

# **Across the Universe Study Guide**

## **Across the Universe by Beth Revis**

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# Plot Summary

Across the Universe by Beth Revis begins with 17 year old Amy Martin and her parents, Maria and Robert, in a cryo lab, deciding who will be frozen first.

Maria, a geneticist, ends up going first so Amy will not be afraid. The process is explained, from inserting an IV to sealing the eyes, inserting tubes into the stomach, and eventually, filling the clear box with a strange blue liquid. Lastly, the box is flash frozen and then put into a drawer, similar to a morgue.

Before Robert goes into the box to start his process, he tells Amy that she will go last. If she chooses, she can stay behind and live with her aunt and uncle. He will not hold his daughter to her promise.

Amy is traumatized by watching her parents go through the process. As top scientists, it is vital that they agreed to be frozen and reanimated 300 years in the future. After a while, Amy decides to go ahead with the procedure even though it is going to be painful.

Soon, Amy is frozen. However, Amy quickly notices that she is still conscious.

"People have been cryo frozen before me, and none of them were conscious. If the mind is frozen, it cannot be awake or aware" (Chap. 1, p. 12).

The story moves forward to 250 years later. During the time Amy was inanimate, she had thoughts or dreams although this should not have been possible. The reader is introduced to the operators of the ship - Godspeed. Elder/Eldest is the name given to the ship's leaders. The Eldest is the main leader; Elder is a leader in training. Each Eldest/Elder is created in a lab on Godspeed. The eldest person of his generation will be the ship's leader when the time is appropriate. People do not live long lives on Godspeed.

The current Eldest is a hard man. The Elder, a 16 year old, is impatient that his mentor will not reveal all there is to know about the ship and how it operates.

Amy's glass box becomes mysteriously unplugged and she is hastily reanimated. Amy is saved by Elder and the ship's doctor. Amy must go through many changes very fast, one of which being that she has been reanimated almost 50 years early. With no way to safely reanimate her parents, Amy is all alone. Only Elder and his friend Harley will keep Amy company and protect her when possible.

Eldest is angry about Amy's presence. He announces to the entire ship that she is a freak and should be avoided.

Amy demands to know what has happened to her. Things escalate when other frozen are unplugged. Some live and are refrozen - some die. Amy finally figures out that there is a military connection which makes her fear for her father's life.



The operation of the ship is somewhat complex. People are drugged into submission for easy rule. People who are no longer useful are killed. The majority of the people, "Feeders," are told what to do, when to do it, and when to mate. Drugs are used to remove individual thought.

It is learned that Orion, the Record Keeper is really an Elder that was supposed to have been killed. He arrives and kills Eldest. It is also learned that he is the one that has been killing frozens. Orion believed that the military personnel would turn the ship's people into slaves. Orion is frozen by Elder.

Elder is suddenly cast into the role of Eldest and the ship's ruler. He outlaws drugs and begins to try to figure out how to undo all of the misdeeds done by the former Eldests and how to build a future with Amy.



# Chapters 1-10

## Chapters 1-10 Summary

### Chapter 1: Amy

The story begins with Amy and her parents in a cryo lab, deciding who will be frozen first.

"Mom wanted me to go first. I think it was because she was afraid that after they were contained and frozen, I'd walk away, return to life rather than consign myself to that cold, clear box" (Chap. 1, p. 1).

The mother ends up going first so Amy will not be afraid. The process is explained, from inserting an IV to sealing the eyes, inserting tubes into the stomach, and eventually, filling the clear box with a strange blue liquid. Lastly, the box is flash frozen and then put into a drawer, similar to a morgue.

Before the father goes into the box to start his process, he tells Amy that she will go last. If she chooses, she can stay behind and live with her aunt and uncle. He will not hold his daughter to her promise.

Amy is traumatized by watching her parents go through the process. As top scientists, it is vital that they agreed to be frozen and reanimated 300 years in the future. They wanted their daughter to do it as well. Now Amy has a choice.

After a while, Amy decides to go ahead with the procedure even though it is going to be painful. Amy overhears the lab techs talking about the scientists being reawakened in 301 years. Amy panics because of the addition of the extra year but cannot ask any questions.

Soon, Amy is frozen. However, Amy quickly notices that she is still conscious.

"People have been cryo frozen before me, and none of them were conscious. If the mind is frozen, it cannot be awake or aware" (Chap. 1, p. 12)

Amy continues to think about the extra year and what she might have done with it.

### Chapter 2: Elder

Elder stands in front of a locked door. It is very strange to have a locked door aboard Godspeed since people are very respectful of privacy.

"Godspeed isn't small - it was the largest ship ever built when it was launched two and a half centuries ago - but it's not so huge that we don't all feel the weight of the metal walls crushing us" (Chap. 2, p. 14).



Elder thinks that the Eldest, his father, has locked the door. The only people allowed on the Keeper level are Elder and Eldest. Elder punches the door in anger. He is supposed to be a leader in training, second in command. Why is his father hiding things from him? Elder has never even been permitted to see the ship's engine room.

Elder manages to get inside the room. It is a large room he has never seen. The ceiling moves. The ceiling opens to reveal a window to the outside, to space. Elder has never seen stars. Suddenly, there is a crack in the window. Elder will surely die. Elder does not particularly care about dying but the rest of the people on the ship would also die. Elder hits the lockdown latch and turns toward the ceiling.

### Chapter 3: Amy

Amy talks about the alliance between government and business. Her parents think it is the best way to combine government with industry to create optimum profits. The new system would seek out new, untapped natural resources. The top military people and scientists capable of making it happen are cryo frozen to create this new future. Amy refers to it as America giving up.

Amy is in a frozen state but is concerned because she is still conscious. Is she really conscious or is this a dream?

"Sometimes it feels like a thousand years have passed; sometimes it feels as if I've only been sleeping a few moments" (Chap. 3, p. 19).

Amy thinks about many things in this state, including her boyfriend Jason, her final pinky promise with her father, and how, when she surfaces, everyone she knows will be long dead. Jason's great grandchildren will be her age. The thought is almost too much to bear.

### Chapter 4: Elder

Elder realizes that the "stars" are in fact lights and the opening is not a window. Elder is looking at a screen with blinking white lights. Behind that screen is the real metal ceiling. Elder realizes that the red light on the "ceiling" is actually a navigational chart. Godspeed is nearing the end of its journey.

Eldest tries to contact Elder through the wi-com chip implanted in his head. Elder tries to ignore his father but Eldest overrides the ignore command. Eldest arrives. He is angry and stomps across the room forgetting his injured leg. Eldest yells about the lockdown because it could cause people on the ship to panic.

"When you take my role as Eldest, you must dedicate your whole life to this one idea: you are the caretaker of every single person on the ship. They are your responsibility. You can never show weakness in front of them; you are their strength. You can never let them see you despair; you are their hope. You must always be everything to everyone on board" (Chap. 4, p. 24).



Elder tells his father that he has never been trained to be a leader beyond his daily lessons. Eldest apologizes for ignoring his son.

Eldest talks about the difference between Sol-Earth and the ship. Eldest shows Elder a digital membrane screen known as a floppy. It shows the floor plan of the Shipper level including a wi-com locator map for every person on board. Eldest explains that shippers run the ship; Elders and Eldests take care of the people. There are 2,312 people on board the Godspeed.

Revis gives a description of the ship and all of its levels.

Eldest explains that Godspeed lost contact with Sol-Earth during the Plague and contact was never restored. They cannot go back.

