

# **Children of the New World Study Guide**

**Children of the New World by Alexander Weinstein**

(c)2017 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



# Contents

<a href="#">Children of the New World Study Guide.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Plot Summary.....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">“Saying Goodbye to Yang”.....</a>	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">“The Cartographers”.....</a>	<a href="#">8</a>
<a href="#">“Heartland”.....</a>	<a href="#">11</a>
<a href="#">“Excerpts from The New World Authorized Dictionary”.....</a>	<a href="#">14</a>
<a href="#">“Moksha”.....</a>	<a href="#">16</a>
<a href="#">“Children of the New World”.....</a>	<a href="#">19</a>
<a href="#">“Fall Line”.....</a>	<a href="#">22</a>
<a href="#">“A Brief History of the Failed Revolution”.....</a>	<a href="#">25</a>
<a href="#">“Migration”.....</a>	<a href="#">27</a>
<a href="#">“The Pyramid and the Ass”.....</a>	<a href="#">30</a>
<a href="#">“Rocket Night”.....</a>	<a href="#">33</a>
<a href="#">“Openness”.....</a>	<a href="#">35</a>
<a href="#">“Ice Age”.....</a>	<a href="#">37</a>
<a href="#">Characters.....</a>	<a href="#">40</a>
<a href="#">Symbols and Symbolism.....</a>	<a href="#">44</a>
<a href="#">Settings.....</a>	<a href="#">47</a>
<a href="#">Themes and Motifs.....</a>	<a href="#">50</a>
<a href="#">Styles.....</a>	<a href="#">56</a>
<a href="#">Quotes.....</a>	<a href="#">58</a>

# Plot Summary

NOTE: Citations in this Study Guide refer to the following version of this book: Weinstein, Alexander. *Children of the New World*. Picador, September 2016. (Paper Edition).

Alexander Weinstein's *Children of the New World* is a fragmented collection of vivid short stories. Each tale takes place in the not-too-distant future starting from 2026 and moving forward into an unknown time. Each story details existence in a futuristic society where life is fast-paced and complicated and where society is trying to find its place within the technology that has been developed.

The reader gets a sense that each of these stories actually takes place within the same world and follows a chronological pattern, despite the lack of years presented in most stories. The first clue readers get about the timing of these stories is in the chapter titled "Excerpts from The New World Authorized Dictionary." Here, readers are informed that this story takes place around 2026. The timeline continues when, four stories later in "A Brief History of the Failed Revolution," the author uses fictional citation ranging from 2028 to 2034.

There are 13 short stories in total. The majority of them zero in on one character and his or her life. In a number of the stories, readers are not made privy to the names or genders of the narrators. Additionally, many of the stories do not indicate an exact setting. However, this does not dull any imagery or personal connection to the characters. Weinstein places a focus on humanity and human feelings within each story presented within the collection.

In the first story, titled "Saying Goodbye to Yang," readers are immediately made aware that this futuristic society has embraced advanced technology because Yang is a robotic brother purchased to keep the narrator's daughter happy and comforted. The progression of technology continues in further stories, "The Cartographers," "Moksha," "Children of the New World," "Migration," "The Pyramid and the Ass," and "Openness," where people have switched from receiving comfort from robots to seeking comfort in virtual reality. In this future world, people are using virtual reality to remember things that never really happened to them. For example, "The Cartographers" focuses on an engineer who programs virtual memories which are then uploaded into people's minds. For people who want to manufacture inner peace instead of memories, "Moksha" offers enlightenment in the form of virtual reality. But these interactions are not always positive. In "Children of the New World," readers meet a childless couple that struggles for affection in the real world yet enjoys family time when they get online. They have created virtual children and the couple spends their evenings with the children online. However, their curiosity for the unknown possibilities hiding in the darker sides of this world eventually lead to heartache that breaches the digital world and entrenches itself in their lives.



While technological advancements play a large part in each story, one in particular hones in on the ethics behind these new inventions. Scientists and developers have found a way to embed information into a person's consciousness. They want to connect to the innermost part of a person's soul. This brings about quite the controversy in "A Brief History of the Failed Revolution." This unique story provides readers with an objective academic paper where fictional sources are cited in such a way that readers feel they are learning more about the progression of Weinstein's society.

The author's world is bleak and at times dystopian, with heavy threads of disappointment and hurt throughout. In "Heartland," a struggling father wonders how he will ever be able to provide for his family, while Ronnie Hawks in "Fall Line" does not think he will ever be able to be himself again. Many of the characters find themselves isolated despite the fact that other humans surround them. In "Openness," the main character, Andy, struggles to open up to his new girlfriend. In his world, everyone holds their own memory data in their bodies and chooses how much of it to share with others. Andy's girlfriend encourages him to completely open up to her, but the consequences of such an act leave him crushed and alone. The narrator in "Heartland" finds himself as an out-of-work father of two who feels lost in the world he is living in.

