

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR
SOMAN CHAINANI

YOUNG



WORLD

"THIS BOOK IS A DAMN REVOLUTION."
—**NIC STONE**, #1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *DEAR MARTIN*

DISCUSSION GUIDE

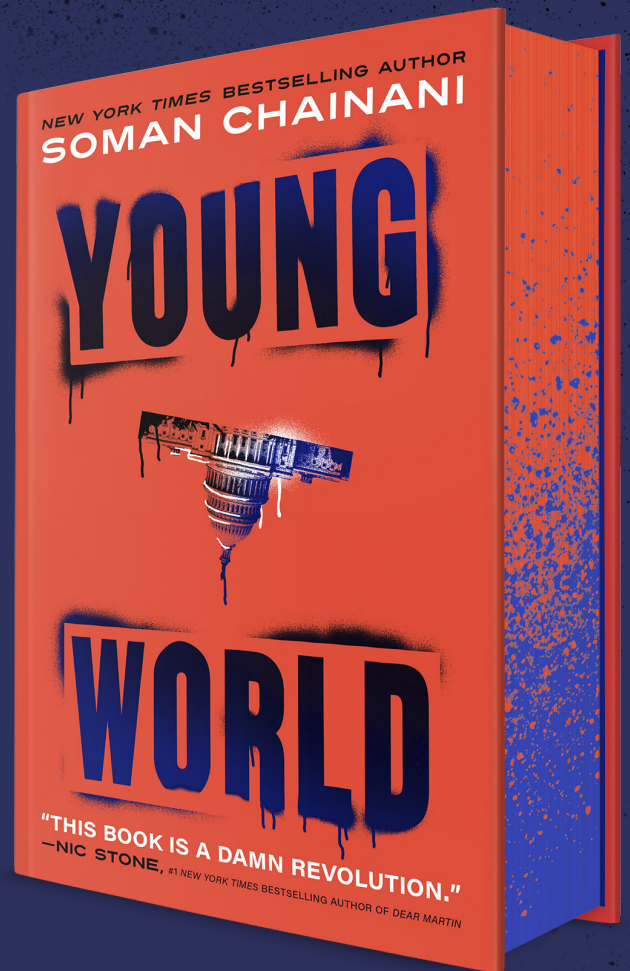
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About the Book

America is on the brink of collapse, and the youth have lost all faith in their leaders. As a pivotal election approaches, Benton Young, a high school senior trying to impress a girl, impulsively uploads a video daring everyone to interfere with the vote and write him in for President. The video explodes online, igniting election chaos and a national revolt, until the Supreme Court intervenes to put Benton in the White House. Galvanized by Benton's rise, global youth take to the streets, and more governments fall, until eight of the world's most powerful nations are led by teenagers.

When these young leaders convene at their first summit in Sweden, they face the monumental task of setting a new course for history. But the first night, their unity is shattered when a leader is murdered in cold blood . . . and Benton is the only suspect. Hunted by enemies young and old, he must untangle a deadly web of secrets, betrayal, and power plays—while the future of the world hangs in the balance.

With globe-spanning action, stunning twists, and an electric new brand of storytelling, *Young World* is a heart-stopping thriller that asks: What happens when the future really does belong to the young?



About the Author

Soman Chainani is the author of the *School for Good and Evil* series, which has sold over 4.5 million copies, has been translated into 35 languages across six continents, and has been adapted into a major motion picture from Netflix that debuted at #1 in over 80

countries. Together, his books have been on the *New York Times* bestseller list for more than fifty weeks. He graduated from Harvard University summa cum laude with a degree in English and American literature and from Columbia University with an MFA in film. He lives in St. Louis, Missouri.

Discussion Questions

- As *Young World* opens, readers are treated to the first of Benton Young's "Dear Miss Escobedo" musings; in what ways do these "Dear Miss Escobedo" notes in a class journal function more like personal diary entries throughout the novel?
- As part of a regular writing exercise for class where the objective is to consider current events and things that matter in the world, Benton Young shares, "Right now the only thing that matters to me is a girl. A girl I know is The One." Why is this opening proclamation in Benton's journal so important? Do you agree with Benton's motivations? How does it set the stage for the events to come?
- After his historic win, Benton tells Freddy, "We finally get the youth a voice. We put ourselves in a position to change things. To tackle the anxiety and dread and stress everyone our age wakes up with every single day." In what ways does the Young World Movement demonstrate the hope for greater agency in global affairs by young people? While *Young World* is a work of fiction, are there any connections you can make to political campaigns and activism by young people happening in our world today?
- Consider the theme of power in *Young World*. In what ways do the different forms of power at play (political, economic, personal) impact how the characters attempt to gain power, maintain it, or challenge existing power structures?
- Though Benton Young embodies a degree of idealism, as President, he is quickly confronted with the harsh realities of realpolitik, where national interests, economic gain, and the pursuit of power often outweigh ethical considerations. What makes this conflict between idealism and reality such a difficult one for him to navigate?
- Consider Soo's early role as unofficial advisor and confidant to the President. What are some of the most compelling reasons for Benton to rely and trust on Soo? Do you see her as having his best interests at heart?
- In *Young World*, the President is pressured by the State Department to "alpha-dog" Teen Swede to maintain US influence. In what ways does this reveal the complex and often cynical motivations of world leaders?
- As she advises him to see the G-8 summit as an opportunity to set the agenda for his Young World Movement, Soon presses Benton, telling him, "This is your chance to set the agenda for a global revolution you started." Do you believe this to be sage advice? Why or why not?
- Inserted throughout the narrative of *Young World*, maps, charts, political art, and other enriching contextual graphics convey and shape the greater story. How do these added features impact your understanding and experience of this global political thriller?
- Throughout *Young World*, readers discover that characters are often not what they appear to be. Do you find this surprising? Do you believe Benton to be a reliable narrator? Is his lack of transparency problematic, or do you see his choices as necessary?

