

AN OCEAN APART

"A MUST-READ!"

—BETH REVIS,

New York Times bestselling
coauthor of *The Fate of Magic*



JILL TEW

AUTHOR OF *THE DIVIDING SKY*

DISCUSSION GUIDE

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ABOUT THE BOOK

Eden Lowell has plenty to be frustrated about. In the flooded Marshes of former Miami, each day is about survival. Even her feelings for her best friend Henry are more complicated than they should be. Luckily, Eden knows exactly who to blame: the Cruisers, corporate elite who sail the world on massive ships instead of facing the environmental crimes they've committed on land.

When Eden learns that a Cruiser family is hosting a dating competition for their heir, Theo Desjardins, she seizes an opportunity. Aided by a political agitator known as the Ringmaster, she'll infiltrate the competition, break Theo's heart, and then steal his money for the Marshes. A perfect plan . . .

Until she gets to know Theo, who's not only handsome but surprisingly kind. As Eden drifts deeper down into the Cruisers' world, the line separating truth and lies becomes murky. Torn between two identities, two loves, and two futures, will she choose the mission, or her heart?



Themes: Science Fiction, Love & Romance, Survival, Hope, Fairness, Justice & Equality

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Nicole Tyler

Jill Tew is the critically acclaimed author of *The Dividing Sky*, which was an ABA Kids Indie Next Pick and was selected by *Kirkus Reviews*, *Publishers Weekly*, and *Reactor* magazine as one of the Best Young Adult Books of the Year. Jill lives in Atlanta with her family. When not writing, she can be found stress baking, gardening, or belting show tunes. Find her on Instagram at [@jtewwrites](https://www.instagram.com/jtewwrites) or online at jilltew.com.

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Have you read Jill Tew's other novel, *The Dividing Sky*? If yes, what did you enjoy most about the novel or the author's writing style? How might this novel be similar or different? Be specific.
2. What unique story elements are required for a novel to be classified in the dystopian romance genre? What type of research would an author have to conduct to effectively write a dystopian romance?
3. The novel is set in the future and highlights many environmental concerns. What are critical environmental issues in our current society? If left unresolved, how will these issues impact future generations?
4. With the support of an adult, research the questions below related to large corporations. Consider exploring large nationwide businesses (or brands) that you frequently support:
 - a. Do the actions of the corporation exacerbate environmental issues? If yes, how?
 - b. Does the company exploit disenfranchised communities? If yes, how?
 - c. Is the corporation taking any ethical actions to alter current or past negative practices?
5. One of the characters in the story is the Ringmaster. Based on your experience, what is the role of a ringmaster? Why is this a fitting name for an antagonist? What approaches might this character use to cause issues for other characters in the novel?
6. Before the story begins, Jill Tew writes, *For girls who never got the ball gowns. This one's for us.* What does this dedication suggest about the author's purpose for writing this story? Why is it important to write novels that represent a diversity of experiences?

GENERAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Eden says, *For the Ministers and the rest of the wealthy, the hurricane was a sign that life on land had become too unstable. They took to the sea in massive ocean liners, choosing to live beside international ports while they govern us from afar.* (p. 7) How did the corporations GemCo, NutriBiz, and Aquadictum contribute to environmental decline? What governmental restructure followed? Why was this structure problematic and inequitable? Cite textual evidence.
2. What does the statement *life doesn't seem to be playing fair anymore* (p. 26) suggest about society? Can you think of significant wealth gaps that exist in our society today?

Extension: With the support of an adult, research what percentage of people are living below the poverty line in the United States. How does lack of access to health care, quality food, and opportunity impact long-term outcomes?
3. Describe Eden's family and community members in the Marshes. Who are the central people in Eden's life? How does each person support Eden? How does Eden give back to family and friends? How do the interactions between the characters in the Marshes move the plot forward?
4. What arrangement does Eden make with the Ringmaster? Do you think it is a good decision? If her mission is successful, what will she accomplish? If she fails, what are possible negative consequences?

