

Moving BOOK STUDY

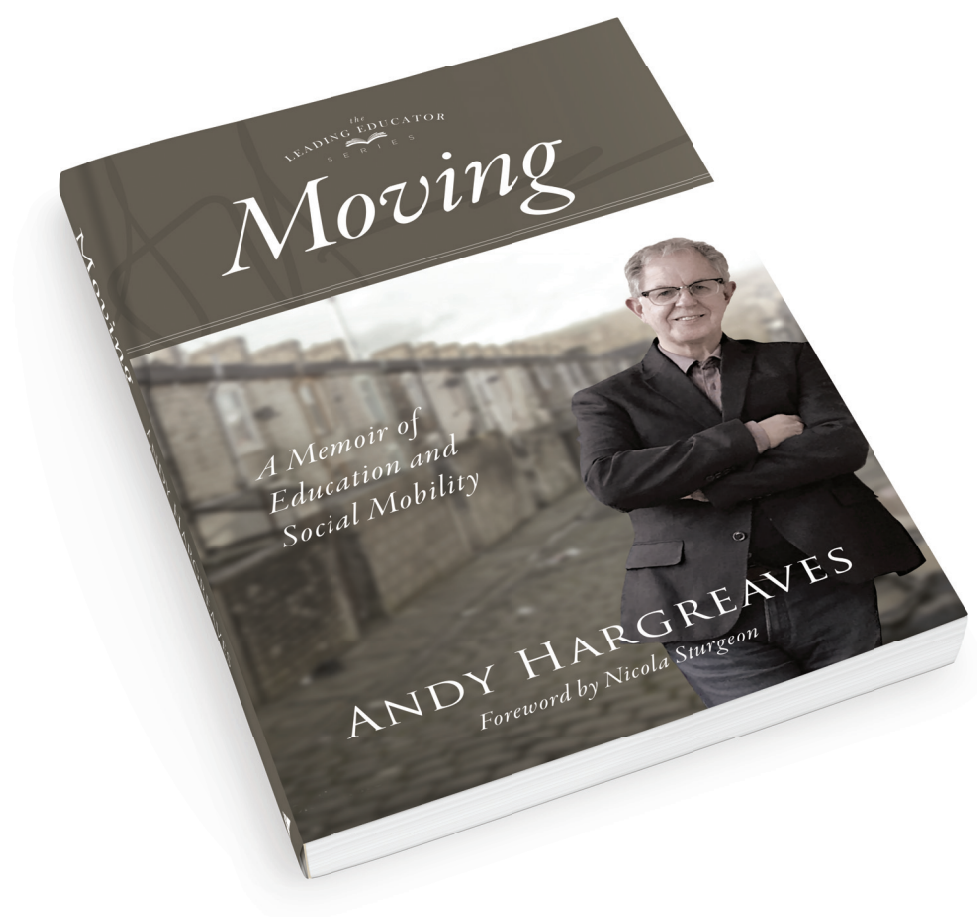
with Solution Tree

by Andy Hargreaves

Book Study Overview

This is a unique book study. It's not asking you to understand a theory and apply it, or look at some tools and use them. It is a memoir, a book based on story and narrative, just like a lot of the way we do teaching. But it's a story about something—a phenomenon known as social mobility, the chance to move on up and progress whatever your circumstances, to actually live the American Dream. It's written like a movie—close-up views of narrative, personal experience, vignettes, comedic scenes and poignant ones; and then panning out to big pictures of how social mobility and the struggle for equity are represented in literature, policy, and practice, here and now.

You'll be asked to immerse yourself in these issues and narratives, to reflect on the struggles, ambitions, and obstacles facing your parents, your family, the kids you serve, and yourself. You'll be asked to think about the bigger picture behind these narratives, including your own practices as an educator. You'll be asked to engage with how all these issues apply in the very midst of the coronavirus epidemic. And you'll be asked to analyze solutions for improving equity in education in ways that directly relate to the book you will have read.



