



FLATIRON  
BOOKS

# *FKA USA*

## Reading Group Guide

Welcome to the Reading Group Guide for *FKA USA*. Please note: In order to provide reading groups with the most informed and thought-provoking questions possible, it is necessary to reveal important aspects of the plot of this novel—as well as the ending. If you have not finished reading *FKA USA*, you may want to wait before reviewing this guide.

1. How would you characterize the world of the territories formerly known as the United States of America? Is it a dystopia? Could the dissolution have been avoided? Should it have been? What is the best, and what is the worst, development in this imagined future?
2. Did you have a favorite of the chapter opening quotes?
3. What parallels between the world of *FKA USA* and modern-day America do you see or has the author hinted at throughout the novel?
4. “You can make technology as smart as you want, but you can bet bank humans will be stupid about it.” (Chapter 1)

Do you agree? Can you think of any examples?

5. “Most scientists gave the human race another hundred and fifty to two hundred years, tops. Almost everyone agreed the best of human history was behind us.” (Chapter 2)

Is this novel a cautionary tale? If so, what lessons did you glean—or do you think you were intended to glean?

6. “The most popular virtual-reality simulation of all time was called Oceanside, which, as the title of the game suggests, allowed its gamers to sit in a lounge chair on a private beach on the ocean, feeling the salt spray on their lips, watching whales in the distance, and drinking a cold beer. Subsequent versions included On the Porch, In the Mountains, and Country Drive.” (Chapter 8)

If this technology were around today, what “game” would you design? What do you think Reed King might be implying about reality versus virtual reality?

7. What role do you think money does (or should) play in a modern society? Is it a necessary evil, an incentivizing good, or something else entirely? Consider the following quotes:
  - “Making money isn’t a crime.” (Chapter 18)
  - “All the money in the world, and I couldn’t do a thing for the person who’d given me the most.” (Chapter 33)
  - “Never take money from someone you don’t want to owe a favor to.” (Chapter 44)
8. Is *FKA USA* a comedy or a tragedy? Whose story was the saddest? The happiest? Characters to consider include Barnaby, Tiny Tim, and Marjorie the sex android.
9. Were you rooting for Truckee to end up with Annabel, Bad Kitty, or neither?
10. “That is the difference between being conscious and not. You start to die only when you begin to understand.” (Interlude – The Goat Speaks)

For the characters in this novel, is death a worthwhile price to pay for life?

11. What did you think about the footnotes? Did you find them necessary, entertaining, distracting, etc.? On a practical level, how did you choose to engage with them? Did you wait until the end of the sentence to read them? The paragraph’s end? Mid-sentence? (Or not at all?) What effect do you think the author had in mind? Did they make the tale or world seem more authentic?
12. “All men are gods.” (Chapter 6)

Appendix A and Sammy’s storyline raise the question of trying to define a human. What would your definition be? What do you think about the fact that Sammy most approximates human beings when she lies? Do you think Reed King reveals an underlying anxiety of humanity about losing our primacy on earth? What do you think the likelihood of androids approaching human intelligence is?

13. In what ways does *FKA USA* play with the form of the going-West road novel?
14. Did you catch any allusions to other well-known works of literature in these pages?
15. If you had to describe the overall tone of the novel in one word, what would it be?

