Dan Rather and Elliot Kirschner begin the book with a quote from Alexis de Tocqueville: “The greatness of America lies not in being more enlightened than any other nation, but rather in her ability to repair her faults.” In what ways does this statement from nearly 200 years ago still hold true for America? In what ways does it feel untrue? Why do you think the authors wanted to begin the book with this framing?

Early in the book, the authors write, “America at its best is a wonderful, diverse, and spirited chorus.” How might a chorus represent those living in America today?

The authors ask, “What Is Patriotism?” What do you think it is? Is your definition the same as before you read *What Unites Us* and if not, how did it change?

Rather and Kirschner draw a distinction between patriotism and nationalism. How do you distinguish the two? Which do you see in our country today?

“It is one of the great truisms of a democratic form of government that not only political power but the very definition of citizenship is predicated on the right to vote.” (Page 30) How has Americans’ attitude to voting changed in the course of your lifetime? How has the access to vote changed? What changes, if any, do you think need to happen for voting access?

Have you ever participated in acts of public dissent? What role do protests serve in our democracy?

The media has been referred to as the Fourth Estate, along with the three branches of the federal government. What do you think the role of a free press or media is in a democracy? How has it changed in your lifetime? How has it changed recently? What do you see for the future of a free press?

“A society worthy of our ideals would be a much more inclusive one, a more integrated one.” (Page 74) What is the difference between “inclusion” and “tolerance,” and why is that distinction significant? Do you think that the United States has become more inclusive and integrated, or less so, and why? What factors do you have helped us make progress? What factors might be hindering it?

“I worry that our nation today suffers from a deficit of empathy, and this is especially true of many in positions of national leadership.” (Page 101) Do you agree with this sentiment? How would you define the notion of “empathy” in terms of its importance to the United States? How do you or your immediate circle of friends and family consider empathy? In what ways do you see it in your elected officials?

“What role does science play in your definition of American ideals? How about the preservation of our natural environment? How might approaches towards science and our natural environment affect the success of the United States?

Books and the arts play an integral role in Rather’s life and his sense of what unites us as a country. How have they affected your life? Can you cite some examples of how a work of art or a book expresses one’s place in one’s country?

The words “Steady” and “Courage” are guiding principles in Rather’s life, handed down from his father. What would be your words?