

**Discussion Questions for Kevin Boyle's Arc of Justice
Reviewer, Lloyd Musselman – August 31 at 6:30 p.m.**

1. This book cries out for your recollections of your experiences with residential restrictive covenants. I grew up in Baltimore and have my stories. My family moved twice to avoid the “Negro Invasion.” What about your stories?
2. Are there any heroes in this book? I mean pure, unadulterated heroes. Next, try villains. Is any character purely one thing or the other?
3. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said the worst sin was doing the right thing for the wrong reason. Did anyone in this story commit that “sin”? Who? How?
4. Should Henry Sweet have been convicted of at least something? He did shoot and kill someone, after all. If the prosecution had charged him with involuntary manslaughter would the story have come out differently?
5. Darrow. At one point, Boyle writes that Darrow now had his chance to “make Americans confront the sheer stupidity of white supremacy.” And that Darrow “cared more about the fight itself than the victory.” How do you feel about all of this? Were the Sweets and the others simply pawns in a more important chess game?
6. Is this story one of overreach? Overreach by just about everybody?
7. In your discussion groups, try counting off. Odd numbers take the side of Garland Avenue whites. Even numbers, the Sweets. Throw yourselves into it. Make some noise.
8. Given the economic realities of how the banks forced homebuyers to front 50% of the value of the house and then pay off the mortgage in 3 to 5 years, can you see why some otherwise reasonable whites could respond the way

they did when the Sweets moved in? If the whites were reasonable, were the Sweets not?

9. Ossian Sweet. Who should play him in the movie? The actor you choose might well indicate how you truly feel about Ossian Sweet.
10. Everybody seems to have had an agenda in this story. Was each major character after justice? Justice, as each interpreted that to mean?
11. If ending racially restrictive covenants is a good thing—and let's assume it is—then why is Detroit today America's most racially segregated city?
12. If you want to appear super-bright to your discussion group, look up Shelley v. Kraemer. This case came to a boil some 20 years after that night on Garland Avenue. What does this latter case tell us about anything?
13. Ok, given what we know about America today, would most Americans look back on the Sweets as trailblazers or trouble makers?
14. Should the events and characters of this story be taught in every high school Problems of Democracy class in America? I mean, what could possibly go wrong?