

Book Club Discussion Starters

Euterra Rising: The Last Utopia

By

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General

- How did you experience the book? Were you engaged immediately, or did it take you a while to get into it?
- Which character – including the supporting cast – did you feel the most empathy towards?
- What major emotional response did the story evoke in you?
- Did the book take you outside your comfort zone?

- What question(s) do you think the author was trying to find an answer to?

Characters

- Did you like the characters and, if not, was that important?
- Were there any characters you loved to hate?
- Why did the characters do what they did? Were their actions justified?
- Did they remind you of people you know?
- Did the main characters change by the end of the book? If so, how?

- To what extent do you agree with Hiram Bowen's statement to Jaeger, 'Nature is barking mad?'
- It might be said that we reinvent ourselves with the stories we tell and re-tell. How far was this true for you in the case of *Euterra Rising*?
- How much do you agree with Spark's observation that we are all more or less deluded if we have no Practice of a good life?

Themes

- What key themes does the novel explore? (Consider the title, often a clue to a theme.)
- Did the author use symbols to reinforce the main ideas?

Central conflict

- What did you think the central conflict was?
- Were all things in Euterra harmonious, or did you detect conflict among Euterrans themselves?

- How did Jako Menpaa react to Laurel Fey’s insistence that reconstructing libraries should be a higher priority than rescuing machines or supplies? Do you agree?
- Jaeger manifests many levels of conflict within himself. What did you perceive these to be?
- How are Euterrans themselves in conflict over what to do with Jaeger? What values and history are in play here?

Structure

- The action in the book takes place in 2027 and 2295 CE. How effectively do you feel this technique worked to chart the social and cultural changes that produced the Euterran culture?
- Did you enjoy the time-shift aspect of the writing? What do you think the structure brought to your experience of the novel?
- Why might the author have chosen to tell the story the way he or she did—and what difference did it make in the way you read or understand it?

Setting

- In what ways did the setting of the story communicate moods or symbolize meanings as the story progressed?
- How did the physical structure and appearance of Mainbranch contrast with that of Euterra and what feelings did that contrast evoke in you?
- In the Euterra of 2295 climate change is a daily reality. Do you think climate change and a post fossil-fuel culture were effectively portrayed in the narrative, and how was this achieved?

Social issues

- In Euterra, the ‘Dan’—an extended family-like group based on mutual affinity, has replaced the biological nuclear family as the basic unit of society and the economy. What do you think about this idea?
- While personal property remains in place, private property has been replaced in Euterra by a community of goods. What are your thoughts?
- Lars Beckett informs Jaeger that the purposes of active practice (work) are to develop one’s character, build community, and produce needed things, not to turn a profit or to artificially stimulate consumption. What do you think of this concept of work?
- Euterran governance is not a democracy nor a dictatorship, nor a monarchy, nor a theocracy, nor a tyranny, nor popular consensus. So how would you describe it?

Moral dilemmas

- Otis Bede chooses to break his vows as a Tarshin runner in order to assist Jaeger. How is this a value conflict in Euterran culture?
- As the Euterrans contemplate the meaning of the existence of the Brotherhood, why do they send Otis Bede on a survey mission to find Mainbranch? What Euterran value is motivating this decision?

- When the Brotherhood approach Euterra with their raiding party, what value do you think the Euterrans are striving to preserve and express?
- As Euterrans take the decision to accept Jaeger, first in quarantine, and later a full member of their society, what misgivings, both moral and practical, did they experience?

Highlights

- What lines from the story struck you as particularly memorable and why?
- What particular passages of description or narrative caught your imagination?
- Who was your favourite character and why?
- What passages of dialogue struck you as particularly entertaining or insightful and why?
- What for you was the most memorable scene or sequence of action in the story and why?

Wrap Up

- What did the title come to mean to you by the end of the novel?
- Were you satisfied with the book's ending? What do you think the future holds for Euterra and Mainbranch now that they know each other exists?
- Did the novel leave any questions open-ended that you would have liked to have known the answer to?
- Had you read reviews before reading the book? If so, did you agree with the reviewers or not? Why or why not?
- If you had to halve the size of your book collection, would this book stay or go and why?
- If you could ask the author a question, what would it be?

(Some of the preceding questions were modelled on: Davis, Jane 2016. *Book Production & Distribution*.)