Eldest describes how the ship is different than Sol-Earth regarding religion, race and how these things cause discord in other societies. The Eldest system is also explained.

#### Chapter 5: Amy

Amy hears nothing. She thinks about when she was a functioning person and how she could hear her heartbeat. Now everything is silent.

Amy begins to wonder if she is dead. She wants to scream but she cannot.

#### Chapter 6: Elder

Elder asks about the third cause of discord. Eldest refuses to answer. He sends Elder to the Recorder Hall to do research and figure it out for himself. Elder realizes that this is a test. Eldest tests him frequently. Eldest often tests Elder so that he will be a good leader, unlike the previous Elder. Although Elder wants to challenge his father, he remains quiet.

"I learned almost as soon as I started living on the Keeper level to keep my ideas to myself and my mouth shut" (Chap. 6, p. 34).

Elder discusses the grav tube which is similar to an elevator but without the car. It relies on gravity and is controlled by the ship's operators. Elder arrives on the Feeder level and thinks about his former living arrangements among various people. Elder never fit in because it was known that one day he would be Eldest.

Elder stares at a portrait of Eldest. The man in the portrait is different than the man Elder sees every day. The expression is softer, kinder. He stares out over land that is perfectly proportioned and measured. The perfection of the landscape bothers Elder.

Elder goes into the Recorder Hall and stares at a globe of Sol-Earth. Hanging above it is a model of Centauri-Earth which is much larger. Unlike Sol-Earth, Centauri-Earth is not detailed. No one knows what will be found when Godspeed lands.



Elder speaks to Orion, the record keeper. Elder asks to research information about Sol-Earth's conflicts. Elder must use his access code since the information is not accessible to those on the Feeder level.

Elder is not allowed to know the identity of his parents because it would cause him to be biased.

Orion shows Elder a diagram with two images. One is before the Plague; the other is after the Plague.

Orion shows Elder how the ship has changed since the Plague and how some things do not make sense. Orion points out another level, one that has been kept secret. A second elevator leads to that level. Elder laughs at the possibility that there is a secret level and then reconsiders the possibility.

#### Chapter 7: Amy

Someone comes into the room where Amy and the others are stored. Someone lifts off the lid of her clear box. Amy is so excited she could scream. Someone touches her for the first time in centuries. A kind voice talks about lack of heartbeat. The box is resealed.

#### Chapter 8: Elder

Elder visits Doc looking for his best friend Harley. Doc says Harley needs to take his meds. Doc asks Elder if he has taken his meds. Harley has been diagnosed with some type of mental problem which Elder chalks up to his creative nature. Elder also spent a year in the mental ward. Elder visits the Ward and sees Harley painting amidst the chaos.

Elder is the one who opened Amy's coffin. Doc catches him and contacts Eldest. Eldest is angry that Elder has found out about the cryo frozen people from Sol-Earth.

#### Chapter 9: Amy

Amy thinks a lot about her dreams - happy dreams of childhood. Amy also thinks that sometimes dreams can become nightmares.

#### Chapter 10: Elder

Eldest refuses to tell Elder about the girl or the others on the secret level. Instead, Elder is told to learn about the third cause of discord. Elder plans to learn about the girl on his own.





## Chapters 1-10 Analysis

This section outlines the basis of the novel. The reader is introduced to Amy, a teenage girl with exceptionally important parents. While Amy is termed as a "non-essential" person, it is obvious that it is not the case when it comes to her family. It also seems clear that Amy will become much more important as the story goes on.

The premise of the story is this: America has decided to cryogenically freeze its most important scientists and military personnel. They will be sent 301 years into the future where they will live on another, as yet to be discovered, planet. These people will be reanimated and will take charge of the new planet and civilization. It will be more efficient, profitable, and rich in natural resources. Amy sees it as selling out to big business since government and business have become so enmeshed that America is truly a fascist society.

Amy faces her first major decision when she is asked if she would prefer to stay on earth rather than be cryogenically frozen and sent off into space with her parents. Amy thinks that staying behind would be breaking a promise to her parents. However, Amy's father gives her permission to do so, if she so chooses. In the end, Amy decides to go with her parents into the unknown.

Elder is the second in command of Godspeed. He is under the tutelage of his "father," Eldest, who is somewhat like a powerful old king. Eldest is not Elder's biological father. Elder's parents are unknown. It is not yet clear how Elder was chosen to be second in command but it was decided early on in his life. It is the thing that caused people to treat Elder differently while being raised in various foster home situations.

Elder is coming of age. He begins to wonder about the things Eldest has not told him and why he is being left in the dark if he will be the one to command Godspeed. Elder is under the impression that Eldest operates the ship as well as oversees rules and people, but that is not true. Ship operators run the vessel; Eldest simply rules the people and ensures that they are safe and free from discord.

Elder questions Eldest's reasoning regarding many things. This becomes a major problem once Elder begins to investigate things on his own, from unknown items on the Keeper Level to the discovery of the secret level that is not on current ship blueprints. Elder wants to know why the people are frozen and are being stored. Doc is playing both sides of the fence - trying to help Elder gain information while supporting Eldest's command.

Elder immediately becomes obsessed with learning more about the girl with the sunset hair.



# Chapters 11-20

## Chapters 11-20 Summary

### Chapter 11: Amy

"More than the sound of my own beating heart, I miss the sound of a ticking clock" (Chap. 11, p. 67).

Amy wonders how much time has passed. There is no assurance that anything is happening at all. Amy thinks about Jason and how he had asked Amy to think of him when she looks at the stars.

Amy begins to hear noises, as if something is cracking. Amy feels like she has shifted in the glass box. Is she waking up? Is she melting? Is she dreaming? It becomes clear that the ice has begun to melt.

### Chapter 12: Elder

Doc finds Elder in the garden. He prepares to contact Eldest but he does not. Elder says he is admiring the statue of the Plague Eldest.

"The Plague Eldest, his concrete face upturned and his arms spread wide, stands benevolent over the garden. Time and scheduled rain has smoothed the face and hands, blurring the details of our greatest ruler" (Chap. 12, p. 72).

Doc knows that Elder is thinking about the girl with the sunset hair. He tells Elder to forget about her. Doc and Elder see Orion in the hallway, far from Recorder Hall, which seems strange. Soon the cryo alarm goes off. Doc and Elder run to the alarm. Elder gives his code for access and Doc shuts off the alarm. Something is wrong. Doc and Elder enter the room to find that Amy's glass coffin - number 42 - is on the floor. Amy screams.

### Chapter 13: Amy

Amy is in the greatest pain she has ever known. Doc and Elder remove Amy from the coffin. She sees Elder for the first time. Amy tries to sit up.

### 14: Elder

Doc says that Amy has been reanimated improperly. Someone pushed the button on the case. Eldest arrives. Doc lies and says that there was an electrical malfunction. Eldest is annoyed at the reanimation of a non-essential person.

Amy repeatedly asks for her parents.



Doc explains that Amy cannot be refrozen. Doc tries to apply a sedative patch. Amy is terrified of going to sleep again.

#### Chapter 15: Amy

Amy cannot figure out if she is dreaming. She sees the boy - Elder - sitting in a chair beside her bed. Amy asks Elder who he is and what has happened. Amy notes the boy's strange speech. Amy can understand but the words sound slurred.

Elder tries to explain the situation the best he can. Amy finally learns that she has been awakened almost 50 years early. Her parents will remain animated until they reach the planet as planned.