5. When Eden arrives on the *Desdemona*, she says, *My quarters are like a scene out of a fairy tale.* (p. 80) How is life as a Cruiser different from life in the Marshes? What access do the Cruisers have that is denied to those living in the Marshes?
6. One of Eden's goals is to *keep viewers engaged so that Aquadictum looks good.* (p. 84) In your opinion, does Theo have an actual opportunity to find love? Why or why not? How much of the dating show is connected to the company image? How relevant is the public opinion through social media influence (Clamor Clout)? Provide examples.
7. What is required of the ladies competing in *Destiny on the Desdemona*? In Chapter 9, a brief overview is given of each contestant. Based on the events in the chapter, answer the following questions about each contestant:
 - a. What are two evident character traits?
 - b. Is the contestant genuinely interested in Theo? Why or why not?
 - c. How will winning benefit each girl's family?
 - d. How could the match benefit Theo's family?
8. The author adds a lot of descriptive details about character appearance, attire, and the opulent settings. Which contestant is your favorite? Which challenge was most exciting? If you could add a dating challenge to the book, what would it be? Why? Be specific.
9. Eden says, *It occurs to me that what I thought was gel in Carnelia and Vrishti's hair might, in fact, be water—some sort of trendy status symbol, to look like you have so little regard for water that you'll drip it all over the floor.* (p. 102) Why is this trend so disturbing to Eden? Can you think of a wasteful trend or system in your community that might upset someone from another community? Be specific.
10. The chats between Theo and Skye are a unique feature in the novel. Why do you think the author chose to include this format? How do the chats show the progression of Theo and Skye's relationship? How does their relationship start? What events and interactions lead to genuine romantic interest?
11. Describe the character traits of Eden and Skye. How is Skye different from Eden? At which points in the story do Skye and Eden begin to overlap or become difficult to distinguish? For example, she says, *It's strange: Only a few days ago, I was completely disgusted by the opulence of this world. Now, at the very least, I can admit it's impressive.* (p. 193)
12. Describe the progression of Eden and Henry's relationship. How did they feel when she departed (Chapter 7)? How does Eden feel when she sees Henry again in Chapter 18? Do you think they could be a good match? Why or why not?
13. Most of the novel takes place on the *Desdemona*, until Chapter 24, when key events shift to an island. What surprises Theo and Carnelia about the island? How do they both respond to the new environment? How does their response compare to Eden's insights when she arrived on the *Desdemona*?
14. In Chapter 26, Matilde says, "Our answer has not changed." (p. 282) How does this response compare to how she's previously shown up for Theo? Why do you think she is refusing to negotiate? Be specific.
15. How is Eden's identity revealed to Theo? What events happen next to resolve the tensions between Theo and Eden? How do they show care for each other? Create a relationship timeline that shows the progression of their romance.
16. When faced with the Ringmaster, Eden says, *"You're the problem . . . You're feeding the war."* (p. 319) Do you agree? Why or why not? Were you surprised when the identity of the Ringmaster was revealed? What were the Ringmaster's actual motives?

POST-READING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In the Epilogue, the author shifts narrator voice from Eden to Theo. Why do you think the author made this choice? Did you like the change? Why or why not? How is Theo's previous lab work connected to his new journey to the Marshes?
2. Upon the conclusion of the novel, which conflicts were resolved? What unresolved issues remain between the characters and within society? Did you like the ending? Why or why not? How would you change or adjust the ending?
3. A central theme is an important message the author wants to convey to the reader. What are two or three themes in the novel *An Ocean Apart*? What specific events or character actions connect to the themes? How do the themes apply to your own life or experiences?
4. Eden has many strong opinions about Cruisers prior to entering the ship. Which characters differ the most from her previous perceptions? Which characters best fit the stereotypical Cruisers persona? For example, how is Matilde different or similar in person to the previous sea witch persona?
5. In the novel, the tension between the Cruisers and those living on land is often discussed. What more subtle rifts exist between the Cruiser families? Based on Korsica's perspective, what tensions might exist for those slightly less wealthy (and famous) than the Cruiser families? How do these dynamics impact interactions during the dating show?
6. If the author writes a sequel, which characters should return? Why? How would you want the characters to further develop or change? Describe the plot, central characters, challenges, and solutions in a possible sequel.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Rebuilding Community: With the support of an adult, research a community that was impacted by a natural disaster. How did the community begin to rebuild? What actions and supports are necessary to revive a community after destruction occurs? Using media tools prepare a three- to five-minute "news report" about the community, impact, steps to rebuild, and organizations that support this work. Consider highlighting donation opportunities to a specific organization in your news report.

Fashion Trends: Eden participated in many dating challenges throughout the novel with the help of her personal designer, Natalia. Select one dating challenge and design a futuristic outfit that you might expect one of the contestants to wear. The outfit can be designed using visual representations (illustrations) or actual fabric designs.

Awareness and Advocacy: Water scarcity is a theme in the book and one that is a reality in our world. Explore facts about [water scarcity](#) around the world. Create a brochure to build awareness about the causes of water scarcity, its impact on communities, and ways we can help.



PRAISE FOR AN OCEAN APART

★ “An eco-aware, slow-burning love story layered with deftly distilled political intrigue.” —*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

“Tew sets up a world that at times feels eerily possible, while still delivering a romance with a healthy dose of drama and longing.”
—*Kirkus Reviews*

“A fast-paced *The Bachelor*-inspired romance, going deeper with purpose for its characters.” —*School Library Journal*

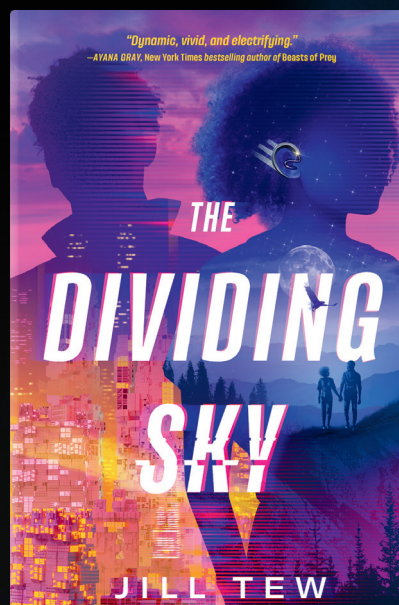
ALSO BY JILL TEW

★ “A gutsy debut that will leave readers wanting more.” —*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★ “[A] high-stakes story packed with slow-burn pining and plentiful tension.”
—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

★ “A masterpiece of speculative, postapocalyptic fiction that demands to be devoured in a night or two.” —*School Library Journal*, starred review

“A simple, sweet romance with dystopian flavor and a hopeful ending that is perfect for genre beginners.” —*Booklist*



A *Publishers Weekly* and *Kirkus Reviews*
Best Book of the Year



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