Wednesday August 12th

This session provides you with opportunities to relate to the book personally, emotionally, and experientially. Like more traditional book clubs that focus on novels or biographies, it asks you to get inside the experience and life of the author and the characters around him, to feel a culture and life story in action, and to relate it to your own experiences. What made you laugh or cry? Were there any points where you felt it was dragging and others where you couldn't put it down? The point of this session is not to find something you have to implement or to do; it is to engage personally with an idea and its embodiment in time and place. It is to feel what you are learning. This is a stepping-stone for exploring the professional issues the book raises during Sessions 2 and 3.

Discussion Points

1. *MOVING* paints some vivid pictures of family and community life and its impact on later life. What messages was Andy picking up from his family and neighborhoods? In ways that are positive, problematic, or mixed, how have those stayed with him today and how do they affect his work with others?
2. Pick one incident or moment in the book that stood out for you and had an impact. Describe it to the group. Why did it have that impact?
3. Think of a story—funny or poignant, perhaps—that captures your own family and community life as a child and what it communicated to you about growing up. What can you learn from this story that can help you help other people?
4. Andy talks about the importance of being able to move on up without having to leave behind who you are or abandon where and what you came from. Have you experienced this issue yourself and how have you dealt with it? Do you see students you teach struggling with this, and what do you do to support them?
5. Most obviously, Andy's narrative is a memoir of growing up in a mainly white working-class community in Northern England in the 1950s through to the 1970s. In what ways are the experiences he describes similar to or different from your own and the kids you teach? Did you find the book interesting but irrelevant to your work? Or did it strike a lot of chords for you? Explain.

Wednesday August 19th

This session is about equity, selection, and inclusion. It asks you to look into Andy's and his brothers' experiences of selection and exclusion and to connect them to related issues and challenges in the present day. Testing, selection, ADHD, culturally unresponsive curriculum, whole-child education—all these are themes that the book raises and that we will be addressing in this second session.

Discussion Points

1. How do you feel about Andy's discussions of social class and social class identity? Is it important in America or Canada? Try to predict how many members of Congress are women, Hispanic, African American, Asian American, or Native American. How many do you think identify as coming from working class backgrounds? What have we learned about the working class during COVID-19? How should it change how we educate children from working class families after the fact?
2. How do you feel about the distinction Andy points to between the "respectable" and "rough" elements of working-class communities? Is it imputing deficits to the "roughs"? JD Vance seems to draw similar distinctions in his hillbilly upbringing. Is it unfair or insightful? What can we learn from it?
3. Andy describes a moment of taking a vocabulary test at age seven that he believes set him on a different path from many of his peers, including his own brothers, from as early as age seven. Do elementary schools in the US and/or Canada select and separate children at an early age? What about reading groups and math groups?
4. *MOVING* describes experiences of being tested and examined in a high-stakes way at ages 11 and then at the end of high school. It draws conclusions about the impact of these processes on well-being and on the inclusive or exclusive nature of the knowledge being examined. What are your own views on testing and its impact on well-being and opportunity? What has COVID-19 taught us about assessment and what can we now do to change our testing and assessment strategies?
5. By high school, Andy is going from home on one side of the town to school on the other. He talks about how this affects his relationships with two sets of friends, how he manages extra jobs and homework late into the night to keep all these things going. He describes the tailspin of declining achievement that followed his father's death and his own mounting family responsibilities, and his violent encounters with the local gang. How has this made you think about school choice, charter schools, magnet schools, or private schools as strategies to take the best and brightest members of the working class, or racial and ethnic minorities, and lift them up by taking them out of their communities?
6. What did you learn from the book's descriptions of university and college life?

Wednesday August 26th

This final session explores the practical and strategic implications that are set out in the final chapter of the book.

Discussion Points

1. Andy argues that if you want more mobility and opportunity, you have to have more equality in society as well as in schools. Do you agree?
2. How do you feel about the argument that meritocracy—creating a world where every child truly will reach his or her potential—is ultimately futile and self-defeating?
3. Name one practical strategy to increase social mobility that Andy mentions at the end of the book and discuss how you relate to it—in either a positive or critical way.
4. Fifty years from now, what might a person who was a child from humble beginnings look back and say about their experience in your class, school, or school system?
5. Finally—pick one song lyric that *MOVING* quotes and talk about what it means to you as an educator.