#### Chapter 16: Elder

Elder goes into the garden to pick flowers for Amy. Eldest contacts him via wi-com but Elder ignores the call. Eldest is angry because Elder has defied him.

Doc tells Elder that he cannot confront Eldest directly, that if he wants to defy his father, he must be sneaky about it.

Eldest tells Elder to go to the Learning Center to study. Elder refuses. Eldest causes a series of loud tonal sounds and clicks to emanate from his implanted wi-com. The sounds become louder and more painful until Elder does as he is told.

#### Chapter 17: Amy

Doc explains everything to Amy. It is the same information she had received from Elder but somehow it seems more valid coming from the doctor. Doc explains that Amy cannot be refrozen. Amy is angry and demands to know what she is supposed to do now. Doc asks if Amy has any hobbies. Amy says she used to run cross country. Doc says that no one runs on the ship. Amy also likes photography. Photography is not permitted unless it is for scientific purposes. Doc also explains that there are no children on board.

Eldest arrives. He is not sympathetic or kind. Eldest asks what Amy knows about the ship.

Amy says she only knows what she was told before she was frozen:

"They called it Project Ark Ship before I was frozen. All I know about it is that I'm on it. We're heading to a planet in the Centauri system that NASA discovered a few years before I was born. It's a generation ship - you are all supposed to have been born on the ship, keeping it running and all, until we get there and my parents and the rest of the people from the mission can terraform the new planet" (Chap. 17, p. 102).



Eldest explains his role on the ship. Amy is told that she is a freak. She is not the same color as others, she is younger, and her speech is different. Her presence will cause discord.

Eldest explains that there are two generations on board. With a few exceptions, everyone is 20 or 40 years old. Eldest is one of the remaining people on the ship. He is 56 years old. Amy quickly figures out that there must have been an elder in the 40 year old generation. Eldest explains that he died.

Eldest wants to dump Amy out into space. Doc argues with Eldest.

"We can't do that,' the doctor says, and I totally forgive him for being creepy and threatening me with drugs" (Chap. 17, p. 107).

Eldest and Doc go outside to argue. Amy tries to listen but catches only snippets of conversation. Amy hears something about someone from last Season who is dead. She also hears that someone disconnected her.

Amy goes to her room and finds flowers scattered on the floor in front of the door.

#### Chapter 18: Elder

Eldest finds Elder and tells him that the girl will do nothing but cause trouble, particularly now that the Season is coming. Elder knows about the Season - the time when people are permitted to mate.

Eldest leaves. Elder breaks the rules by entering Eldest's chambers. He finds mental meds on Eldest's desk. Elder thinks about the current situation.

#### Chapter 19: Amy

Amy describes her room. It is a mixture of industrial and personal. The colors in the room are white and gray although someone has added an ivy border around the door frame. The bathroom is cold and impersonal but the linens smell of lemons and lavender. Amy describes the lights, food and the view.

#### Chapter 20: Elder

Eldest and Elder have been called to the cryo level. Someone has unplugged number 100 - William Robertson, a leadership specialist. Unlike Amy, Robertson didn't make it - he died trying to get out of the box. Doc says it was done on purpose. Eldest is furious. Robertson's body is cast out into space. Elder sees the real stars for the first time.

## Chapters 11-20 Analysis

Many important events take place in this section. Amy becomes reanimated. She is disoriented, confused and angry when she learns that she has been reanimated almost



50 years early. By the time her parents become reanimated she will be older than they were when they were frozen. Amy does not react well to being told she is a freak. While it is clear that she is different from the other people on the ship, Eldest does not handle the situation well. Instead of showing some sympathy, he immediately wants to get rid of the foreign "non-essential" girl who will surely cause discord amongst the ship's residents.

Doc is slightly more sympathetic. His position allows him to speak more frankly to Eldest than others would ever be allowed - perhaps because he is the only one who knows how to handle certain situations. There is an unspoken bond between Doc and Eldest, as if they are co-conspirators or perhaps share an unwieldy secret. There are whispers and hints about a dead resident from the previous Season, one who had caused some problems. One might surmise that the problem person had been terminated. Eldest certainly seems capable of making many types of cold-blooded decisions.

Elder's fascination with Amy is accelerated by Eldest's demands that he forget about her. Elder rebels for the first time, which surprises Eldest and also foreshadows trouble on the horizon.

Orion's part in the story is still relatively unknown although he seems to be in places he should not be and knows things that perhaps he should not know - including the existence of the cryo level.

Amy feels as if she has traded one prison for another. She does not know what to do or how to occupy her time. Amy wants to run.



# Chapters 21-30

## Chapters 21-30 Summary

### Chapter 21: Amy

Amy has to run. She leaves her room and goes to the garden level. She runs through the garden. She sees a man who pays little attention to her. Amy ends up on the Feeder level where people are shocked at her presence. One man asks "what" she is instead of whom. Amy meets Steela, a former head agriculturist. Steela tells Amy that it is dangerous for the Feeders to see her. They are a simple people that will view her as a threat. Steela tells Amy to get back to the hospital.

### Chapter 22: Elder

Elder is stunned by the real stars. Doc and Eldest discuss the recent events with Robertson.

### Chapter 23: Amy

Amy cries and collapses. She is greeted by Orion, who offers to help her clean up before returning to her room. Amy goes to the Recorder Hall with Orion where she sees a model of Sol-Earth as well as a smaller model of Godspeed. Amy realizes that there is nowhere to run.

### Chapter 24: Elder

"'Come,' Eldest demands, and I know by the way he says it, as if he's a master speaking to a slave, that he means me and not Doc" (Chap. 24, p. 145).

Eldest asks Elder what he would do in this situation. Elder suggests looking at vid records and wi-com locators. The vid feeds to the cryo chambers are blacked out. The only person shown as being in the lab is Doc. Doc says that there were scientists in the other labs. Eldest wonders if it is "him." Doc says he is dead. Eldest says his influence may still be alive.

### Chapter 25: Amy

Amy follows a nurse to the Ward where she is introduced to the others, including Harley. Harley says that everyone there is mad. Amy tells the residents that she is from Earth, a long time ago. Amy begins to describe her world.

### Chapter 26: Elder



Eldest learns that Amy is telling the people in the Ward about Earth. Eldest makes an announcement to all people that Amy is an experiment. She is simple and often lies. Amy is to be ignored.

#### Chapter 27: Amy

Amy asks for an explanation of the Ward. None of the people seem to be crazy, although Victria, a writer, seems to be rather high strung.

#### Chapter 28: Elder

Elder goes to Amy's room. He finds Harley painting Amy's portrait. Elder is jealous and is unhappy when Harley calls him "the boy." Harley asks Amy to tell him about the sky. Amy says she has a headache. She asks why everyone thinks she is a freak. Elder asks if Harley has told Amy about Eldest's announcement. Harley did not.

"Part of me is very glad that Amy doesn't know what Eldest has said. But Harley has always been this way, for as long as I've known him. He thinks ignorance is the best way to protect someone, and he doesn't understand that what we imagine is often worse than the truth" (Chap. 28, p. 160).

The trio discusses Eldest and the possibility that Amy will cause a disturbance. Elder talks about Robertson.

#### Chapter 29: Amy

Amy demands to know what is being done about Robertson's murder. There are no cops on board Godspeed since there is no crime. Eldest is the only ruler. Amy creates a chart of facts regarding herself and Robertson and says they should look for clues.

#### Chapter 30: Elder

The trio goes to the cryo chamber and dusts for fingerprints. All prints come back to Elder/Eldest. Afterward, Harley goes to the hatch to see the stars. Elder asks Amy if she wants to see the garden.

