



Every Anxious Wave

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READING GROUP GUIDE

About the book:

Good guy Karl Bender is a thirty-something bar owner whose life lacks love and meaning. When he stumbles upon a time-travelling worm hole in his closet, Karl and his best friend Wayne develop a side business selling access to people who want to travel back in time to listen to their favorite bands. It's a pretty ingenious plan, until Karl, intending to send Wayne to 1980, transports him back to 1980 instead. Though Wayne sends texts extolling the quality of life in tenth century "Mannahatta," Karl is distraught that he can't bring his friend back.

Enter brilliant, prickly, overweight astrophysicist, Lena Geduldig. Karl and Lena's connection is immediate. While they work on getting Wayne back, Karl and Lena fall in love -- with time travel, and each other. Unable to resist meddling with the past, Karl and Lena bounce around time. When Lena ultimately prevents her own long-ago rape, she alters the course of her life and threatens her future with Karl.

A high-spirited and engaging novel, *Every Anxious Wave* plays ball with the big questions of where we would go and who we would become if we could rewrite our pasts, as well as how to hold on to love across time.

Discussion Questions

1. In the beginning of the novel, Karl shows that he has no interest in his present life. The phrase "remember when..." seems to bring particular comfort to him. How does his outlook change throughout the book?
2. The appearance of the wormhole allows Karl to have access to his past. Yet, he insists that he and everyone else use the wormhole only to see rock concerts. Do you agree with his reasons for this rule? How do you feel when the rule is slowly broken over the course of the novel?



3. Karl trusts Lena based on her physical appearance—purple hair, punk band t-shirt. He admits this is presumptuous, but seems to be comfortable with the notion that someone who likes the same bands as he does is trustworthy and relatable. Do you see anything wrong with judging people by their appearances? What do you think would have happened if Karl had chosen to contact a different person on the list of Northwestern physics graduate students based on criteria other than musical taste?
4. Karl admits he was embarrassed by The Axis's most successful album, *Big Bigger Love*, which was about lead singer Milo's attraction to fat women. Do you feel that artists have an obligation to espouse personal beliefs that go against the mainstream? Is there any song, movie, book, etc. that "saved your life," as the song "Pin Cushion" "saved" Lena's?
5. There is no recorded history of Mannahatta Island in the tenth century. Instead, the author found her inspiration for tribal life in 980 in the book *Sex at Dawn*, which posits that prior to the advent of agriculture, there was no concept of property and humans were hunters and gatherers who lived communally and shared resources equally. Do you think that human beings have lost anything by losing their communal hunting and gathering ways to agriculture and industrialization? Would you prefer to live in community as Wayne and his Lenape tribespeople do?
6. How does the author's depiction of a 'Post-A' city critique our anxieties about natural disasters and technology?
7. "You didn't recognize me, Karl. It's because I'm old, right?" says Meredith, who sits at Karl's bar for an hour unrecognized. Women often are made to feel invisible as they age. Do you think Meredith's assessment of why Karl failed to recognize her is accurate?
8. Lena's life is markedly different after she goes back in time and stops her rape from happening. Although she ultimately ends up in graduate school in both versions of her life, undoing the rape gets her career prestige and a more comfortable life. How do the long-term effects of trauma inadvertently overpower Lena's ambitions and intelligence? Do you think Lena could have had more material success in spite of her assault?
9. If you could go back in time to see any rock concert, what would you choose?
10. Lena, in many ways, is a stranger to Karl, yet he eagerly skips over nineteen years of his life to be with her. Do you find this a bold romantic gesture or the act of a man who isn't satisfied with his life in the present? If you could jump forward to another era of your life, would you?
11. Glory and her friends are basically indentured to the government as Post-A recovery workers and don't have a choice in the matters of their educations or careers. Wayne comments that, because of the asteroid, there is no such thing as "popularity" among her peers. But without a popular class of people, there is no "unpopular" class and therefore no need for alternative culture such as punk or indie music. How do you think homogenizing a society would affect art, music, and storytelling?

Want to learn more about Mo Daviau?
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