



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

EMILY ST. JOHN MANDEL's five previous novels include *The Glass Hotel*, which has been translated into twenty-five languages, and *Station Eleven*, which was a finalist for a National Book Award and the PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction, was the basis of a limited series on HBO Max, and has been translated into thirty-seven languages. She lives in New York City and Los Angeles.

[See more](#) about this book, including links to booksellers, at Emily St. John Mandel's website. [Follow](#) Emily St. John Mandel on Instagram.

2023 SUMMER READING

Each year, the faculty chooses a summer reading text to use as a common starting point for the next school year. Summer reading provides us an opportunity to look at University's core values through the lens of different characters and stories. Students should come to school prepared to discuss the reading during Seminar Days and in their English classes during the first weeks of school.

Why This Book?

[Sea of Tranquility](#) spans 600 years. It begins in early 20th century Canada, travels to several moon colonies in the 23rd and 25th centuries, and ultimately wraps up in a version of the American Midwest where giant robots harvest farm crops and airship terminals move people between planets. The characters in it grapple with global pandemics, old-school colonialism, post-modern electronic music, time travel, and the quintessential science-fiction question of whether life is just a simulation. Throughout all this, they contemplate ways in which we can retain our individual humanity, compassion, and sense of purpose in a world that is both increasingly complex and also shockingly familiar.

Questions to Consider

- This book covers centuries. What has changed about society over time in the novel? What has stayed the same?
- At one point, a character in the novel tells Olive, "I was so confused by your book. There were all of these strands, narratively speaking, all these characters, and I was waiting for them to connect, but they didn't ultimately." Do you feel the characters in this book were connected in real ways? Why or why not?
- Gasperry is determined to help Olive at great personal risk. Why? Would you make the same choice?
- Are we supposed to see the events of the novel as corrupt files in a simulation? Or as a disruption to the time continuum because of Gasperry's travels? Does it matter?
- Are all cats time travelers?

Extra Opportunities

Here are some ways to build on the ideas of this book depending on your interests. Interested in...

- Repetition throughout history? See [this TED talk](#) by Holly Frey, executive producer of the HowStuffWorks podcast network.
- The role of technology in our lives? Read [How to Stay Smart in a Smart World: Why Human Intelligence Still Beats Algorithms](#) by Gerd Gigerenzer.
- Space colonies and life on the moon? Watch [For All Mankind](#) on Apple TV+.
- More of Emily St. John Mandel's writing? Check out [Station Eleven](#) or [The Glass Hotel](#). *Station Eleven* was also made into a [miniseries by HBO](#).

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