## Chapters 21-30 Analysis

Amy meets her first residents outside the lab. Steela and Orion are relatively kind toward her while others stare at her as if she is a freak. It will become worse since Eldest made the announcement. Amy befriends Harley quickly, which makes Elder jealous. It is clear that Elder has developed feelings toward Amy in a short amount of time.

The mystery of "him" is mentioned. The identity of the dead person is not mentioned but it is clear that it is someone who had caused a great deal of trouble for Eldest and had



some influence amongst the others. Eldest is convinced that the recent activities are because of "him."

Amy is worried about her parents and what might happen if they are the next victims. Amy, Elder and Harley join forces and begin to investigate. This will surely invite trouble, especially for Elder.





# Chapters 31-40

## Chapters 31-40 Summary

### Chapter 31: Amy

Elder and Amy walk out into the garden. Amy is impressed by the design and the flowers that grow. On a bench, a couple begins to mate. Amy is shocked and uncomfortable. It begins to rain. It is fake rain but somehow it makes Amy feel better.

### Chapter 32: Elder

Elder and Amy discuss Eldest and his ways. Amy is not impressed and thinks Eldest is a jerk. Elder and Amy kiss. Amy runs off and goes back to her room.

### Chapter 33: Amy

Amy thinks about Jason. She goes for a run. Amy stops and speaks to a girl who is genetically modifying rabbits.

### Chapter 34: Elder

Elder goes into a room where Eldest is staring at what Elder once believed was starlight. Eldest speaks about the job and how it is often very difficult. Sometimes it is hard to live with the decisions that must be made.

"You do what you have to do, whether you like it or not. There's nothing to be proud of, not as Eldest. There's never a right answer. Just keep them alive. It doesn't matter how. Just keep the frexing ship alive" (Chap. 34, p. 196).

Eldest says he knows that Elder has spent the entire day with Amy. Eldest tells Elder that he can spend time with her to understand what kind of trouble she can cause.

Elder and Amy see people in Season. Amy is disgusted by it because it is simply sex and not love that causes people to mate. Elder thinks that when he turns twenty he will be with Amy in the Season.

Amy wants to see her parents. Elder arranges it.

### Chapter 35: Amy

Amy desperately wants to see her parents but not as frozen meat.

### Chapter 36: Elder

Elder and Amy go to the cryo level. Harley is standing guard. Elder asks Amy if she wants the trunk she packed before she was frozen.



### Chapter 37: Amy

Amy opens her mother's trunk. Inside she finds family photos and her grandmother's cross. In her father's trunk she finds books and her teddy bear. Amy's trunk is empty.

### Chapter 38: Elder

Amy is through looking at the items in the trunks. Suddenly she hears a noise. Amy runs to the cryo room. Another person has been unplugged. Elder calls Doc who arrives quickly. The woman has barely begun to melt. Doc plugs the box in again and all is well. Harley calls out that he has found someone dead.

### Chapter 39: Amy

Amy recognizes the dead man as being Mr. Kennedy, an old man who had worked in her mother's department. Amy always thought Kennedy was a pervert. Doc says that Kennedy was a weapons specialist. This surprises Amy.

### Chapter 40: Elder

Doc makes the group promise not to say anything to anyone about the unpluggings or about Mr. Kennedy. Doc plans to contact Eldest but Elder tells him not to, saying that he will vouch for Amy and Harley.

Elder checks Doc's floppy to see who else was on the cryo level at the time of the unpluggings. The only person on the level, aside from the group, was Eldest.

## Chapters 31-40 Analysis

Amy struggles with getting used to the concept of the Season. The longer she stays on Godspeed the more homesick she becomes. Even the feel of the fake rain and the fake dirt comfort her.

Amy decides that she must see her parents. It will be difficult to see them in their frozen states but she misses them terribly. Seeing belongings from home gives her an overwhelming sense of comfort as well and Amy is glad to take those things back to her room. Amy is offended when Elder comments on her grandmother's cross and asks if she believes in fairy tales. The argument does not go far because Amy hears the cracking noise that signifies melting.

Learning that Mr. Kennedy was a weapons specialist is a shock to Amy. Amy's mother had been a genetic scientist who spliced DNA. Amy had not known about weapons in the department.

Eldest tells Elder to spend time with Amy. Perhaps it is a trick of reverse psychology; perhaps he simply wants Elder out of his hair for a while.

The fact that Eldest was the only one on the cryo level during the unpluggings is alarming to Elder. In Elder's mind it could mean one of two things: either Eldest is unplugging the boxes or someone is impersonating the ship's ruler.



# Chapters 41-50

## Chapters 41-50 Summary

### Chapter 41: Amy

Doc storms off. Elder says he will talk to Eldest. Harley asks Amy if she wants to go back to the ward. Amy says she cannot bear to be inside any more. She wants to go to the garden. There are people everywhere, mating. Amy says they can go to the wheat field which is almost deserted. Harley wishes he had had the foresight to bring his paints. Amy tells Harley to go back and get them. Harley warns Amy to be careful and then leaves her.

Amy wanders deeper into the wheat field. She sees Luthe, who calls out to her. The other men with Luthe laugh. Luthe says he wants to have a freak. Amy begins to run. Luthe chases her. Amy trips over a couple on the ground. Luthe attacks Amy and begins to rape her. Harley arrives on the scene and knocks Luthe to the ground. Amy and Harley run.

### Chapter 42: Elder

Elder finds Eldest in another lab on the same level as the cryo chamber. Eldest is examining cat embryos. He explains that it is unknown what types of animals will be needed on Centauri Earth. Eldest also begins to speak about DNA and RNA. Each generation must be equally balanced. It is up to the Eldest to ensure that each generation has an appropriate number of scientists, artists, mathematicians, and other professionals.

Eldest tells Elder that he will make a good leader someday.

### Chapter 44: Amy

Amy is in her room, in shock. Harley sits beside her bed until she tells him that she wants to be alone.

Amy runs to her parents' coffins. She opens the drawers and looks at them. She contemplates flipping the switch and then being there to help them reanimate. Amy feels utterly desperate. Amy knows her mother is more essential than her father. Amy tries to deactivate the power to her father's box but she cannot. Amy decides that she can wait fifty years if it means seeing them again.

### Chapter 44: Elder

Elder continues his talk with Eldest. Elder learns that people are fed vitamins and contraceptives through their water. During the Season, the contraceptives are replaced with hormones. Amy had been right - the behavior is not natural.



Elder confronts Eldest about being in the cryo area when the people are unplugged. Eldest becomes angry but does not deny Elder's accusations.

Chapter 45: Amy

Amy thinks about the one regret regarding Jason. The night Amy left, a girl told her that Jason was a serial cheater. Amy had slept with Jason for the first and last time that night. Now she is uncertain if Jason was faithful. Amy's regret is not demanding the truth.

Chapter 46: Elder

Elder goes to the ward. Harley says that Amy is in her room but wants to be left alone. Harley says he wants to be left alone as well.

Elder goes to the Recorder Hall. Orion is hanging a painting of Elder, the new leader. It is time for Eldest to step down.

On the steps, Victoria is writing in her notebook. She and Elder talk about the Season. Victoria's opinions match Amy's regarding the unnatural state of things.

Chapter 47: Amy

Amy visits Doc. She objects to the way people are behaving. It becomes clear to Amy that Doc sees this behavior - and DNA manipulation - as necessary and normal.

