

A DIFFERENT KIND OF POWER

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

JACINDA ARDERN

1. How does *A Different Kind of Power* differ from memoirs of other world leaders? What stood out most to you? What are your biggest takeaways?
2. “My words will always be the greatest tool I have,” Jacinda Ardern’s father, a police officer, told her. From her time in Murupara to her childhood friendships to her college years, in what other ways does Ardern’s upbringing inform her style of leadership? Who are her great influences?
3. Ardern shares the story of a treasured family heirloom—a violin that traveled from Scotland to New Zealand with her great grandmother. What makes a family treasure—the object or the story?
4. Ardern has an emotional reaction the first time she hears “Peace Train” by Yusuf Islam (Cat Stevens). What song or songs have stirred similar emotions in you?
5. How much of the history and culture of New Zealand’s indigenous Māori people were you aware of before reading *A Different Kind of Power*? What insights did you gain? How does understanding its history inform Ardern’s feelings about her home country?
6. Discuss the differences between campaigns and elections in New Zealand and those in other countries, particularly the United States. What differences stood out to you? What does Ardern learn about campaigns when she first volunteers? Why are volunteers so essential for them?
7. What does Ardern mean when she says that “there is a difference between having an answer and believing it”? How do her political values square with the beliefs of her Mormon upbringing? What does the quote mean to you?
8. Describing her childhood and understanding religions and political opinion different from her own, Ardern asks: “So what would our world look like if, as adults, we met people with the inclusivity we’re born with, rather than the exclusion we are taught?” How might you answer that question?
9. When it came to her putting herself out there as a politician, Ardern grew up seeing her sensitivity, or “thin skin,” as a weakness—“my tragic flaw, the thing that might just stop me from sticking with the work that I loved.” Where do you see her “thin skin” as an integral part of her political life?
10. “It is different for women in the public eye. It is different for women, full stop.” What challenges does Ardern face as a woman in a very public role? What expectations do we have of women leaders that we don’t have for men? Did this book help you uncover any of your own biases?

- 11.** Becoming prime minister and a mother at the same time is a unique situation for anyone. Discuss Arden's "village"—especially her partner, Clarke—and how they help her be both a present mom and head of state. How is having a village so important, no matter what we do? Who is in your village? Whose village are you in?
- 12.** Right before being sworn in as New Zealand's fortieth prime minister, Arden shares that she wants her government to feel different: "I want people to feel that it's open, that it's listening, and that it's going to bring kindness back." What do you think of her statement? What do you think of "kindness" as a guiding principle?
- 13.** One of the greatest lessons from Arden's time on the school debate team is that "the difference between what we are and what we could be is the greatest waste." How does that lesson drive the next chapters of her life? What do those words mean to you?
- 14.** The Christchurch shooting was one of the most difficult times in office for Arden. What steps does she take for her nation in the aftermath that bring the citizens of New Zealand together?
- 15.** "Every crisis asks clearly and unequivocally for action to be taken. And it will keep asking. Until there is change," writes Arden. Her government was able to enact gun reform in ten days. Why do you think it was so successful?
- 16.** Arden makes some very hard decisions during the COVID pandemic, but they are decisions that help keep New Zealand safer than most countries during that time. What measures did she take, and what can others learn from New Zealand's example?
- 17.** Not long after COVID restrictions are lifted, Arden notices an uptick in opposition, disinformation, public dissent, and sometimes confrontation, not just in New Zealand but around the world. What do you think had changed?
- 18.** What factors went into Arden's decision to no longer be prime minister? What do you think of her decision? What does being able to step aside say about a leader?
- 19.** Is it possible for kindness to be the norm not just in politics but in all forms of leadership? What examples of empathetic leaders do you currently see in the world—whether in local, state, and national politics; community; business; or beyond?
- 20.** Arden reminds us that "all of the traits that you believe are your flaws will come to be your strengths," including impostor syndrome. Does that change your perception of your own traits? How did this memoir change your view of what a leader can be?