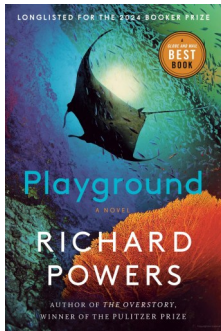




Discussion Guide



About the Book:

Playground

Author: Richard Powers

W.W. Norton & Company, 2024

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Questions for Discussion

1. What were your general impressions of this book?
2. What does Playground refer to in the book and who are the various players?
3. What is the role of AI in this novel? What do you think the message is about the future of humans and AI?
4. Much of this book revolves around the ocean. What would you say are some of the messages of the book about oceans? Comment on how the ocean was portrayed.
5. What did you think of the female diver, Evelyne, in the book? She was based on a real person. Have you read about her before? If not, does this book inspire you to do so?
6. What has been your experience with the ocean? Have you ever scuba dived and/or snorkeled? If so, what did you see in the ocean?
7. Some people have been confused about this novel and the various storylines and how they relate. Were you confused? If so, what questions do you have about this book? Does it help to know that some of it was supposedly written in an AI perspective? Why or why not?
8. Some of the themes in this book included white privilege and colonialism. How did that affect the lives of the characters?
9. When the island inhabitants of Makatea had to vote on whether or not to agreed to the floating sea project, what did you hope they would decide? Why?
10. What happened in the relationship between Todd and Rafi? Do you think they reconciled? Why or why not?
11. What do the MAMs have to say about the book? Whom do you agree with?

Listen on YouTube:

Author Richard Powers on his new book Playground (6:39)

Richard Powers — Playground - with John Williams — Playground—
with John Williams (56:26)

Richard Powers — Playground - with John Williams — Playground - with John Williams
(1:03)



NANCY: An amazing novel weaving several story lines revolving around the ocean and its plight, artificial intelligence, gaming and human relationships. Because AI is one of the voices, it's somewhat difficult to separate the truth of the novel from its alternative fiction. Impressive in scope and the underlying research which provides a disturbing commentary on our present and future.



ABIGAIL: Wow. This book really laid it out, portraying both the incredible ocean and the creatures therein, and the problems with human pollution. So creative the way Ina's sculptures underscored the issue of plastic. I hope this book spurs people to speak up and take action on the Earth.



SALLIE: A lot to unpack in this book. Clearly, the very different childhoods of Todd and Rafi influenced them profoundly. The way that Evelyne's father opened her to the ocean, when women were still not allowed to explore. And the "fictional" children of Ina and Rafi living a somewhat idyllic life on Makatea. Very interesting.



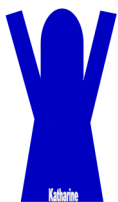
PRISCILLA: Oh my! Hard to read this one. The whole world of AI baffles me! Where does Jesus fit in? I think I'm getting too old for all of this stuff! These people's lives were so strange. The one lady doesn't know her own children, too busy diving. Rafi and Todd seemed so alone. What a decision the islanders had to make.



MOLLY: I I liked the way he wove the story around Rafi and Todd which illustrated white privilege vs. ghetto life. Later he wrapped in colonialism at the island. It lifts up the reality of racial bias and the importance of promoting diversity, equity and inclusion.



JANE: I for one want to applaud the female diver Evelyne! What a lady. She rocks, bucking the system when they wouldn't let her in, despite her expertise. Then she soars to the top of her field and writes a book about it. Great character!



KATHARINE: This would be a great book for environmental science classes, religion, computer science and oceanography. It discusses things on so many levels, I think it would engage students in a really thinking about the role of AI, as well as the need to take care of the Earth.