



Pushing the Limits of Community Suggested Reading and Discussion Questions

Through this theme, you'll explore the importance of community in the face of large-scale challenges like natural disasters, pandemics, and climate change. As individuals, how vulnerable are we against these dangers? Chances are, we stand a better chance of surviving as a unified force. So people are coming together, maximizing their capabilities as a community to – literally - weather the storm.

Odds Against Tomorrow

Nathaniel Rich, Fiction. NEW YORK CITY, the near future: Mitchell Zukor, a gifted young mathematician, is hired by a mysterious new financial consulting firm, FutureWorld. The business operates out of a cavernous office in the Empire State Building; Mitchell is employee number two. He is asked to calculate worst-case scenarios in the most intricate detail, and his schemes are sold to corporations to indemnify them against any future disasters. This is the cutting edge of corporate irresponsibility, and business is booming.

As Mitchell immerses himself in the mathematics of catastrophe--ecological collapse, global war, natural disasters--he becomes obsessed by a culture's fears. Yet he also loses touch with his last connection to reality: Elsa Bruner, a friend with her own apocalyptic secret, who has started a commune in Maine. Then, just as Mitchell's predictions reach a nightmarish crescendo, an actual worst-case scenario overtakes Manhattan. Mitchell realizes he is uniquely prepared to profit. But at what cost? At once an all-too-plausible literary thriller, an unexpected love story, and a philosophically searching inquiry into the nature of fear, Nathaniel Rich's *Odds Against Tomorrow* poses the ultimate questions of imagination and civilization. The future is not quite what it used to be. - *amazon.com*

- What does this novel say about our society's attitude toward disasters? How is this attitude different from how we feel about other threats such as terrorism or economic collapse?
- If you were in Mitchell's shoes, would you rejoin society or not? Is he better off without being a part of a community?
- How does a community help or hinder when you are facing a large-scale challenge? In what ways does community help you mitigate or adapt to the challenge?
- If you were facing this collapse, how might you use “old school” technologies or approaches to help solve problems? What about newer, digital technologies? Which are the most helpful in a situation like this?