Chapter 48: Elder

There is a strange exchange between Elder and Orion in the ward's common room. Orion is reading "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star." Elder says that Orion should not have given Victoria access to books from Sol-Earth. Orion says he does not have access. Orion asks if Elder is aware that he has a friend in Orion.

Chapter 49: Amy

Harley goes to Amy's room. Harley talks about the Season being over and how things are back to normal. Amy says there is nothing normal about this behavior. People are not mindless drones. Harley says he did not act like Luthe and the others. He had been in love once but the girl died. Amy understands that the girl had committed suicide.

Chapter 50: Elder

Elder goes to Amy's room. He shows Amy the floppy with the wi-com locators. Amy says that they need to be down by the cryo rooms to protect the frozens. Elder begins to wonder if Harley, due in part to the lack of meds, has killed the frozens.

Eldest signals that there is about to be an announcement.



## Chapters 41-50 Analysis

The reader learns more about the way things work on Godspeed. Perhaps the most alarming is the behavior during the Season, which is encouraged through the addition of hormones in the drinking water. Elder is concerned by this and by the fact that Amy drinks a lot of water.

Amy's near rape lets her know that her situation is more dire than she may have previously imagined. Still, Amy is unwilling to become a prisoner inside her room. Amy trusts Harley and Elder which may or may not be wise although both boys have saved in her different ways.

Orion's role in the story is yet to be determined. He has access to a great deal of information and it is clear that he knows more than Eldest would like.

Amy also begins to see that she is not the only person who does not agree with the methods used by Eldest and realizes that something is wrong.



# Chapters 51-60

## Chapters 51-60 Summary

### Chapter 51: Amy

Harley and elder listen to the announcement from Eldest. Eldest has called everyone to the Keeper Level. Harley devises a way in which Amy can use the grav tube by holding onto Elder, almost as if he is carrying her.

### Chapter 52: Elder

Elder would rather be alone with Amy than attend a meeting of all of the people on board. Eldest calls the meeting to order. He tells people that the landing date of Godspeed has been miscalculated. It will not land for near 75 years - 25 years more than was anticipated. The crowd stirs. Soon, however, the crowd calms, content to know that while they will not see land, their children will. Elder asks Amy for her opinion. Amy oohs and aahs at the stars. Elder says she knows that they are not real stars. Amy tells Elder to be quiet while their Eldest is speaking. Amy cheers along with everyone else.

### Chapter 53: Amy

Amy feels weird as if something is wrong. Some part of her brain knows that something abnormal is happening. Elder and Amy approach Eldest. Eldest says it is important to give people hope so they work when they don't want to, smiling the whole time. Amy suddenly finds Eldest's cold eyes comforting and warm.

### Chapter 54: Elder

Elder takes Amy to see Doc. There is something wrong. Amy is devoid of emotion. Harley says that perhaps it is not such a bad way to be. Amy says she is fine although clearly, she is not.

### Chapter 55: Amy

Amy and Elder see Doc. Elder tries to convince Doc that something is wrong. Amy says everything is fine. Doc finally comes to the conclusion that Amy is unbalanced. He prescribes medication.

### Chapter 56: Elder

Elder confronts Eldest, who is drunk. Eldest refuses to tell Elder what he has done. Elder punches Eldest in the face and flees.



Elder goes to Amy's room. He studies the chart of the frozen on Amy's wall. Amy says she has a headache. Apparently, whatever had influenced her had worn off. Amy is furious and panicked. She says that she cannot live out her life on the ship.

#### Chapter 57: Amy

Elder takes Amy to Recorder Hall. He shows her the wall floppies that show the progress of Godspeed since its launch until the time Amy awoke. Elder shows her various things including an altered version of the Gettysburg Address. Amy tries to explain that the Address has been rewritten to promote racism. Elder does not understand racism.

#### Chapter 58: Elder

Elder wants to show many things to Amy but she wants to return to the cryo level to give Harley a break. Then she sees a picture of Ed, the scientist that froze her. Ed's child is the first born on Godspeed. Amy says she wants to know if any of Ed's descendants are on board. Elder says he can trace them.

Amy finds discrepancies in the records and realizes that everything leads back to the Plague.

#### Chapter 59: Amy

Eldest arrives at the Recorder Hall. He confronts Elder and Amy. He tells Amy that he was right - she is a disturbance. Amy confronts Eldest, asking about secrets on the ship and the things that happened during the Plague. Eldest says that the ship was built on secrets and it runs on secrets. Amy demands to know the truth but Eldest leaves.

#### Chapter 60: Elder

Elder feels bad about leaving Amy in the Recorder Hall. He begins to see that Eldest is losing it. Elder challenges Eldest and says he wants to know the truth about the Plague. Eldest says that there never was a plague.

## Chapters 51-60 Analysis

Eldest employs whatever methods are necessary to get what he wants from people. Eldest claims that his actions are best for the people but Elder begins to think that Eldest is no longer fit for command. Amy's strange behavior is alarming to Elder, particularly because she has no idea that her mind has been altered.

The mystery becomes more intense when Amy realizes - and tries to explain - that facts about Sol-Earth have been doctored and changed to reflect the teachings of Eldest. Elder does not completely understand until he learns that there never was a plague.





# Chapters 61-70

## Chapters 61-70 Summary

### Chapter 61: Amy

After Elder leaves Amy in the Recorder Hall, she is approached by Orion. Orion says he tries to stay out of the man's way.

Amy goes back to the hospital. Along the way, she sees Steela, who is being guided by her daughter. Steela's temper is short. Steela's daughter, to whom Steela refers as a dimwit, wants to take her mother to see Doc because she is having delusions. Amy offers to take Steela to the hospital. Steela agrees.

### Chapter 62: Elder

Eldest has yet to explain about the plague. Instead, he takes Elder to the engine room. Eldest shows the engine to Elder and quizzes him on how it operates. Elder knows that it uses and recycles uranium endlessly. Eldest says that is correct. However, the uranium is no longer powerful enough. At best, the ship runs at 40% of its maximum speed. Godspeed is not even halfway to its destination.

### Chapter 63: Amy

Amy and Steela see Doc. Doc gives three IVs to Steela, more than the others because she is on mental meds. By the time Amy leaves, Steela is vacant and unresponsive.

### Chapter 64: Elder

Eldest finally explains that the plague was nothing but a lie to cover up suicide, mutiny and riots caused when people learned the truth about not landing on schedule. The Plague Eldest played on the people's devotion to their children. He created the Season and also introduced Phydus into the water system. Phydus is a drug that overrides a person's emotions and eliminates individual thought. Eldest says it is the only way to survive.

### Chapter 65: Amy

Doc explains Phydus to Amy. Amy is outraged at the fact Eldest just does whatever he pleases and no one seems to have any desire or guts to stop him. Doc seems rather nonchalant about the entire process.

Amy watches as Steela's body becomes little more than a husk. Doc explains that Steela will die as will anyone Eldest deems to have lived beyond his or her usefulness.

### Chapter 66: Elder



Elder goes to see Amy. Amy is hysterical. She tells Elder about Steela. Elder tells Amy about his meeting with Eldest and how Phydus is used. The pair talks about Phydus. Amy is angry that the drug has been used on her.

Elder agrees to watch over Amy's parents while she rests.

Chapter 67: Amy

Amy works on her chart and tries to figure out the connection of the people who have been unplugged. Amy eventually falls asleep.

