

Further Reading

The Goldfinch
Donna Tartt (2013)
TARTT

Theo Decker miraculously survives an accident that takes the life of his mother. Alone and abandoned by his father, Theo is taken in by a friend's family and struggles to make sense of his new life. He becomes entranced by one of the few things that reminds him of his mother: a small, mysteriously captivating painting that ultimately draws Theo into the art underworld.

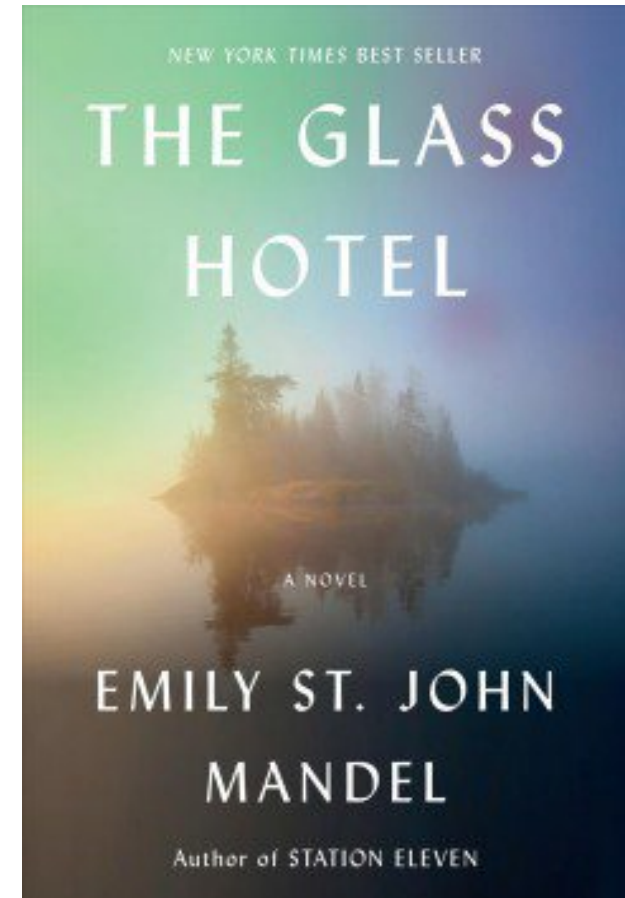
Station Eleven
Emily St. John Mandel (2014)
MANDEL

One snowy night, a famous Hollywood actor slumps over and dies onstage during a production of King Lear. Hours later, the world as we know it begins to dissolve. Moving back and forth in time, this suspenseful, elegiac, spellbinding novel charts the strange twists of fate that connect five distinct people.

City on Fire
Garth Risk Hallberg (2015)
HALLBERG

A tale set against a backdrop of the infamous 1977 blackout follows the experiences of two New York heirs, their paramours, two punk-loving teens, an obsessive reporter and a detective who would learn what any of them have to do with a Central Park shooting.

Book Discussion Guide



About the Book

From the award-winning author of *Station Eleven*, a captivating novel of money, beauty, white-collar crime, ghosts, and moral compromise in which a woman disappears from a container ship off the coast of Mauritania and a massive Ponzi scheme implodes in New York, dragging countless fortunes with it.

Discussion Questions

1. On page 35, Raphael tells Walter, “Our guests in Caiette want to come to the wilderness, but they don’t want to be in the wilderness. They just want to look at it, ideally through the window of a luxury hotel.” Examine the meaning of Raphael’s words. In what other instances is the truth framed in such a way so as to distort it?
2. Describe Paul and Vincent’s relationship. How does their relationship evolve? Is either character able to achieve closure with respect to their relationship?
3. Explore the theme of opportunity as it is depicted in the novel. What opportunities are available to Vincent? To Paul? To other young people in the early 2000’s? How does each character’s access to opportunity—or lack thereof—affect their fate? Is there such thing as a “good opportunity”? Why or why not?
4. Discuss the concept of the “counterlife,” as Alkaitis experiences it. How is the counterlife different from memory? Which characters populate Alkaitis’s counterlife, and who is conspicuously absent?
5. Who—or what—appears as a ghost in the novel, and to whom? What do these ghosts represent to the people who see them? Are the ghosts a welcome presence or are they a source of terror?
6. Consider the role the financial crisis of 2008 plays in the novel. Which characters are affected, and how? Are they able to move forward? What do these outcomes suggest about the possibility of starting over?
7. Examine the intersection of success and morality in the novel. What constitutes success, and what conditions are necessary for one to achieve it? Which characters achieve success, and which characters fail to do so? Is success a corrupting influence?
8. Examine Olivia’s character. Why do you think Vincent sees Olivia’s ghost right before she dies, and what does this apparition suggest about Vincent’s understanding of Olivia’s fate?
9. Explore the theme of interconnectedness as it is portrayed in the novel. In what ways are the different characters connected? Are they aware of these connections, or do their ties remain largely invisible? What qualities of the modern world facilitate these connections? Is connection a guaranteed cure for loneliness?
10. Explore the symmetry between Vincent’s death and that of her mother. How do you understand Vincent’s fate? Why is Vincent able to come to peace with her mother’s death only after she herself dies?

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