

Station Eleven

Emily St. John Mandel

Common Reading Guide

In 2009, the Robert D. Clark Honors College implemented its Common Reading Program to introduce new students to debate in the public space. Public debate is something the Robert D. Clark Honors College values greatly: discussion trumps agreement. Students, faculty, and staff have diverse opinions and we encourage new students to join in our proud tradition of debate in the public space.

This year, the Clark Honors College is pleased to present its first work of fiction in the Common Reading Program: *Station Eleven*. The fourth novel by Canadian novelist Emily St. John Mandel and a 2014 National Book Award Finalist, *Station Eleven* weaves a riveting tale spanning many characters and time.

We created a blog (available at <http://blogs.uoregon.edu/commonreading2015/>) for you to share and discuss with other incoming first-year students, current CHC students, staff, and faculty. You are encouraged to share and discuss your own opinions here. *By the time you arrive for New Student Orientation (September 21, 2015), you are expected to have completed the book and made meaningful contributions to the blog.* Throughout the year, we will continue engaging with the book and its themes with events such as guest speakers, film screenings, and other opportunities for conversation.

Below are a few questions to keep in mind as you read; we've put them on the blog as well for you to discuss.

We hope you enjoy this book as much as we have and look forward to a great year with thought-provoking discussion!

Happy reading, young platypi!

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QUESTIONS

1. What is the value of art (performance or otherwise)? Does it have inherent value, or is value artificially imbued onto it by its audience?
2. Miranda Colbert says "this life was never ours. We were only ever borrowing it" (101). What makes someone's life his or her own?
3. How do values and morals shift in *Station Eleven* from the pre-collapse world to the post-collapse world? What about in the Traveling Symphony? Is there a common set of values that humanity embodies in spite of outside events?
4. If "survival is insufficient," as it says on the lead caravan of the Travelling Symphony what makes life sufficient enough to live? What, according to Mandel, is worth living for, and, thus, worth dying for?
5. Do you agree with Mandel? Are there other elements of life that are more worthy? In your opinion, what is life worth living for?
6. Consider the Museum of Civilization. Do laptops and credit cards represent what it means to be civilized? If not, what are the hallmarks of civilization? What exhibits would be in your own Museum of Civilization?