Many of the characters venture out in search of themselves, either virtually or physically. In "Moksha," Abe travels all the way to Kathmandu, Nepal in search of instant enlightenment and self-awareness. However, the further Abe ventures away from where he started, the more he realizes just how good he had it before he left. He longs to be back home—back in the same dorm room with the same girlfriend talking about the same things he used to. Readers see this feeling in a number of the stories, where, despite their efforts, the characters just want to be back home with a person who loves and accepts them. In "Heartland," the failed father drives home drunk in order to get back to the family he wants to be with. In "Migration," a father struggles to connect with his son. In the end, they find a connection through throwing a ball against the wall of an abandoned Toys R Us store. Adam, in "The Cartographers," misses the simplicity of enjoying friends and a lover in his life, while Andy, in "Openness" wants to go back to a simpler time.

The greatest difference in tone comes in the final story titled "Ice Age." Readers find themselves in a futuristic world that has lost all technology. The few survivors, who have managed to make it through the initial freezing over, find themselves back in a world of hunting and gathering. There are no electricity or creature comforts in this world. The characters in this story live in primitive igloos and struggle to stay alive. However, the story ends with a line that something spoils, ". . . what was once our community" (226). Gordon, the main character, witnesses how quickly a strong-knit community of people can untether with the promise of even just a few comforts from the old world. Loyalty runs thin in "Ice Age" and technology has somehow been lost.



# “Saying Goodbye to Yang”

## Summary

“Saying Goodbye to Yang” is related from a first-person limited point of view. The unnamed narrator is married to a woman named Kyra. The couple has adopted a Chinese daughter and purchased a robot from Brothers & Sisters Inc. that looks Chinese and comes loaded with facts and information about China and the culture. In the opening scene, the robot/brother, Yang, malfunctions. The narrator quickly shuts Yang down, but the robot will not turn back on. The parents decide to take Yang to a repair shop. This robot cost them \$8,000 and they don't have enough money to buy a new one.

The narrator drags Yang's limp body to the first repair shop, a place recommended by a neighbor named George. We learn that George has two cloned daughters, a family choice which the narrator strongly opposes for ethical reasons. The narrator does not like George very much and continues to reference George's habit of painting his face for Superbowls as an indication that George is emotionally detached from the hardship of losing a son like Yang. A man named Ross is working at the repair shop George suggested for Yang. Ross is openly racist against all Asian cultures and comments that Asians are the “same thing” (9). The narrator feels very uncomfortable in this run-down repair shop. Ross tells the narrator that Yang is dead and needs to be recycled. The narrator does not like this answer and takes Yang to a more mainstream repair shop, where they tell him the same thing.

The narrator spends much of his time that day reflecting on his personal relationship with Yang. He remembers trying to bond with Yang as if he was the narrator's son, but Yang was too robotic to establish any true connection. The narrator does not want to lose Yang because his daughter, Mika, has bonded so strongly with her older brother. Additionally, Yang serves as both a teacher and a babysitter for Mika, so they don't know what they will do to take care of Mika without Yang. Yang is taken back home. His voice box and memory system are intact and detached while the body is buried in the backyard. The family has a funeral for Yang the next day. George and his family leave a bouquet of flowers at their front door, which surprises the narrator who thinks lowly of him. They take the flowers inside and put them next to a picture of the family with Yang. Mika talks to Yang's voice box, which responds to her with a fact about The Great Wall of China, and the family is comforted. The narrator completes this tale by acknowledging “how little [he] truly know[s] about this world” (22).

## Analysis

A major theme in this short story is the idea that intolerance is often based off of incorrect biases and that it harms people who it is aimed at. Weinstein depicts several characters as being intolerant for different reasons. First and foremost, the obvious



person who practices intolerance is the mechanic Ross. He remarks that Koreans and Chinese are all the “same thing” (9), and Ross has a poster up in his shop that states, “There ain’t no yellow in the red, white, and blue” (11). The color yellow here is being used as a racial slur to refer to the skin color of Asian people. The fact that Yang is designed to look Chinese and has information about China stored in him makes the narrator feel uneasy about the care Ross will give his son. On top of Yang’s possible mistreatment, the narrator feels uneasy because his own adopted daughter is from China. This obvious and outward racism makes the narrator feel very uncomfortable.

