



Pushing the Limits of Connection Suggested Reading and Discussion Questions

Connecting with each other and our histories is an important part of being human. In your groups, consider the common threads of family and societal connections, and how our interactions have changed over time with our ever-expanding ability to remain connected.

Cloud Atlas

David Mitchell, Fiction. *Cloud Atlas* begins in 1850 with Adam Ewing, an American notary voyaging from the Chatham Isles to his home in California. Along the way, Ewing is befriended by a physician, Dr. Goose, who begins to treat him for a rare species of brain parasite. . . . Abruptly, the action jumps to Belgium in 1931, where Robert Frobisher, a disinherited bisexual composer, contrives his way into the household of an infirm maestro who has a beguiling wife and a nubile daughter. . . . From there we jump to the West Coast in the 1970s and a troubled reporter named Luisa Rey, who stumbles upon a web of corporate greed and murder that threatens to claim her life. . . . And onward, with dazzling virtuosity, to an inglorious present-day England; to a Korean superstate of the near future where neo-capitalism has run amok; and, finally, to a post apocalyptic Iron Age Hawaii in the last days of history.

But the story doesn't end there. The narrative then boomerangs back through centuries and space, returning by the same route, in reverse, to its starting point. Along the way, Mitchell reveals how his disparate characters connect, how their fates intertwine, and how their souls drift across time like clouds across the sky. - *amazon.com*

- What is *Cloud Atlas* about? What are the questions the book explores—its primary thematic concerns? How do the different affordances of each time and place (for example mass communication, advanced technologies) shape the experiences of the people who live in them?
- Is this a cautionary tale...a prognosis...a diagnosis? In Mitchell's tales, what do humans seem bent on doing to one another...and why? With little left at the end, what, if anything, remains?
- How do each of the tales fit together? How, for instance, is Luisa Rey connected to Frobisher?

