

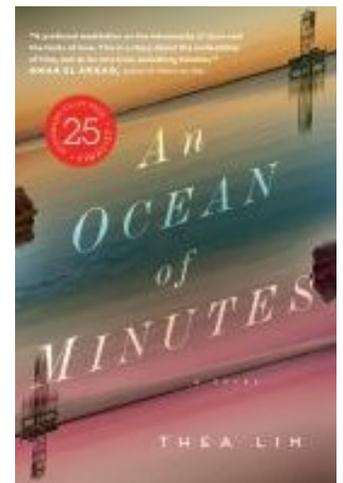


An Ocean of Minutes

Thea Lim

Discussion Questions

1. At the start of the novel, we join a 23-year-old Polly as she is about to make a massive sacrifice to save her boyfriend's life. As the novel goes on, we know that Frank has a family with parents and siblings, but it is Polly who loses 12 years of her life to save him. At what stage does someone else's life become our responsibility? To what lengths are we expected, explicitly or implicitly, to use self-sacrifice to help those we love? Is this expectation greater for men or women?
2. Frank manages to slip a photograph into Polly's bra before she leaves, but upon finding it, Polly tears it up because she's enraged that "Frank believed they needed props, aids, to remember each other." Do you believe this is why Frank included the photograph? Did he already sense that they would lose each other? What other purpose can photographs serve? Why do you believe that photographs aren't able to survive the time travel process in the novel?
3. Much of Polly's appreciation of her time with Frank and her desperation to return to him stem from the loss of her mother. How does the death of a parent or loved one affect her perception of time and the future? Do you think she would still have volunteered to travel to the future to save Frank if her mother hadn't died?
4. Baird's character offers a counterpoint to Polly's during her first few weeks in 1998, as he demonstrates what life might have been like had she not volunteered to sacrifice 12 years for Frank. Even though Polly and Frank do not end up together at the end of the novel, does Baird's example prove that Polly still made the right decision? Was there any other decision that Polly could have made?





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5. After Baird sets Polly up, Polly realizes that “she had lost the luxury of rage.” What does it mean to be able to have or express rage? Who in our society has that luxury? Are there other moments in the text when we see rage being enacted? What are the consequences?
6. TimeRaiser resembles many of the corporations in our world today. While it uses the technology of time travel to promote itself and gain power, it uses other techniques as well. What vulnerabilities of the people in the novel does TimeRaiser exploit for capital? What techniques does it use to do so? How much of this is dependent on technologies and how much is independent?
7. In the final pages of the novel, Polly comes to terms with the fact that what she and Frank had shared is over. This realization is tied to her realization that, “that scent, Frank’s smell, the rain and the sweetness, was gone.” When something, such as their relationship, ends, is it also gone? How does the novel’s understanding of alternative futures and timelines complicate this notion?

About the Author

Thea Lim's writing has been published by the *Southampton Review*, the *Guardian*, *Salon*, the *Millions*, *Bitch Magazine*, *Utne Reader* and others, and she has received multiple awards and fellowships for her work, including artists' grants from the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council. She holds an MFA from the University of Houston and she previously served as nonfiction editor at *Gulf Coast*. She grew up in Singapore and lives in Toronto with her family.

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