify only gross mental health disability. Supplemental psychiatric evaluations and written psychological screening tools were abandoned after postwar assessments; they demonstrated poor predictive power in evaluating recruit service capacity for combat environments. Currently, only three mental health accession tools are used to screen applicants before their entrance into military service, namely, educational achievement, cognitive testing, and a cursory psychiatric evaluation. The Navy and Air Force use a fourth screening measure during entry-level training. Educational attainment with high school graduation has been the strongest predictor of finishing a service term. The purpose of this article is to provide both a historical review and a review of testing efforts.”

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/17274262/>

“Because screening has repeatedly failed to predict psychological vulnerability, other health measures should be emphasized, such as increased access to health care and elimination of the stigma associated with treatment for psychological conditions.² Moreover, no comparable screening program in non-military populations supports this approach. Because of the complexity of human nature, human behavior has not been consistently predicted in any walk of life, let alone on the battlefield.”

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1635644/>

Question 15: The military trains men (specifically) that the behaviors during war are admirable and these behaviors in some way make them a real man. Many young men that enlist are still learning what it means to be a man. The formative years spent in the war environment can create a conflict when they return and many military men and women later end up arrested at some point. Do you feel the imagery used when persuading young people to enlist is fair?

America’s veterans are in trouble—literally. Each year roughly 200,000 service members transition out of the military, and while most reenter civilian life successfully, others struggle with drug and alcohol addiction, PTSD, traumatic brain injuries, and homelessness.

For many, this post-service journey leads to a grim destination: the criminal justice system. One in three of the nation’s 19 million veterans report having been arrested and jailed at least once, and more than 181,000 are behind bars. Former service members make up nearly 8% of those in state prisons and 5% of the federal prison population.

[https://time.com/6232785/us-veterans-criminal-justice/#](https://time.com/6232785/us-veterans-criminal-justice/)

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“One in three of the nation's 19 million veterans report having been arrested and jailed at least once, and more than 181,000 are behind bars. Former service members make up nearly 8% of those in state prisons and 5% of the federal prison population. I am deeply troubled by such statistics, but not surprised.”

<https://time.com/6232785/us-veterans-criminal-justice/#>

“The list of US soldiers to return from Vietnam only to go on to become serial killers in their homeland is not a short one. This list is by no means comprehensive either:

Arthur Shawcross aka ‘The Genesee River Killer’

Joseph James DeAngelo aka ‘The Golden State Killer’

Gary Ridgway aka ‘The Green River Killer’

William Bonin aka The Freeway Killer’

Randy Kraft aka ‘The Scorecard Killer’

Leonard Lake

Gary Lewingdon

Ronald Gene Simmons

Joseph Ernest Atkins

Kenneth Lee Boyd

Gary Bradford Cone

James Floyd Davis

Phillip Carl Jablonski

James Rodney Johnson

James Allen Kinney

Leonard Marvin Laws

Darrell Mease

Michael Andrew Nicholaou

Gary Lee Roll

Morris Solomon Jr.

Russell Wayne Wagner

Ward Weaver Jr.

Dan White

Marvin Bieghler

David Livingstone Funchess

William Mentzer

Larry Wayne White

John Dwight Canaday

David Knotek

Jeffrey Don Lundgren

Roy Lewis Norris”

“Every single one of the men above was trained by the US armed forces - both physically and psychologically - to kill. Every single one fought in Vietnam. Every single one killed multiple times on their return.”

<https://www.crimeandinvestigation.co.uk/article/was-the-vietnam-war-responsible-for-creating-a-generation-of-serial-killers>

“More serial killers have originated in the United States than in any other country. Although the United States only contains 4.25% of the world's total population, it has contained 67.58% of all known serial killers, with 3,204 documented serial murderers.”

<https://wisevoter.com/state-rankings/serial-killers-by-state/#:~:text=>

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Question 17: The military trains men (specifically) that the behaviors during war are admirable and these behaviors in some way make them a real man. Many young men that enlist are still learning what it means to be a man. The formative years spent in the war environment can create a conflict when they return and many military men and women later end up arrested at some point. Do you feel the imagery used when persuading young people to enlist is fair?

“When one reads the Qur’an, one may recognize some characters and stories from the Bible. Principle among these is Jesus himself. Muslims hold Jesus to be a prophet of similar or greater importance than even Muhammad. Muslims take Jesus to be the Messiah, who ascended to heaven, and will return to earth. But unlike Christians, they do not believe him to be God incarnate.”

“Given that Muslims, like Christians, are monotheists who believe in a God who created the world, and that Jesus was the Messiah, is it possible that the two religions revere the same God? The simple answer is no. The Christian idea of God relies very heavily on the doctrine of the Trinity, which Muslims outright reject. Whereas Christians hold that God is three persons but one being, Muslims hold this doctrine to be polytheism and therefore blasphemy. They cannot accept that the Christian God is the same as theirs. The reverse is also the case. That Muslims deny the deity of Christ, makes a significant distinction between the two religions.”

<https://www.premierunbelievable.com/articles/what-is-islam-and-how-does-it-differ-from-christianity/15772.article#:~:text=>

“The Second Battle of Fallujah was the bloodiest battle of the entire conflict for American troops, and is notable for being the first major engagement of the Iraq War that was fought solely against insurgents as opposed to the government military forces of the former Ba'athist Iraq.”

“Islam is monotheistic Abrahamic religion that originated in Saudi Arabia in the 7th century CE. A Muslim is an adherent of Islam. There are over 1.8 billion Muslims — a quarter of the world's population, making Islam the second-largest religion in the world. It is also the fastest-growing major religion in the world.”

“Islam has two main branches: the Shia and the Sunni. This split in the religion comes down to a political and spiritual difference of opinion about who should have succeeded Muhammad after his death in 632 CE. Major tenets and beliefs are often similar between the two branches because Sunnis and Shias are both Muslims, but some important differences exist. Tensions and conflicts between Shias and Sunnis are very similar to those that have at times existed between Catholics and Protestants.”

“Muslims believe that Muhammad was the last prophet. He was the last of a line of prophets sent by God to guide humanity, the seal of the prophets (khatam al-nabiyyin, Q. 33:40). Muhammad was born in Mecca in Arabia around the year 570 CE.”

“Muslims don't believe Jesus was the son of God, but they do revere him as a holy prophet. Almost all Muslim scholars declare that Jesus will come again and defeat the anti-Christ, then die and be raised up. Whatever the interpretation is, one must still understand from this passage that Jesus Christ is coming again. A similar statement is found in Surat Zukhruf (Ornaments of God) 43:61; “And lo!”

Question 18: Nature vs. Nurture. Patient 541 did not suffer severe abuse as a child as many, but not all, serial killers have. Ted Bunny, Dylan Klebold (one of the Columbine shooters), and Johanna Dennehy (Great Britain), for instance had normal upbringings. Do you believe that some people are

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born killers or did circumstances, however small, trigger something inside of them?

Joanna Dennehy is from St Albans, Hertfordshire.

She came from a stable, loving home in a rural area, where her mum Kathy worked as a shop assistant and dad Kevin worked in security - however, Dennehy left home at the age of 16 and never returned.

In 2013, she was arrested after a ten-day killing spree, which left three men dead and two more fighting for their lives.

Psychiatrists later diagnosed her with "psychopathic, anti-social and emotional instability disorders".

<https://www.the-sun.com/news/57157/who-is-joanna-dennehy/>

<https://www.aetv.com/real-crime/serial-killers-who-came-from-good-homes>