Chapter 68: Elder

Elder finds Harley by the hatch. Harley talks about never landing on Centauri Earth. Elder tells Harley to go back to his room and rest, that he will keep watch over Amy's parents. Harley is argumentative. Elder fashions a bed out of lab coats. When Elder wakes, there is red paint everywhere. He searches for Harley. Harley is at the hatch. Harley has broken the code box and says he can get closer. Before Elder can do anything, Harley is sucked out into space.

Chapter 69: Amy

Amy wakes with the paintbrush stuck to her face. She thinks how Harley would find it funny. She stares at the wall again and for the first time, finds a pattern. Amy takes Elder's advice and takes herself out of the equation in case her unplugging was an accident. The connection becomes clear. Each of the others belonged to the military. Amy begins to wonder if the murderer disconnected her by accident, thinking that he was disconnecting her father, who was also military.

Amy goes outside to find Harley and Elder. Orion stops her in the hall and gives her a painting from Harley. Amy is not surprised to learn that Harley has committed suicide.

Chapter 70: Elder

Amy is upset by Harley's death. She shares her insight with Elder about the deaths being connected to the military. Amy begins to wonder if Orion is involved in the unpluggings. If Orion had removed his wi-com chip, there would be no way to track his movements.

## Chapters 61-70 Analysis

More patterns begin to form. Amy finally sees the first connection between the frozens that have been unplugged. Amy is worried that her father was the initial target, which would mean that someone wants to kill off the military people. Amy worries that her father could still be in danger since it is known that she is the one who was unplugged.



Elder had been right to worry about Harley and the fact that he had not been taking his medication. Harley is not crazy but he is smart enough to realize the futility of the situation. His death is not a surprise; rather it seemed to be a matter of time.

It is an interesting coincidence that Amy and Elder learn about Phythus at the same time. Doc seems to be rather free with doling out proprietary information, particularly to a girl who could be dangerous. It is surprising that Amy has not been killed or at least drugged to keep order.

Amy's ideas about Orion's involvement make sense considering the man's stealthy behavior and appearances in strange places at strange times. Amy is turning into quite a sleuth. Amy seems to have been the only one who has noticed Orion's facial scar.



# Chapters 71-80

## Chapters 71-80 Summary

### Chapter 71: Amy

Amy and Elder go to the cryo level. Elder checks the floppy to see if Orion has been on the level. Elder discovers that Orion has found a way to trick the system into thinking he is Elder/Eldest. The system uses DNA so that is confusing to Elder.

Once in the cryo room, Amy runs to her parents' boxes. Her father's box has been pulled out. Amy panics. The light is still green, however. She returns her father's box to its chamber and closes the door. On the door is a bright red X.

Elder believes that Orion wants them to know he is involved. Orion has created some kind of test for Elder.

### Chapter 72: Elder

Amy and Elder hear a noise. They follow the noise to the lab where Eldest and Doc are standing near the water pump. Eldest and Doc argue. Eldest is angry because Doc told Amy about Phydus. Eldest says he should have listened, that Doc also should have killed the previous Elder. Doc talks about giving the previous Elder high doses of Phydus.

Elder steps out of the shadows. He tells Eldest that it has to stop. Giving Phydus to people is wrong. He tries to smash the pump but does not succeed. Elder and Eldest argue. Meanwhile, Amy rips out the wires of the pump.

### Chapter 73: Amy

Amy stands and watches as Elder and Eldest argue. Elder tells Eldest that he will not be a leader like him. Eldest tells Elder that he is an idiot and he cannot believe that they share the same DNA. Elder is confused. Eldest explains that all Eldests are exact clones of the ones that have gone before. Elder is a test tube baby. Things begin to make sense to Elder.

Orion appears. It becomes clear that Orion was the previous Elder which is how he had been able to trick the biometric scans. Orion dumps a bucket of Phydus on Eldest's head. Eldest dies.

### Chapter 74: Elder

Orion begins to lay out the master plan. Doc had known that Orion was not dead but had hoped that he had committed suicide. It had been easy for Orion to assume a new role on the ship. Orion is pleased that Elder is on his side.



Orion talks about the frozen and how they are the new colonists. The people on board the ship will be used as slaves. Amy argues but is unheard. Orion says Elder agrees with him. Orion also hints that it was Elder that unplugged Amy.

Elder realizes that Orion is just as crazy as Eldest. There is no way to keep him from killing the frozen. Elder pushes Orion into a cryo chamber and cranks up the dial.

Chapter 75: Amy

Elder is now Eldest. Amy promises to stay by his side. Elder tells Doc that there will be no more drugs.

Elder calls everyone to the Keeper Level for an announcement. He plans to tell them about the hormones, Season, the Phydus and the fact that they are severely behind schedule. He will announce that he is the new Eldest.

Amy goes to Recorder Hall. She begins to write out the entire story. She and Elder will work to correct the falsehoods listed as history. Amy begins to write to her parents.

Chapter 76: Elder

Elder thinks about sharing the same DNA as Eldest and Orion. Elder has no idea how he will lead Godspeed.

The Past Elder

Elder thinks about the time he first saw Amy in the box. He unplugged her, not knowing that Orion was watching. Elder thinks that he can never tell Amy the truth.

Chapter 77: Amy

Amy sits in front of the hatch staring at the stars. It has been a week since the drugs have stopped. People have begun to feel; to explore. Elder approaches Amy and sits down.

Chapter 78: Elder

Elder tells Amy he unplugged her.

Chapter 79: Amy

Amy is furious. She screams at Elder. She could have died. Elder has taken her away from everything she loved. Amy thinks that the ship is nothing but metal and lies.

Chapter 80: Elder

Elder explains that he did not know what he was doing. He thought Doc could refreeze her. Amy does not look up.



## Chapter 81: Amy

Amy feels desperate and alone. She asks Elder to stay with her. He says he will - always.

## Chapters 71-80 Analysis

The book comes to a swift conclusion. The previous Elder turns out to be Orion. That explains why Orion was always hiding and lurking as well as avoiding Doc and Eldest. Doc chose to turn a blind eye to many things, even those that were wrong or murderous.

Elder struggles - and will continue to struggle - with the fact that he is the same person as Eldest and Orion. Elder does not know how to lead and does not know how or if he can do it without Phydus.

Amy faces an entirely new life on board Godspeed. Her role as historian will be vitally important and it will be Amy who will keep Elder honest.



# Characters

## Elder/Eldest

Elder/Eldest is the name given to the ship's leaders. The Eldest is the main leader; Elder is a leader in training. Each Eldest/Elder is created in a lab on Godspeed. The DNA for all leaders is identical. In the story there are three Elder/Eldests.

Eldest is the ruler of the ship for the majority of the story. He is a gray haired man, age 56 years. Eldest has become a bit twisted with power and leadership. His manner is abrupt and he is a cold and cruel leader.

The first Elder, also known as Orion, was believed to be dead for the majority of the book. Although all of the Elder/Eldests share the same DNA, Orion had his own ideas. Eldest had sent him to be killed in the mental ward but Orion escaped and created a new identity for himself.

Elder, 16, is the youngest member on board Godspeed. Elder is often too curious for his own good, particularly when he unplugs Amy because he wants to meet her. At the end of the story, Elder has become Eldest.

## Amy Martin

Amy Martin is a 17 year old girl from Sol-Earth. She has red hair and green eyes, loves photography and marathon running. Amy also loves Jason, the boy she left behind to go on the Godspeed mission with her parents.

After deliberating life without her parents, Amy decides to become cryogenically frozen and sent into outer space where she would be reanimated 301 years in the future.

