



The Storied Life of A.J. Fikry

Book Club Kit

Discussion Questions

These questions are from author Gabrielle Zevin's Reader's Guide (gabriellezevin.com).

1. Consider the setting. Why do you think the author chooses to set the book on an island? How does the island setting reflect A.J.'s character?
2. Lambiase moves from an occasional or nonreader, to a reader, to a bookseller. How do you think becoming a reader changes him? Consider the scene where he decides not to confront Ismay about the backpack. Do you think Lambiase's reaction is different than it would have been if he hadn't taken up reading?
3. The author chooses to begin each chapter with a description of a short story. Discuss some of the ways the stories relate to the chapters with which they are paired. Is A.J. creating a canon for Maya? How does the book itself function as a kind of canon? If these are A.J.'s favorites, what do they say about A.J. as a reader and as a man?
4. Did you find Ismay's motivations for stealing Tamerlane to be forgivable? How do you think she should pay for her crime? Why do you think Lambiase lets her off?
5. When did you become aware that Leon Friedman might be an imposter? What did you make of Leonora Ferris's reasons for hiring him?
6. Were you surprised by the outcome of the short story contest? What do you think of A.J.'s comments to Maya about why certain books and stories win prizes and others don't? Does the knowledge that a book has won a prize attract you to reading it?
7. How do you think the arrival of the e-reader is related to the denouement of the story? Is A.J. a man who cannot exist in a world with e-books? What do you think of e-books? Do you prefer reading electronically or on paper?
8. At one point, A.J. asks Maya, "Is a twist less satisfying if you know it's coming? Is a twist that you can't predict symptomatic of bad construction?" What do you think of this statement in view of the plot of A. J. Fikry? Did you guess who Maya's father was? If so, what were the clues?



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Author Information: Gabrielle Zevin



Gabrielle Zevin, 2024

About Gabrielle Zevin

Gabrielle Zevin is an American author and screenwriter. She is best known for her 2022 novel, *Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow*; her 2017 novel *Young Jane Young*; and *The Storied Life of A.J. Fikry*, published in 2014.

Zevin was born in New York City, NY, and grew up in Boca Raton, Florida. She graduated from Harvard University in 2000, where she studied English. She has lived in Los Angeles since 2012 with her partner, director and film editor Hans Canosa.

Zevin began her writing career at age fourteen as a music critic for the *Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel*. Her debut novel was *Margarettown*, published in 2005. She is the author of ten published books, including five for young readers. She is also the screenwriter of *Conversations with Other Women* (2005).

About *The Storied Life of A.J. Fikry*

The Storied Life of A.J. Fikry was first published in 2014. It was a *New York Times* bestseller and nominated as a Goodreads Choice Award Finalist, among other accolades. Zevin also wrote the screenplay for the movie adaptation of the book, which was released in 2022. In an interview with *NPR*, Zevin talked about the character A.J. Fikry. "You know, reading has become to him sort of a way to not engage with other people, when the best thing about reading is that it kind of can help us engage with other people."

Sources

- "About Gabrielle," gabriellezevin.com
- "A bookseller's dream: the charming 'The Storied Life of A.J. Fikry'" by Ric Russo. May 19, 2014, *Miami Herald*.
- "In 'Storied Life,' Characters Come With A Reading List," *NPR*, March 28, 2014.
- Photo: Wikimedia Commons