

READING GROUP NOTES

TIME TRAVEL FOR
BEGINNERS
JACLYN MORIARTY

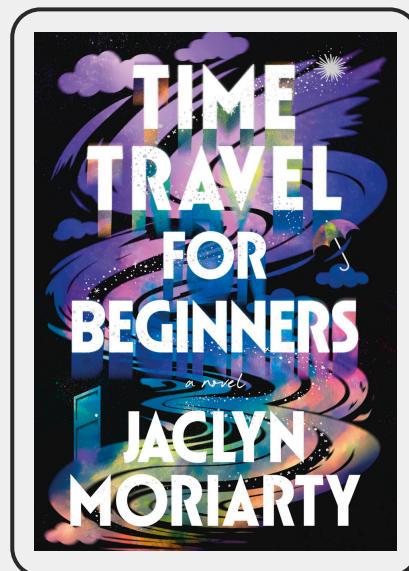
Three strangers' lives are forever changed when they're all drawn to a mysterious agency claiming to have unlocked the secret to time travel in this dazzling novel from award-winning author Jaclyn Moriarty.

Anna, Teddy, and Jade are on a collision course. The Agency is the cause. It is also the solution.

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If you could travel to any time period and place in the past for a short visit, when and where would you go?

At the Time Travel Agency, it is possible to travel in partial mode—insubstantial, invisible, and safe. In some ways, Anna, Teddy, and Jade have been living their lives in partial mode. Do you ever suspect that you might need to step into the spotlight and be seen, or alternatively, that you'd like to withdraw into partial mode and observe your life for a while?

Can you think of one small moment or decision that altered your destiny drastically? If you could change that moment or decision, would you?

Customers at the agency visit plenty of common regrets, such as failing to get travel insurance or floss their teeth. What small regrets do you have that you would change if you could? Have there ever been unexpected positive consequences of your mistakes?

The novel explores a spectrum of parenting styles, from Anna's protective involvement to Jade's permissiveness, Rena's strict supervision, and Trisha's ruthlessness. At the outer edges are manipulative parents like Teddy's and absent parents like Anna's. Which parenting style in the novel—or in life—do you think is the most effective? Have your ideas about parenting changed over the years? If you see a stranger or friend who is parenting in a way that troubles you, are you likely to speak up?

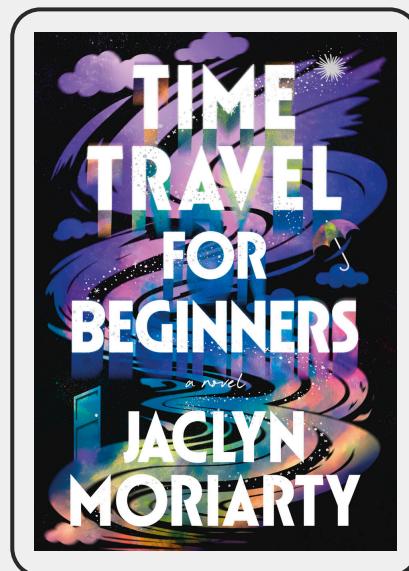
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If you could spend twenty minutes chatting with any person from the past (whether distant or recent), whom would you choose? Would it be someone famous or someone related to you?

It is often suggested that the COVID years have altered time and memory both individually and communally. Grief is also known to reshape time for the individual grieving. How has time changed its shape and meaning over the course of your life?

What do you think time is? Do you have any grasp of quantum physics, and if so, can you explain it to the room?



When Dr. Nastevski explains her theory of time travel to other physicists, there is always a moment when they can no longer follow her and conclude that she is not making sense. She feels deeply alone and misunderstood. Do you think there might be geniuses living today whose ideas have been dismissed as nonsense because their intelligence is on another plane? (Are you a misunderstood genius?)

The agency does not allow journeys to the future; would that be your preference for time travel? If so, would you want to see how your own life turns out, or are you more interested in the future of civilization? What would you find in an ideal future, and what might you find in a completely unexpected future?

While Teddy and Anna are time traveling at the agency, Jade is metaphorically time traveling each time she writes her stories of men she has dated and her experiences with the Tango Dancer. Do you think that art is a form of time travel? What makes you “time travel” in your mind in day-to-day life?

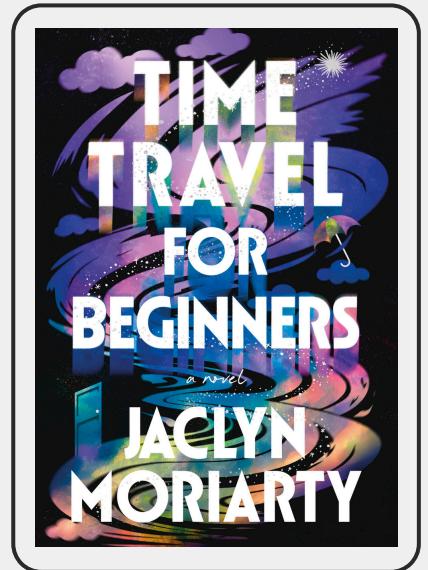
The novel explores the unreliability of memory and confirmation bias. For example, once Joon suggests that Teddy’s brother has always stolen from him, Teddy embraces the idea and is able to remember several incidents of this. Yet he has unconsciously edited out crucial aspects of those memories. Is there always more to a story than we think? Have you ever discovered that a clear and vivid memory you have is in fact false, or at least distorted? How do different perspectives change the nature of truth? Is there one objective truth?

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What do you think the novel is suggesting about individual responsibility when it comes to children learning about the consequences of their actions? Similarly, what is the novel suggesting about bullying, its definition, and its consequences?

Forgiveness, both for ourselves and for others, is a significant issue for the characters in this novel. Do you find it easy to forgive? If you were in Teddy's shoes, would you forgive your former wife or your brother? How do you define forgiveness, and do you agree with the idea that forgiveness is always healthiest? Are you able to forgive yourself?



The Tango Dancer plays significant yet different roles in both Anna's and Jade's lives. Are there minor characters at the margins of your life who have been pivotal in your destiny?

Storytelling, both in the literary sense and the stories we tell ourselves, weaves through this novel. How is story important to you? Do you think we write our own destinies?

For some people, the Time Travel Agency might be considered an ideal workplace. Do you think you'd like to work there? What would be the perfect workplace for you?