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## Book Club Kit Discussion Guide

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*Last Night at the Lobster*  
by  
Stewart O’Nan  
(New York: Penguin Group, 2008)

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### **Author:**

Stewart O’Nan is the author of eleven novels, including *Snow Angels* and *Songs for the Missing*, as well as words of nonfiction, including a bestselling book with Stephen King on the Boston Red Sox, *Faithful*. *Granta* has named him one of the twenty Best Young American Novelists. O’Nan lives with his family in Avon, Connecticut. [From the book jacket]

### **Summary:**

Perched in the far corner of a run-down New England mall, the Red Lobster hasn’t been making its numbers and headquarters has pulled the plug. But manager Manny DeLeon still needs to navigate a tricky last shift—just four days before Christmas and in the midst of a fierce blizzard—which a near-mutinous staff and the final onslaught of hungry retirees, lunatics, and holiday office parties. All the while, he’s wondering how to hand the waitress he’s still in love with, his pregnant girlfriend, and where to find the present that will make everything better.

Stewart O’Nan has been called “the bard of the working class.” And *Last Night at the Lobster* is a poignant yet redemptive look at what a man does when he discovers that his best might not be good enough. [From the book jacket]

### **Questions:**

1. Why does Manny choose to keep the restaurant open through the snowstorm? Would he have made the same decision if it hadn’t been the restaurant’s last day?
2. How well do you think Darden Restaurants handled closing this branch of the Red Lobster? Could they have made the transition easier for the employees?
3. When Jacquie shows up for work, she’s angry with him for his glib response, saying, “Why do you have to go and make a joke about it? I don’t know if you know this, but a lot of us only came in because of you.” Why can’t Manny see the loyalty he’s aroused in some of his staff?
4. When the mother of the sick toddler demands the phone number of Manny’s boss, he gives it to her even though his staff doesn’t understand—or approve. Have you ever

had to do something that you felt was the right thing to do even if the people around you did not? Discuss how that made you feel.

5. Manny seems to have a soft spot for Coach Kashynski. Is it just sentimentality, or is there a deeper reason?
6. After buying the earrings for Deena, he thinks, “Sometimes it’s not the thought that counts, just the present.” Do you agree or disagree?
7. Despite the likelihood that no one will ever use the bathrooms again—the building will likely even be demolished—Manny cleans them up after the busload of sick passengers departs. What does his decision say about him?
8. Do you think that Jacquie and Manny’s relationship was doomed to failure, or do you think he could have done something differently? Do you think Manny and Deena will stay together? Why or why not?
9. Manny couldn’t bring himself to steal the marlin even though he defied company policy in giving away the lighthouse glasses. What, in his mind, is the difference between the two transgressions?
10. What does it say about the way businesses operate today when a man as hardworking and conscientious as Manny is treated as if he were negligible?

[From Penguin.com]