Amy is awakened when Elder, son of the ship's ruler, unplugs her. Amy might have died if someone had not been nearby to rescue her from the glass coffin where she lay in state.

Amy is a smart girl who is outraged, frightened, and perhaps too curious for her own good at times. Amy is also very independent and headstrong. It is Amy who plays a large part in unraveling the mysteries on board Godspeed. It will also be Amy who stays by Elder's side as he learns how to operate the ship.

## Harley

Harley is a painter and resident of the mental ward. He is Elder's best friend and also befriends Amy. Harley commits suicide when he learns the truth about the ship.



## **Orion**

Orion is the man in charge of Recorder Hall. Orion is the elder who was believed to have been killed by Doc.

## **Steela**

Steela is a former head of agriculture on board the ship. She is sent to the ward to be disposed of by Doc.

## **Robert Martin**

Robert "Bob" Martin is a sixth level military leader who is cryogenically frozen and taken aboard Godspeed. Bob is Amy's father.

## **Maria Martin**

Maria Martin is a gene splicer who is cryogenically frozen and taken aboard Godspeed. Maria is Amy's mother.

## **Victoria**

Victoria is a writer who is housed in the ship's mental ward.

## **Jason**

Jason is the boy with whom Amy had been in love on Sol-Earth.

## **Luthe**

Luthe is the Feeder who attempted to rape Amy in the wheat field.





# Objects/Places

## Godspeed

Godspeed is the name of the ship that serves as the background for the majority of the story. It is operated by Eldest, a leader who is the eldest of his generation. The people are treated like drones and are drugged into submission. The mission and the ship are both put into jeopardy when the truth begins to come out about manipulation, drugs, and murder.

The basis of the story and one of its main themes is the exploration of a new planet and planning for a future civilization. In the beginning of the story Amy talks about the alliance between government and business. Her parents agree with the government that it is the best way to combine government with industry to create optimum profits. The new system would seek out new, untapped natural resources. The top military people and scientists capable of making it happen are cryo frozen to create this new future.

Orion believes that the people who have been cryogenically frozen are going to be the colonists of the new planet and the residents of the Godspeed will be their slaves.

Amy explains what she knows about Godspeed: "They called it Project Ark Ship before I was frozen. All I know about it is that I'm on it. We're heading to a planet in the Centauri system that NASA discovered a few years before I was born. It's a generation ship - you are all supposed to have been born on the ship, keeping it running and all, until we get there and my parents and the rest of the people from the mission can terraform the new planet" (Chap. 17, p. 102).

The author describes Godspeed as having four levels, plus a secret level where the frozen are housed. The ship is completely self-contained.

## Earth

There are two versions of Earth mentioned in the story. One is Sol-Earth, which is the earth that is known to the reader. However, Sol-Earth has changed drastically. NASA discovered an inhabitable planet some 300 years away and decided that it could be inhabited - more successfully - than the current earth. The current earth struggles with environmental issues and many other problems that could be solved on a new planet. The new planet would allow select leaders to seek out new and untapped natural resources. The top military people and scientists capable of making it happen are cryo frozen to create this new future. Amy Martin's parents are top personnel and have been chosen to go into space. Amy goes along as "non-essential" cargo.

Centauri-Earth is the destination for Godspeed. Not much is known about Centauri-Earth, save for its location. The model of Centauri-Earth that resides in Recorder Hall is



almost a blank canvas. Eldest and the other officials on the ship prepare for all possible conditions on Centauri-Earth since it is impossible to gauge anything about the planet until Godspeed arrives.

## **Keeper Level**

The Keeper Level is where Elder and Eldest live. It is rarely accessed by the Feeders unless they are called upon by Eldest.

## **Feeders**

Feeders are the people who populate the general city. They are drones.

## **Garden**

The garden is one of Amy's favorite places. It was designed by Steela.

## **Shipper Level**

The Shipper Level is where the ship's operational center is located.

## **Cryo Level**

The Cryo Level is where the frozens are housed. It is broken into by Orion who unplugs the military members with the hope of keeping his people from becoming slaves.

## **Wi-Com**

The wi-com links are communications devices implanted into the heads of all people born on Godspeed.

## **Floppies**

Floppies are digital membrane devices used to locate people and to access information.

## **Hatch**

The hatch is the entrance/exit to Godspeed. Through the glass one can see the stars. It is opened when it is necessary to dispose of a body.

# Themes

## Rules

Adherence to the rules is one of the main themes in *Across the Universe* by Beth Revis. Despite any differences that exist between any members of the residents of Godspeed, there is always complete adherence to any rules put forth by Eldest, the eldest member of the ship's residents and its ruler. Godspeed is a generation ship, meaning that all of its inhabitants were born on the ship, except for the people who were cryogenically frozen. There is only Eldest's way. None of the people have ever experienced life outside of Godspeed and therefore have no knowledge that there might be another way to do things. Those who go against the norm are put into the mental ward and are treated as defectives.

Amy, Elder and Harley do not adhere to the rules. Amy is declared to be a freak; Harley is considered to be crazy; and Elder is said to have some mental problems although he is simply coming of age and testing his boundaries.

Punishment is harsh for those who do not adhere to the rules. This is well known, which is why there are no locked doors since no one would dare violate another's privacy. When Elder defies Eldest in the garden, Eldest punishes Elder by ordering a series of piercing tones and clicks to be played through his implanted wi-com chip. The sounds increase in volume until Elder finally does Eldest's will.

Eldest also shows that he is a ruthless man and will do anything to punish those who violate the rules, even if it means dumping a body into outer space.

## Future

The basis of the story and one of its main themes is the exploration of a new planet and planning for a future civilization. In the beginning of the story Amy talks about the alliance between government and business. Her parents agree with the government that it is the best way to combine government with industry to create optimum profits. The new system would seek out new, untapped natural resources. The top military people and scientists capable of making it happen are cryo frozen to create this new future.

The plan is to cryogenically freeze important high level scientists and military personnel and to send them aboard Godspeed, a ship that will land on a newly discovered planet 301 years in the future.

"They called it Project Ark Ship before I was frozen. All I know about it is that I'm on it. We're heading to a planet in the Centauri system that NASA discovered a few years before I was born. It's a generation ship - you are all supposed to have been born on the



ship, keeping it running and all, until we get there and my parents and the rest of the people from the mission can terraform the new planet" (Chap. 17, p. 102).

Amy sees a completely different concept of the future when she is awakened almost 50 years early by someone who has unplugged her glass box. The result is that Amy almost dies but then must face life on board a ship where everything has been homogenized and sterilized. Amy will also have to face this present - and future - without her parents.

## **Betrayal**

Betrayal and murder are prevalent on board Godspeed. Although the people have been created to avoid any type of discord, there are some who do not measure up to Eldest's standards. Many of those people, whether they are simply creative, intelligent or not compliant to the ways of the ship, are sent to a mental ward where they are considered to be defective. As such, little if any attention is paid to them and their ideas. They are also medicated to prevent problems.

There are several references to at least one person who has betrayed Eldest. A more common thread is the vast number of people who have been betrayed by Eldest and several Eldests before him. The Eldests are the ones who invented many lies told to the people, including the existence of the Plague, purpose of the Season, time the ship will land, the way the ship operates, the use of drugs to subdue people, and much, much more. Elder and Amy find these lies to be intolerable but the Eldest's power often seems to be absolute. There may be solutions to the problems on board the ship but Elder and Amy must uncover who can be trusted and who should be feared.



