

Emily St. John Mandel, *Station Eleven* (2014), Vintage Books, 2015.

1. How does the epigraph by Czeslaw Milosz illustrate some of the novel's larger themes? What are some of the multiple readings of the last line, "There is too much world"? Why did Mandel choose this to introduce *Station Eleven*?
2. The novel's beginning (Chap 1-6) is preoccupied with endings (and to the point of being almost hyper-aware of the genre in which it is working). Why does Mandel start the novel with *King Lear*? How is Shakespeare's play relevant to apocalyptic motifs?
3. In Chapter 6, Mandel provides "An Incomplete List" of various aspects of our contemporary society that are "lost" in the post-apocalypse (31-32). Why does she provide this list? What purpose does it serve? How are we meant to respond? The list is admittedly incomplete, but are there things Mandel overlooked or should have included?
4. "Survival is insufficient," a line from *Star Trek: Voyager*, is the Traveling Symphony's motto. What does it mean to them? What does it mean within the novel's broader themes and/or apocalyptic "tone"? How might we read *Station Eleven* as an "anti-apocalypse"?
5. What is the metaphor of the "Station Eleven" comic books? How does the Undersea connect to the events of the novel? The novel ends with Clark, remembering the dinner party and imagining that somewhere in the world, ships are sailing. Why does the novel end with him?
6. On page 62, the prophet discusses death: "I'm not speaking of the tedious variations on physical death. There's the death of the body, and there's the death of the soul. I saw my mother die twice." Knowing who his mother was, what do you think he meant by that? What other kinds of deaths occur throughout the novel?
7. Certain items turn up repeatedly, for instance the comic books and the paperweight—things Arthur gave away before he died, because he didn't want any more possessions. And Clark's "Museum of Civilization" turns what we think of as mundane belongings into totems worthy of study. What purpose does an archive of this kind serve in the post-apocalypse? Why is the text so heavily focused on objects, their preservation and the meanings they hold for us?
8. On a related note, some characters—like Clark—believe in preserving and teaching about the time before the flu. But in Kirsten's interview with François Diallo, we learn that there are entire towns that prefer not to dwell on the past: "We went to a place once where the children didn't know the world had ever been different" (115). What are the benefits of remembering, and of not remembering? What do you think happened during the year Kirsten can't remember? How does this preoccupation with memory in *Station Eleven* compare to similar concerns in other books or films we've discussed?

(Questions adapted from those provided by the publisher, Knopf-Doubleday.)

Link to key places and symphony's route: <https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1fX9-5JQwwRtkPKFDtDaoBLxUnBc&ll=43.38658695023698%2C-82.6721191484375&z=7>