

## Discussion Questions for *These Things Happen*

by *Richard Kramer*

1. Does the author overdo the Broadway musical and old movie references? Not every reader will “get” these references. Is this something a novelist should be concerned about? (*Sarah Barnett*)
2. Along these lines, it seems Kramer is looking at issues of acting and theatrics throughout: George practices how to fist bump, he has to be a certain person in the restaurant, the boys talk about “types” all the time: Expert Guy, Lacks Irony Guy, (see Helpful Hospital Guy below!), etc. Is there a deeper meaning to all this, beyond just pointing out that we are “all actors.” (*Maribeth Fischer*)
3. Did we need all seven points of view? Specifically, I’m wondering about Jerry (Helpful Hospital Guy) who has a six-page chapter. (*Sarah Barnett*)
4. The portrayal of gay life felt dated. I am no expert but would grown men, living openly together really hesitate to say the word *gay*? Really need to whisper it? (maybe I’m showing my own naivete with this question...) I was puzzled too that Theo was disappointed his parents weren’t more upset by his coming out or even that George misses “furtiveness.” What did Kramer want to portray of this world? His acknowledgements made me consider that maybe I was not his intended audience. (*Maribeth Fischer*)
5. I loved George and Jerry—even though Jerry only had one brief chapter, and looking at those sections, I see that perhaps because both men are outsiders (George feels he is) they are observing and reflecting more. Is this another cry (mine!) for more interiority (something we wanted in *Brooklyn*). I’m curious what characters other readers were especially drawn to and why. (*Maribeth Fischer*)
6. The dialogue felt long and circuitous so that we often don’t ever get to the subject. As there were some important subjects these characters wanted to address, this was frustrating. I almost could see the dialogue working more as script—and this *is* Kramer’s background. Was he relying too much on dialogue to do the heavy lifting (as, again, one would in a script where actors—I assume—bring voice and mannerism to the dialogue). (*Maribeth Fischer*)
7. “The teenagers spoke like no children I’ve ever encountered”—says **Paul Dyer and Judy Wood** agreed that they did not seem realistically portrayed (even if they were smart, somewhat savvy New York teenagers). Since the book centers around the teens, is this problematic? (*Paul Dyer, Judy Wood*)

8. I just finished reading **Chapter 8** which is the one told by Lola. They're all together at a table at the restaurant. I think this is a very strong bit of writing and allows all the characters to show who they are much better than in previous chapters. Might we talk about Chapter 8 and how it differs from the others? (*Judy Wood*)
9. What is the significance of the title? (*Sarah Barnett*)