



FLATIRON  
BOOKS  
NEW YORK

# *The Deep Sky*

## Reading Group Guide

Welcome to the Reading Group Guide for *The Deep Sky*. 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 *The Deep Sky*, we respectfully suggest that you consider waiting before reviewing this guide.

1. *The Deep Sky* explores the reasons different people might choose to leave the Earth, and their friends and family, for a one-way trip to another planet. What reasons might drive you to do the same?
2. Asuka often struggles with a perception of herself that is not necessarily consistent with how other people view her. How are our perceptions of ourselves different from how others view us? Is there ever a way to close this gap or is misunderstanding inevitable?
3. Asuka's mother argues that Asuka shouldn't base her entire life on something she wanted as a child because no one that age ever knows what they want. Do you agree?
4. The crew of the *Phoenix* uses digitally augmented reality (DAR) to impose their own realities on the ship, with the result that they are traveling together but living in different worlds. How do you think this affects the crew?
5. There are parallels between DAR and the proliferation of media and different social platforms that allow people today to construct their own online worlds that could be very different even from those of their family and friends. How does this affect our society? What are the positives or negatives?
6. If you could use DAR, would you? What world would you draw for yourself with it?
7. What symbolic role do birds play in *The Deep Sky*? Discuss!
8. Why do you think Asuka is obsessed with birds? How do you think future generations will think about species going extinct today?
9. Billionaires today are investing significant amounts of money in private space ventures, and it seems inevitable that future space exploration will be, at minimum, a private-public venture. There is an ongoing debate in the book about whether we should prioritize resources to continue

to push the envelope of human reach, or whether we should focus on fixing what we have. Which do you think is right?

10. Linda Trembling, the trillionaire behind the voyage of the *Phoenix*, makes a choice to limit the crew to only those who can bear children. She makes other choices, too, about qualifications. Whenever there are a limited number of seats on a ship, decisions about who can stay and who can go are inevitably fraught. What criteria would you choose? How do you balance selection with the ethics of fairness?

11. Asuka is multiracial, bicultural, and a dual citizen. How do you think that impacts how she views herself and how she relates to other people? How does that affect her view of the broader mission of the *Phoenix*?

12. The crew of the *Phoenix* is allowed to bring only a shoebox worth of personal effects. If you were selected for the crew, what would you put in your box?

13. The *Phoenix* leadership often has to weigh risks to the individuals onboard, the entire crew, and the mission as a whole. How do you think this relates to broader choices we make as a society when it comes to climate change? What would you focus on in a fire onboard the ship? Saving the ship or saving lives?

14. Throughout the book, Asuka struggles to find the words to tell people how she's feeling in the moment—and ends up missing opportunities to connect. Do you ever feel this way? Is there anything you wish you had told your parents (or anyone else)?