

BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to generate discussion and debate. Please select and use questions with care. Individuals may find some of these questions personally disturbing and/or triggering.

THE CHARACTERS

1. The author did not define a clear protagonist and a clear antagonist in the story, so who, in your opinion, were the protagonist and the antagonist?
2. Ben and Katherine struggled at times as individuals within larger hum an entities (e.g. their families, military units, and countries). What then is more important to you—freedom of the individual or the success of the whole?
3. Katherine's and Ben's childhood upbringings were significantly different, but what similarities did you observe?
4. Did Ben cross the line between sociopathic behaviour and psychopathic behaviour?
5. In the submarine hunt sequence in Chapters 16 and 17, who made the correct decision in the end—Katherine or Moretti?
6. In the standoff between Captain Collins and Bradfurd Rouse in Chapter 22, did you take a particular side, and why?
7. Did Steph Sadler make the right choice at the end of Chapter 27?
8. Have you ever seen or experienced anything like Mrs Wu's reaction to the physical world—as described in Chapter 28?
9. During Chapter 32, did any dividing lines come to mind for you? What were they?
10. In retrospect, Katherine should never have answered the phone call at the beginning of Chapter 35—*true* or *false*?
11. In the lead-up to the scene on the mountain in Chapter 36, what did you think Captain Collins was going to do?
12. Who was the better leader: Captain Collins or Rear Admiral Pengcheng?
13. Who was the better tactician: Captain Carter or Captain Zhang?
14. In the final sequence, did Katherine ultimately make the right choices—given the situation in which she found herself?
15. In the final sequence, would a male commander have made significantly different choices to Katherine?

16. If you were in Steven Derilo's place in Chapter 54, what would you have done?
17. Was Ben a hero, and why?
18. Was Katherine a hero, and why?

THEMES

1. Which is more impressive for you: the coastal wilderness scene described in Chapter 23, or the marvel of the Ford class aircraft carrier described throughout the book?
2. If racism, as defined by Professor Hoffman in Chapter 31, does not exist, then how do we define what divides us?
3. Are the methods that national leaders use to influence their people, and the methods that religious leaders use to influence their followers, more similar or more different?
4. The culminating event described in Chapter 56 produced immediate physical effects on people in other parts of the world—see the beginning of Chapter 58. Is this even possible?
5. When is disobeying an order (or a rule, or a law) ever the right thing to do? Consider Moretti's dilemma in Chapter 17, and Ben's decision at the beginning of Chapter 45.
6. The words 'convergence' and 'parallel' are part of the title of the book. Where/how did you see these concepts at work throughout the story?
7. What was the significance of 'colour' and 'grey' as symbols in the story?
8. What did the North Korean vase symbolise for you?
9. The mountains 'spoke' in Chapter 43 and at the end of the epilogue. What did their words mean to you?

GLOBAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

1. To what degree is China intent on usurping the United States as the global hegemon / dominant superpower?
2. Is a world war inevitable in the next ten years?
3. Will there always be a need for military strength to maintain peace and stability in our world?
4. Should Taiwan (Chinese Taipei) continue to exist as a sovereign nation, or be subsumed back into China as a whole?
5. Should Hong Kong be allowed to continue under the 'One Country, Two Systems' policy, or be fully subsumed into China as a whole?

AUSTRALIAN CURRENT AFFAIRS

1. Has Australia 'backed the right horse' by challenging China and further aligning with the United States?
2. Should Australia allow nuclear-powered vessels in our ports and near our cities?
3. Is there a place for nuclear-powered electricity generation in Australia?

THE FUTURE

1. Are our individual futures decided more by our own decisions and actions, or more by our destiny?
2. Will humans be significantly different beings in the year 2100, or will we be essentially the same beings as we are now?
3. Do you think the human race will exist in the year 2100?
4. To what degree are you comfortable with the future use of military systems and weapons that are controlled by artificial intelligence?
5. Will aircraft carriers have greater, less, or similar influence in 2050 as they do now?