# Style

## Point of View

Across the Universe by Beth Revis is written in the first person point of view, through the eyes of the two main characters, Amy and Elder. The chapters alternate between each character, at first giving background information and establishing the characters in their separate worlds before coming together in the same place - Godspeed - the ship that launched almost three hundred years ago from Sol-Earth to begin a new civilization elsewhere.

The reader will most likely have the easiest time relating to Amy, at least at first, since she is someone from present day. Elder is from 250 years in the future and as such, has many different experiences from the reader.

The use of first person in the story works well in that the reader is able to understand the modern world of space travel and its advantages and pitfalls through the eyes two people from very different worlds. The reader is taken on a journey along with Amy and Elder and is given the opportunity to see inside the mind of an ordinary girl and the second in command of the people of Godspeed as they wend their way through a complicated scenario of betrayal, secrets, and an unknown future.

The use of first person also makes the story seem slightly less fantastic to the point that the reader can grasp what the future might be like if a ship such as Godspeed were to exist.

While third person omniscient may have enabled the reader to get a broader view of the life of an ordinary earthling and space royalty, the use of first person lends an air of authenticity to the story and allows the characters to become real.

## Setting

Godspeed is the name of the ship that serves as the setting for the majority of the story. It is operated by Eldest, a leader who is the eldest of his generation. The people are treated like drones and are drugged into submission. The mission and the ship are both put into jeopardy when the truth begins to come out about manipulation, drugs, and murder.

The basis of the story and one of its main themes is the exploration of a new planet and planning for a future civilization. In the beginning of the story Amy talks about the alliance between government and business. Her parents agree with the government that it is the best way to combine government with industry to create optimum profits. The new system would seek out new, untapped natural resources. The top military people and scientists capable of making it happen are cryo frozen to create this new future.



Orion believes that the people who have been cryogenically frozen are going to be the colonists of the new planet and the residents of the Godspeed will be their slaves.

Amy explains what she knows about Godspeed: "They called it Project Ark Ship before I was frozen. All I know about it is that I'm on it. We're heading to a planet in the Centauri system that NASA discovered a few years before I was born. It's a generation ship - you are all supposed to have been born on the ship, keeping it running and all, until we get there and my parents and the rest of the people from the mission can terraform the new planet" (Chap. 17, p. 102).

The author describes Godspeed as having four levels, plus a secret level where the frozen are housed. The ship is completely self-contained.

## Language and Meaning

The language used in *Across the Universe* by Beth Revis tends to be relatively informal and relies a great deal on dialogue between the characters, at least in the beginning. The language used by Amy and those around her is somewhat standard modern usage. However, when the reader is introduced to Elder, Eldest, and others aboard Godspeed, the language changes. The author introduces new slang terms like "frex" which is an expletive that takes the place of a common cuss word. The language between Elder and his father is much more formal than what is usual, perhaps in part because Eldest is in charge of the people on the ship and is a leader who commands authority and respect.

The reader is introduced to many new concepts through the eyes of Elder including the various items used on board the ship, such as a grav tube. However, the jargon used on is generally not difficult or something that requires much explanation. The things that must be explained are outlined or referenced in such a way that the reader can understand.

In general, the language used by the characters is very descriptive and is used in such a way that the person speaking makes clear the meaning and context of what is being said.

## Structure

*Across the Universe* by Beth Revis is a work of fiction. The book is 398 pages in length and is comprised of 81 chapters. The shortest chapter is one page in length; the longest chapter is 15 pages in length. The average length of a chapter is five pages.

The main storytellers in the book are Amy - the daughter of top level scientists who have been cryogenically frozen - and Elder, the son of Eldest, the leader of the people aboard Godspeed, a ship that launched 250 years before from Sol-Earth.

The book travels in chronological fashion. It begins with Amy and her parents being cryogenically frozen and placed in state to be taken aboard the Godspeed with the aim of beginning a new, more fruitful civilization. The story jumps ahead approximately 250 years when Elder is introduced. The story moves forward from that point. Elder discovers Amy and the others and the real story begins from that point.

The chapters alternate between each character, at first giving background information and establishing the character in their separate worlds before coming together in the same place - Godspeed - the ship that launched almost three hundred years ago from Sol-Earth to begin a new civilization elsewhere.



## Quotes

"Mom wanted me to go first. I think it was because she was afraid that after they were contained and frozen, I'd walk away, return to life rather than consign myself to that cold, clear box."

Chap. 1, p. 1

"People have been cryo frozen before me, and none of them were conscious. If the mind is frozen, it cannot be awake or aware."

Chap. 1, p. 12

"Godspeed isn't small - it was the largest ship ever built when it was launched two and a half centuries ago - but it's not so huge that we don't all feel the weight of the metal walls crushing us."

Chap. 2, p. 14

"Sometimes it feels like a thousand years have passed; sometimes it feels as if I've only been sleeping a few moments."

Chap. 3, p. 19

"When you take my role as Eldest, you must dedicate your whole life to this one idea: you are the caretaker of every single person on the ship. They are your responsibility. You can never show weakness in front of them; you are their strength. You can never let them see you despair; you are their hope. You must always be everything to everyone on board."

Chap. 4, p. 24

"I learned almost as soon as I started living on the Keeper level to keep my ideas to myself and my mouth shut."

Chap. 6, p. 34

"More than the sound of my own beating heart, I miss the sound of a ticking clock."

Chap. 11, p. 67

"The Plague Eldest, his concrete face upturned and his arms spread wide, stands benevolent over the garden. Time and scheduled rain has smoothed the face and hands, blurring the details of our greatest ruler."

Chap. 12, p. 72

"They called it Project Ark Ship before I was frozen. All I know about it is that I'm on it. We're heading to a planet in the Centauri system that NASA discovered a few years before I was born. It's a generation ship - you are all supposed to have been born on the ship, keeping it running and all, until we get there and my parents and the rest of the people from the mission can terraform the new planet."

Chap. 17, p. 102





"We can't do that,' the doctor says, and I totally forgive him for being creepy and threatening me with drugs."

Chap. 17, p. 107

"Come,' Eldest demands, and I know by the way he says it, as if he's a master speaking to a slave, that he means me and not Doc."

Chap. 24, p. 145

"Part of me is very glad that Amy doesn't know what Eldest has said. But Harley has always been this way, for as long as I've known him. He thinks ignorance is the best way to protect someone, and he doesn't understand that what we imagine is often worse than the truth."

Chap. 28, p. 160

"You do what you have to do, whether you like it or not. There's nothing to be proud of, not as Eldest. There's never a right answer. Just keep them alive. It doesn't matter how. Just keep the frexing ship alive."

Chap. 34, p. 196



## Topics for Discussion

Discuss Elder's reasons for unplugging Amy. Was it an impetuous move? Did Elder have good reasons? How does Elder explain? What might have happened if Amy had died?

What might have happened if Eldest had lived? Would there have been a chance that the ship could have operated under his rule with a lack of Phydus?

Discuss your thoughts on Orion's plans to kill the military frozens. Do you think Orion had a point or was he insane? What were the opinions of the others?

Do you think Harley was crazy? Why did Harley commit suicide? Do you think anyone could have stopped him?

Explain your thoughts on the Plague. What might have been a better lie? How might people find out the truths being hidden from them now that Eldest is dead?

What do you think will happen between Amy and Elder? Will Amy be permitted to have an official presence as a leader?

Discuss what might occur during the next twenty years aboard Godspeed. What challenges will be faced? How will they be solved?