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The Circle

Dave Eggers

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READERS' GUIDE

LMU COMMON BOOK: *THE CIRCLE* BY DAVE EGGERS

Consider some of the following questions as you read or discuss the Common Book. We'd love to hear your thoughts, too! Share them with us at commonbook@lmu.edu. You can also connect with us at facebook.com/lmucommonbook, or by using the #lmucommonbook hashtag.

"The Circle"

- Why do you think Eggers named the mega-corporation the "Circle"? What is the significance of a circle as the title and as the name of this company? Why are they striving to complete it?
- What makes Mae an "ideal" employee at The Circle? And why do you think the company appeals to her?
- Do you believe that a company such as the Circle is plausible in your lifetime?
- Would you want to work at the Circle?
- How would you classify the world of the Circle? Is it close to perfection, a modern-day utopia, as Mae believes? Or is it more like a dystopia, as some of its critics think?
- For a company that thrives on order and efficiency, the Circle company also seems to endorse—require, even—loose and extravagant socializing. What do these values say about what working for them entails? How do Mae's values evolve to accommodate these expectations?

Political Science

- As the Circle expands its corporate reach, how does it influence politics? What are your reactions to politicians who "go transparent" and to the Circle's "taking over" of a very public act like voting?

Literature / Writing

- There are no discrete chapters in this novel. How does this structure impact the way that you read this text?
- Do you read Eggers' work as a satire? A fantasy? How else might you classify this book?
- What's your reaction to the book's ending? What does it say about the Circle's future?

Public Health

- Do you think that all of the technological advances in "knowledge acquisition" can be translated into real changes that would improve health? Or do you think that the information accumulates without useful health-related purposes?

Ethics /Bioethics

- How do Mae's values change over the course of the book?
- One of the central themes in *The Circle* is the use of biometrics (retinal scans, bracelets, DNA sampling) to identify employees and also to monitor their health. What are some of the pros and cons of using biometrics for these purposes? Do you think the cons can be outweighed by the potential gain in medical knowledge?

Science/Engineering/Technology

- When working in the field of science and engineering, there are certain responsibilities to society (i.e. ethical responsibilities) that you will have when creating or modifying a new product, including things related to technology. What are some of these responsibilities that show up throughout the text in *The Circle* that both the company and Mae face?
- How does The Circle (company) influence advancements in technology?
- How is technology reshaping our world? What ways for the better? What ways for the worse?
- Throughout the story, Mae is chastised by Mercer for her reliance on technology. Why does he feel this way? Do you agree or disagree with his claims?

Privacy

- We often speak about "respecting" someone's privacy, but in the world of the Circle, PRIVACY IS THEFT. What does that mean? And what are some of the costs of giving up our privacy?
- What does transparency mean to the Circle? How does it change the world?
- What happens to love and friendship in a world where "SECRETS ARE LIES"?

Other...

- When Mae first goes to work at the Circle, she's fresh out of college, eager to make her way in what she sees as a brave new world. How does she handle the challenges of this new world? Is she heroic or admirable in her actions?
- In what ways does Annie inspire and motivate Mae in terms of the level of success that can be achieved at the Circle? How does their relationship change throughout the book?