

## NCSSM Summer Reading Program Sample Questions

### *Three Cups of Tea*, by Greg Mortenson & David Oliver Relin

1. *Three Cups of Tea (3CT)* is the chronicle of one person's failure that ultimately led to success. Think about adversity in your own life (or that of someone close to you) and discuss how it was dealt with. How can failure lead to success?
2. At the heart of *3CT* is a simple message: *education is important*. Reflect on your own education to this point. How has it mattered to you? What might your future be like if you were limited to the education available to most in Pakistan and Afghanistan? Why is higher education – especially in our society – important?
3. There is a danger in imposing our own solutions to the problems faced by other cultures and societies. How was Greg Mortenson able to avoid this trap? What about his background made him sensitive to the specific needs of those he encountered in Pakistan and Afghanistan?
4. What does *3CT* tell us about the status of women in this region of the world? Why does Mortenson feel the education of girls is so important? How will it improve their status? Is the same dynamic true in our culture?
5. The hardcover version of the subtitle to *3CT* was “One Man’s Mission to Fight Terrorism and Build Nations ... One School at a Time,” yet the authors repeatedly requested Penguin Books to change the paperback version to “One Man’s Mission to Promote Peace ... One School at a Time.” Regardless of which you think is the more accurate subtitle, what – according to *3CT* – is the relationship between education and the war against terrorism? What might be the implications for current U.S. policy?
6. Through Mortenson’s experiences we get a glimpse into the world of Islam. How was this awareness critical to the success of his (and the Central Asian Institute) programs? What have you learned about Islam by reading *3CT*?
7. It seems as if everywhere Mortenson turns he has to deal with *politics*. What were some of the political obstacles (local, regional, global) he had to overcome? What does his experience tell us about the relationship between *politics* and *education*?
8. According to *3CT*, how does Mortenson characterize the concept of *community*? What is the relationship of the *individual* to his sense of *community*? As an *individual*, what specific steps might you be willing to take to meet the challenges posed by *Three Cups of Tea*? In other words, what next steps are you willing to take?