

READER'S GUIDE

The book starts out with a quote by Petrarch, “Five enemies of peace inhabit with us - avarice, ambition, envy, anger, and pride; if these were to be banished, we should infallibly enjoy perpetual peace.” Which of the characters do you associate with each “enemy” or trait and why?

The Ryechiks are positioned as the enigmatic neighbors. What about them makes them seem like they are the “other” or the “outsider” in this story? In what ways are the other characters making assumptions about them?

This story focuses on modern materialism and consumerism, but it also touches on the topics of security and threats to our society. How did these topics make you feel as a reader?

Which character do you identify with the most and why? How do you feel about your connection to that character?

How might the Lawson's fare differently if they hadn't purchased the home that they selected at the beginning of the story?

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The story features three couples: the Lawsons, the Rychiks, and the missing Mahaskals. In what ways do the Mahaskals become a symbol of what each couple could become (a couple who escaped, a couple who succeeded in moving up, a couple who disappeared, etc.)

The financial commentary in the plot is a point of debate among readers. So find it an interesting take on the American Dream narrative. Others have said it is preachy and heavy-handed. What were your thoughts on this plot point?

What were your theories about the explosion before reading the final chapters?

How does this story vary from other “American Nightmare” tales or “Rich People Problem” books?

