

# Book Club Guide

Sumptuous cuisine, lavish spreads, fine wines and champagnes—the posh spectacle of a Horace Button meal is being reenacted by book clubs everywhere.



## A word from the author

By Eric Peterson

Dear Readers,

*The Dining Car*, for me, was to be my “restaurant” book. I wanted to write about the experience of going to work every day as a server, a bartender, or a chef; of checking your ego at the door and being entirely *of service* to others.

I never imagined this book—and its quirky cast of characters—would capture the imagination of so many readers, much less garner so many awards.

Writing a novel that connects with readers still strikes me as somewhat a miracle. That you've made *The Dining Car* a selection for your book club is a great personal honor.

Thank you for reading this book.

### IN THIS GUIDE

#### **A word from the author**

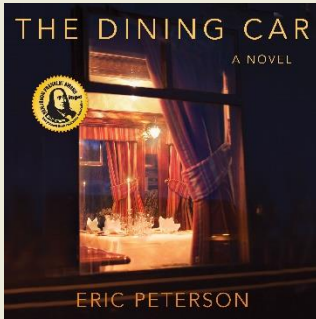
Eric talks about his vision for the book—and has a personal message for his readers

#### **Discussion questions**

Six questions guaranteed to stir up debate about the book

#### **Planning a trip by train**

Where to find Amtrak routes and schedules, and where to discover opportunities to travel by vintage private railroad car



# Planning a Trip by Train

By Eric Peterson

## Discussion Questions

By the editors at Huckleberry House

1. As Jack and Wanda clean and stock the *Pioneer Mother*, preparing for Horace's arrival, Wanda clearly has the upper hand. At what point in the story does the balance of power shift in Jack's favor?
2. In the end, who is the strongest, most powerful character in the book?
3. When Dr. Rose visited Jack in the hospital, he urged Jack to "find someone even more damaged than you, and be of service." How is being of service a recurring theme in this novel?
4. At the end of the novel, Horace directs Pierre to deliver a bottle of champagne to Jack and Wanda "as a token of his esteem." What motivates Horace to see Jack and Wanda together as a couple? Has Horace been manipulating his servants into a relationship all along?
5. Is Jack a reliable narrator? Would Horace be satisfied with the way he's portrayed in the book?
6. The author inserts selected opinion pieces from Horace's "Window on the West" column in *Sunshine Trails* magazine. How did reading these columns help shape your opinion of Horace? Did seeing the columns enhance your reading experience?



I'm often told reading this novel makes people want to take a long trip by train. Amtrak operates trains all over the country. For schedules and fares, visit [www.amtrak.com](http://www.amtrak.com).

In Southern California, Amtrak's Pacific Surfliner offers spectacular views up and down the coast. Another trip with amazing scenery is Amtrak's Coast Starlight, which operates between Los Angeles and Seattle.

For breathtaking mountain panoramas, the California Zephyr is a trip not to be missed. The Zephyr passes through the Sierra Nevadas and the Rockies. When the train runs on time, both the eastbound and westbound mountain crossings are in full daylight.

You might be heartened to know there are still opportunities to travel by private railroad car, too. Owners of vintage private cars often rent their cars for charters or sell seats to defray trip expenses. For more info on charter options, check out the website for the American Association of Private Railroad Car Owners at [www.aaprco.com](http://www.aaprco.com).