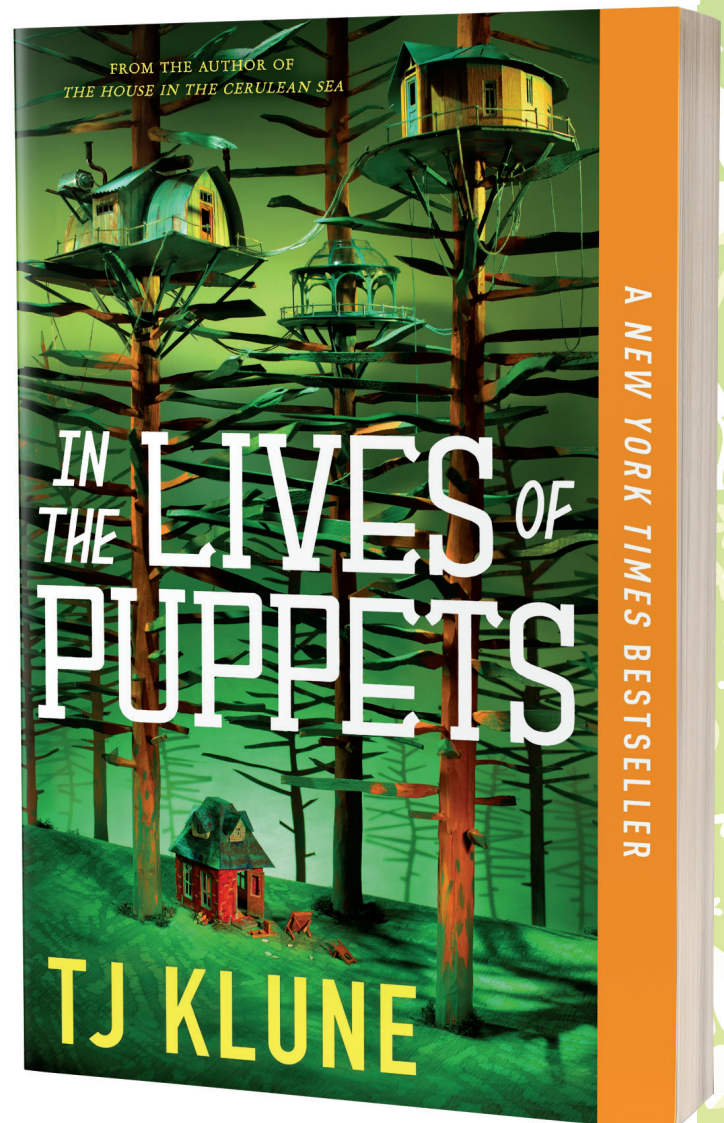


READING GROUP GUIDE



TJ Klune is the *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestselling, Lambda Literary Award–winning author of *The House in the Cerulean Sea*, *Under the Whispering Door*, *In the Lives of Puppets*, the Green Creek Series for adults, the Extraordinaries Series for teens, and more. Being queer himself, Klune believes it's important—now more than ever—to have accurate, positive queer representation in stories.

1. Would you have enjoyed growing up in a family like Victor's? How do Giovanni, Nurse Ratched, and Rambo compare to the main characters in your own family? How is Victor affected by Nurse Ratched's fearlessness and Rambo's constant jitters?
2. The Scrap Yard is piled high with detritus from a variety of industries, with labels and promises that reflect the desires of their creators. What do the scraps tell us about the needs and wants of the communities that bought and sold them? As Victor scavenges for circuit boards in the first chapter, is he wise or foolish to believe in the potential of all broken creations? What are the many types of salvages that occur in Victor's life?
3. When you first met Hap, did you trust him? Did the fact that he was an android make him more or less trustworthy than if he had been human?
4. How does the forest contrast with the City of Electric Dreams? As Victor carves wood, finding this to be much better than inflexible inorganic materials, what does he also reveal about the beauty of the natural world?



5. As Hap learned about the requirements of Vic's human body—food and sleep—what came to mind when you thought about your body's needs? Are food and sleep illogical hassles, or are there other benefits beyond the practical ones? Are there times when you'd prefer to be made of metal and wiring?
6. When the Coachman describes Giovanni's early days and grim assignment, how did you react? What accounts for a change of heart in a creature that has no heart? How would you respond to the Coachman's philosophical points raised on pages 244–245 about the nature of forgiveness, time, and mortality?
7. What ultimately is the source of The Authority's authority? Does having a heart make Victor and Hap weak, or does it provide a better type of power?
8. What does the closing scene say about the necessity of memory—not just for storing information but for deepening our capacity to love?
9. If you have seen *Top Hat*, what do you think the cheerful songs and spectacular dancing could teach a robot about human nature? Which movie would you recommend to explain humanity to a future generation of machines?
10. From the original story of *Pinocchio* (written by Carlo Collodi and featuring a wooden puppet who longs to become human) to the realities of AI in the twenty-first century and beyond, what can *In the Lives of Puppets* teach us about the best and the worst possibilities for machines that think like humans? Reflecting on the title of the novel, who are the puppeteers in this storyline?
11. How did the novel change your perspective on the joy of being yourself, in whatever way you were created, and about your ability to evolve and choose a new path?
12. The book is dedicated to humanity, with a warning in the epigraph that humanity got lucky...this time. Discuss the predictions that are woven into the downfall of humanity described on page 63: "The further they went, the less control they had. They accused each other of treachery. They poisoned the earth. They had time to change their ways, but they didn't." Can a miraculous kiss save the world?
13. TJ Klune's imagination has no bounds. How did *In the Lives of Puppets* enrich your experience of his other books that you have read? What recurring messages about love and hope have resonated with you?

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