

Before the Fall ~ Noah Hawley

Page Turners Meeting - September 12, 2017 @ 6:30

Discussion Questions:

1. Every person on the plane has experienced sadness or difficulties in the past. Do you think that, universally, everyone has his/her own sad story, or is this a unique trait of this particular set of characters?
2. What different meanings could the title BEFORE THE FALL signify?
3. "True horror, you see, comes not from the savagery of the unexpected, but from the corruption of everyday objects, spaces" (363). Do you agree? Do you see this idea reflected elsewhere in the book?
4. In what ways is this novel a traditional thriller? In what ways does it bend the conventions of the thriller genre?
5. The 24-hour news cycle is ubiquitous in our culture. How is this phenomenon portrayed in BEFORE THE FALL, and how does it make you rethink what we see on television every day?
6. BEFORE THE FALL alternates between the present day --- the investigation into the plane crash and Scott's experience --- and flashbacks to each passenger's life. As you read more of the flashbacks, how does your understanding of the past inform or change your understanding of the present day narrative?
7. "He [Scott] too is striving for truth. Or maybe he alone" (356). Much of the book revolves around a quest for the truth. What truths are debated or searched for during the course of this book? Do you believe that truth is objective? Do you agree with Bill Cunningham that "people have a right to know" the truth (388)?
8. Noah Hawley is well-known for his work in film and television. In what scenes do you see this reflected in the book?
9. "Everyone has their path. The choices they've made. How any two people end up in the same place at the same time is a mystery" (1). Much of the plot hinges on chance encounters or small decisions. What are some seemingly unimportant choices characters make that turn out to be pivotal? Do you see this sort of kismet in real life?
10. How is the concept of heroism explored throughout the book? What separates heroes from other people? How does an ordinary person become a hero?
11. After the plane crash, Scott meets many different people --- JJ, Eleanor, Doug, Layla, Gus, Bill --- who want different things from him. How do these characters affect Scott and his personal journey?
12. In many ways, Scott has been a passive observer rather than an active participant in life. In what ways does the crash change how he relates to the world around him and his sense of self?

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