

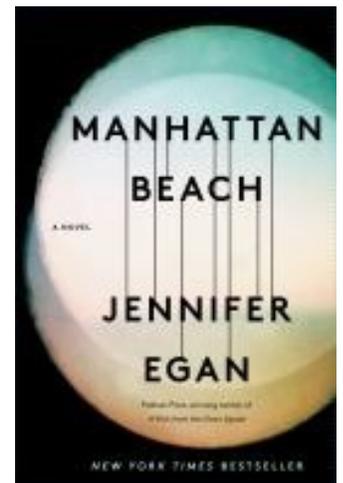


Manhattan Beach: A Novel

Jennifer Egan

Discussion Questions

1. In the first chapter, on the beach, Anna walks barefoot despite the cold and says, "It only hurts at first. After a while you can't feel anything." Dexter admires Anna for her strength, which he senses comes from her father. He reflects that "men's children gave them away" (pages 8–9). How does this meeting between Dexter, Ed, and Anna set the tone for the rest of the novel?
2. Why is the thought of what Lydia "might have looked like, had she not been damaged. A beauty. Possibly more than Agnes," (page 16) so painful to Ed? Why is he unable even to cope with Lydia, much less love her, as Anna and Agnes do?
3. "Each time Anna moved from her father's world to her mother and Lydia's, she felt as if she'd shaken free of one life for a deeper one. And when she returned to her father, holding his hand as they ventured out into the city, it was her mother and Lydia she shook off, often forgetting them completely. Back and forth she went, deeper — deeper still — until it seemed there was no place further down she could go. But somehow there always was. She had never reached the bottom" (page 26). What does this passage reveal about Anna? What allows, even compels, her to shift between worlds?
4. Ed, looking back on his decision to work with Dexter, reflects that he needed a change, that "[h]e'd take danger over sorrow any day of the week" (page 34). Is Ed right to do this? Is Ed's philosophy a noble or a selfish one?
5. What draws Anna to Nell? And Nell to Anna? How are they each not "angels" and how does this bond them?





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6. When Anna takes the train west, there's a moment when she "bolted upright. She had thought of her father. At last, she understood: This is how he did it" (page 426). What allows her to understand and perhaps reconcile with her father?
7. Luck plays an important role throughout the novel and has particular significance for Anna, Dexter, and Ed. How does luck shape each of their lives? Good luck and bad luck?
8. Throughout the novel, characters create new identities for themselves and start over. How do these individual stories of reinvention relate to the spirit of optimism, the quest for the new that is so common among Americans at this time?

About the Author

Jennifer Egan is the author of several novels and a short story collection. Her new novel, *Manhattan Beach*, published last fall and a *New York Times* bestseller, has been awarded the 2018 Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Fiction. Her previous novel, *A Visit From the Goon Squad*, won the 2011 Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Critics Circle Award, and the Los Angeles Times book prize. Also a journalist, she has written frequently in the *New York Times Magazine*—most recently about pregnancy and childbirth among opioid-dependent women.

This book is available for download as an eBook and an eAudiobook. For more information, please visit lpl.overdrive.com or call 519-661-4600.

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