



THE LAST BOOKSTORE ON EARTH

LILY BRAUN-ARNOLD

DISCUSSION GUIDE

RHTeachersLibrarians.com

About the Book

The world is about to end. Again.

Ever since the first Storm wreaked havoc on civilization as we know it, seventeen-year-old Liz Flannery has been holed up in an abandoned bookstore in suburban New Jersey where she used to work, trading books for supplies with the few remaining survivors. It's the one place left that feels safe to her.

Until she learns that another earth-shattering Storm is coming . . . and everything changes.

Enter Maeve, a prickly and potentially dangerous out-of-towner who breaks into the bookstore looking for shelter one night. Though the two girls are immediately at odds, Maeve has what Liz needs—the skills to repair the dilapidated store before the next climate disaster strikes—and Liz reluctantly agrees to let her stay.

As the girls grow closer and undeniable feelings spring up between them, they realize that they face greater threats than the impending Storm. And when Maeve's secrets and Liz's inner demons come back to haunt them both, they find themselves fighting for their lives as their world crumbles around them.



Themes: Science Fiction, Survival, LGBTQ, Love & Romance



About the Author

Lily Braun-Arnold is currently an undergraduate studying English at Smith College. When she isn't writing, she can be found working at her local independent bookstore, Watchung Booksellers, or daydreaming about living in outer space.

Pre-Reading Questions

1. What are some of the thoughts you have about the future of the planet? What are some of your concerns and hopes for it?
2. Based on the title, predict what the novel might be about in terms of plot and setting.

Discussion Questions

1. Describe Liz's character and situation. Talk about her narrative voice, including her references to the "alien overlords." What does she convey in the first chapter about her personality, her current circumstances, and her past?
2. What is Maeve like? What does Liz admire about her? Why do the two of them grow closer? How and why do the two of them clash? Explain why Maeve keeps her past from Liz and how Liz finds out about it. What does Liz learn about Maeve and Eva's relationship?
3. Flashbacks tell readers about Liz's life before The Storm and when it arrived. What was her family like? Why were her parents at odds? What was school like for Liz? What were her hopes for the future?
4. Describe Thea's personality and the relationship between the sisters. How did being twins affect them? How were they similar and how were they different? In what ways were they close? In what ways did they not get along? Discuss Liz's comment that Thea was "so much better than [her]." (p. 178)
5. Why do you think the author chose to set this story in a bookstore? Why do books matter to Liz? Describe the store and how it changes during the story. What role did it play in Liz's past? Why is Liz so attached to it? Why do you think she is scared to leave for good, or even for a short time?
6. What was Liz's relationship like with Eva before The Storm and right after it? Why did Eva leave, and why did she plan to leave without telling Liz? When Liz sees Eva again, how do they interact? Does it seem like Eva has changed? How? What happens to Eva in the end?
7. Explain what Liz slowly learns about the group that Eva joined and Maeve once belonged to. Where do they live? What is their "protocol"? Why was Maeve banished? When Liz first encounters them, Tristan says, "Good people don't exist anymore." (p. 128) How is that belief used to justify their actions?
8. Discuss some of the things about which Liz feels guilty. Should she blame herself for what happened to her family? What does Maeve feel guilty about? What does Eva feel guilty about? Why do you think guilt is such a dominant emotion in the story?
9. Why does Liz think that she deserves negative things, like having her hand damaged in the generator? Discuss her comments: "I didn't deserve that sort of love" (p. 182) and "I'm not sure if I deserve to live." (p. 251)
10. Many scenes in the novel involve violence; for example, ones about The Storm and Liz's family; Liz's hand and the generator; Maeve and Liz being attacked in the woods; Becca, Benji, Tristan, and Eva trying to seize the bookstore; and Maeve removing the tarp. What are your emotional reactions to these scenes of violence? Were they inevitable?
11. Why do people still visit the bookstore after The Storm? Who comes in? Review the stories that Liz collects from people who come to the bookstore. What are some of the experiences that people relate? What are their feelings about what happened and about the future? Why does Brian Henderson say the result for him was that he "was no longer alone"? (p. 299)

Extension Activities

1. After reviewing the stories that Liz collects from people who come to the bookstore, write three of your own about people of different ages and backgrounds who had different reactions to the disaster. Share them with the group, reading at least one of them aloud. Then have a group discussion about these additional stories.
2. What other fiction have you read about the future of the planet? Or the future in general? Prepare a list of five novels about the future to share. These could be about the near future or be science fiction set in the far future. If you have read a book, describe it and give your opinion. If it's a book you've found through research or asking people you know, locate a professional review to share with the group.
3. This novel was published when the author was a college student. Discuss whether you would like to write a novel in the near future. If not, why not? If you would, what would you like to write about? Do you know of other teen or twenty-something authors who have had books published? What would be some pros and cons of having a novel published at a relatively young age?



Praise for *The Last Bookstore on Earth*

★ "Just the right amount of action, balancing the **introspective scenes, a blossoming queer romance, and a well-executed slow doomsday reveal** . . . A beautifully realized addition to the genre."

—Kirkus Reviews, starred review

★ "[A] **poignant sapphic debut dystopia** turns a suburban New Jersey bookstore into a haven for survival and romance in a world of 'death, and rot, and memories.'"

—Publishers Weekly, starred review

"**Nail-biting.**" —The Bulletin

Kathleen Odean, a long-time youth librarian,
chaired the 2002 Newbery Award Committee.



Visit RHTeachersLibrarians.com, your
online destination for all the resources
you need for your school or library!



@RHCBEducators



@TheRandomSchoolHouse

Random House Children's Books • School & Library Marketing
1745 Broadway • New York, NY 10019