

Reading and Study Questions for World War Z

Hello Students,

I have put up page numbers on the syllabus that constitute an abridgement of the book (188 pp instead of 342). **HOWEVER**, I hope that you will read the entire book. The abridgement will give you a good idea of what is going on but the full book will give you much more. Please note that if you have only seen the film, you know next to nothing about the book. They are very dissimilar.

1. This book consists of a series of fictional interviews, not unlike the interviews you did for your last paper assignment. Watch the way Max Brooks, the interviewer, goes about his job and think about your preparation for the interview(s) you did. What kinds of questions does he ask? Where does he prod, ask for more? Where does he back off? How does he choose his subject and what, if anything, does he inject of himself?
2. The author assigns his real name to the interviewer. What is the effect?
3. How and when did the threat become public knowledge? Why was it not widely known much earlier? Which nations conceal and why? Which one reveals and why?
4. WWZ has 43 voices including the interviewer's. What is the effect of all of these perspectives? Which 2 or 3 do you find most important? **Find a perspective that is missing here and create an interview.**
5. There is a very heavy emphasis on military technology and weaponry. It is, after all, a book about war. How does this technology (hand-held weapons, bombs, nuclear submarines, etc.) function or not function in the war against the zombies? Pick an example from the reading and explain the success or failure of this particular technology.
6. This book has been praised for its geopolitical awareness. It preserves some prejudices and transcends others. Pick a nation that is represented and discuss its portrayal. Has WWZ changed its system of government? How have its citizens coped with the trauma?
7. Interviewees are identified by nationality but they are often living in other places like the Canadian in Greece who talks about his experiences in Krgyzstan. What is the effect of all this re-location?
8. I maintain that sometimes a zombie is just a zombie, but perhaps a zombie is never a zombie and Brooks is writing about a more generalizable type of catastrophe. Can you plug in another element for zombies? Climate change or a Communist takeover? Terrorism? Do any of these or other threats work in this context?
9. Breck Scott maintains that the developers of the vaccine Phalanx "never lied." What is the irony of this statement?

Group Activity

Organize an interview with a UCI student or students. Follow the conventions of the book (brief questions from the interviewer; type and behavior of zombies, etc.) and use

your knowledge of UCI to develop a "Battle of UCI" scenario that the interviewees can describe.