- In what ways does Young's initial inexperience as president and the manipulative actions of older leaders raise questions about the true extent of his agency? Is the office of President depicted as more or less powerful than you had considered it? What does this imply about the challenges of wielding power effectively?
- Discuss the development of Benton Young from ordinary teen to President. How do his initial insecurities evolve as he navigates the complexities of his presidency and global politics?
- Consider Benton's relationships with his parents. How and why does his understanding of who they are change throughout the course of the novel?
- Benton shares, "This is the single most important meeting of the day and yet I remember none of it, because I'm so freaked out by how I'm being trusted with nuclear fucking weapons . . ." Given the motivations that led him to this moment, do you think he regrets his choices? Why or why not?
- Analyze the stance and aggressive behaviors of the BRICS nations. Is their hostility warranted?
- As Freddy once again helps President Benton better understand the power dynamics at play with the other countries in the G-8 and the opposing global forces in the BRICS, Benton declares, "This is my cabinet. My team. I need more than a ninja. I need a friend. Which means you, Freddy." What does Benton's reluctance to select cabinet members from the adults around him really indicate? From your perspective, why is loyalty and genuine support so vital to Benton?
- In *Young World*, characters act out of a mix of love, jealousy, ambition, and fear. How do these complex motivations make it difficult to pinpoint one clear villain or hero in the novel?
- The narrative repeatedly highlights how characters' perceptions and interpretations of events (and each other) can be skewed by personal biases and external influences. How does this unreliability of perception impact the overall story?
- Though it's easy to label the narrative as a high-stakes, action-packed story about the dynamics of global powers, *Young World* is also a story about friendships. Of the relationships depicted through the novel, which was your favorite and why? In what ways are Benton's relationships with his friends (Freddy and Jax) and his romantic interest (Jess) crucial aspects of the narrative?
- Do you have a favorite secondary character in *Young World*? Did it change as you read? What about them did you find most interesting or appealing?
- Analyze the significance of the Young World Movement in the story. How does the age of the world leaders influence their actions, motivations, and the potential future of global governance as depicted in the novel?
- In *Young World*, exploiting Dragontail is presented as an existential threat to the planet, potentially triggering catastrophic climate change. Why does that seem to matter so little to so many of the world leaders, even those who are part of the Young World Movement? Did the ending and ultimate resolution surprise you?
- Describe the novel in one paragraph. Focus on the themes and issues explored. Is *Young World* simply a YA political thriller?

Extension Activities

- The dynamic art and graphics of *Young World* not only enrich the novel by adding to and shaping the narrative, but they also add a sense of originality. Using the novel as inspiration, create your own original visual art to complement or extend Chainani's vision in *Young World*.
- Music connects people around the globe. Select a favorite character from *Young World* and create an original playlist which is representative of their experiences in the novel. Then imagine the playlist is the novel's soundtrack and consider creating original album art, including each artist's information and the reason for their song's inclusion.
- Benton creates a global Young World Movement, and there are inspiring true stories of teen-led political activism around the world. Conduct some internet sleuthing to find inspirational examples to share with others, being sure to note what injustice this/these teens want to address and what they are doing to bring about change. After completing your search, browse the [Revolting Youth website](#). Did any of your examples appear there? What patterns do you notice across different movements?
- Benton Young's journal entries serve as a window into his world. They become a way to process his very private feelings for and imagined interactions with Ms. Escobedo and make sense of the huge changes taking place in his life. In both cases, writing is a process of self-actualization. Using his writing as an inspiration, commit to creating a journal with your own daily musings to process your experiences.

Extension Activities

Do a document analysis of the RAD Magazine cover. If helpful, use these guiding questions:

- Who is depicted on this cover?
How are they depicted, and why?
- What colors are used? Why? What is their emotional and/or cultural messaging?
- What symbols are used?
How are symbols juxtaposed?
- What is the creator's overall message?
- Who is the intended audience?
- What is the creator's perspective, and how does this connect to the youth movement of the book?



This guide was created by Dr. Rose Brock, an associate professor in the library science department in the College of Education at Sam Houston State University. Dr. Brock holds a PhD in library science, specializing in children's and young adult literature.



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