However, the narrator himself is shown as quite intolerant. Several times throughout this story the narrator judges his neighbor, George. George has cloned daughters, and the narrator is opposed to cloning. It seems as though this is an option for making a family, but both the narrator and his wife, Kyra, are against it. The narrator does not want his daughter raised by, “some clone from the neighborhood” (4). They consider people who make cloned children to be “egocentric” (4). The narrator even assumes negative things about George because of his life choices. It is George’s genuine acts of compassion which surprise the narrator most. When the narrator is taking Yang to the car in the morning, it is George who suggests a cheaper mechanic. When the narrator arrives with a dead Yang, it is George who consoles him by apologizing and putting his hand on the narrator’s shoulder. It is George and his family who leave the flowers on the doorstep during Yang’s funeral as a symbol of their sympathy and support. These are acts the narrator never assumed would have come from George. He assumed that George, with his cloned daughter and love of the Superbowl, would be unemotional and not very supportive. We never learn if George picks up on the narrator’s bias or not, but we see that the narrator learns to admit that there is, “little I truly know about this world” (22).

This quote is a play on words because it is both a direct and an indirect reference. On the surface, the narrator is celebrating the fact that Yang is such a knowledgeable addition to the family. The narrator managed to keep Yang’s memories and information, so they are still able to learn fun facts about China and the culture. However, on a deeper level, the narrator is lamenting the fact that he judged George and his family so harshly. There is even a possible sense of remorse that the narrator distrusted Ross to the point where he was unable to return to Ross and have Yang disassembled for less money. The narrator feels that he must open up more and be more understanding as a way to learn more about the world around him, which he judges harshly.

The narrator spends a lot of time remembering his activities with Yang. The reader gets the sense that the narrator took Yang for granted and that he did not realize just how much he cared for this machine that could not truly smile when happy. The narrator remembers trying to bond with Yang like he was a son. However, Yang’s robotic, early-model movements and speech made the narrator feel uncomfortable. We learn that the narrator gave up trying to do things with Yang. But Yang’s bedroom shows hints that the narrator should not have given up. In his bedroom, Yang has a baseball glove alongside a baseball team’s banner. This was the only game the narrator ever took Yang to. While the narrator assumed that Yang did not enjoy his time and so, in turn, stopped taking him places, it appears as though Yang had fond enough memories to keep those items on display in his bedroom. The reader gets a sense too that the narrator feels he was a



bad father to Yang, and the hints of Yang reminiscing of a time when his “father” paid attention to him help confirm the narrator’s fears.

Humans bonding with AI machines is a common motif in television shows and movies today. In this story, the focus is on a relationship between a parent and a machine purchased as a babysitter and cultural mentor. The narrator did not realize how much Yang meant to him until it was too late. This personal feeling is overshadowed by the parents’ worry for who will take care of their daughter now that Yang is gone. Yang has acted as a caretaker for years now, allowing the parents to work full shifts and bring money home. Now that Yang is gone, the parents must scramble to find a person who can take care of Mika. Again, we see George show neighborly compassion when he volunteers his home and his wife as a caretaker. There is a strong sense of community at the end of this story. The family has lost Yang, but they have support from outside offering to help them through this difficult loss.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Why does the narrator consider robotic family members to be okay while cloned family members are not okay?

## **Discussion Question 2**

What is the narrator trying to insinuate when he repeats the fact that his neighbor George watches a lot of football?

## **Discussion Question 3**

What evidence do we have that Yang enjoyed being the son of the narrator?

## **Vocabulary**

concussive, wake, placid



# “The Cartographers”

## Summary

This short story is related from a first-person limited point of view, told by the narrator, Adam Woods. Adam, along with people named Quimbly and Barrett, form a team that carefully designs memories for people called beamed memories. They design everything from births of children to skydiving to family vacations. They call themselves mapmakers and pride themselves in quality work. Quimbly chooses to manufacture dark and painful memories for people. Adam does not like this change, and he often leaves the office to get breaks from the darkness. Adam meets a woman named Cynthia while trying to venture away from Quimbly’s dark memories. Cynthia is different from anyone Adam knows. She does not beam her memories because she lives her own. She does not use technology or hook up to technology in any way. She reads paper books and writes in journals with a pen. They fall in love and move in together.

A customer complains about one of their manufactured memories. As a result, Quimbly requests that each of them beam each other’s memories for quality control. However, we learn that beaming too often can have negative side effects on a person, making them unable to distinguish between real memories and beamed ones. Distance grows between Adam and Cynthia. Quimbly makes the decision to include ad sales in the memories—a decision which distances him from Adam. Customers become angry at this inclusion and they stop purchasing memories made by the team. The business dissolves. Cynthia breaks up with Adam because she knows he is addicted to beaming. Adam spends weeks alone at his home doing nothing but beaming until he has no clue who he truly is. He finds a number in his phone marked as “home” and calls it to ask if he can come home.

Adam moves into his parents’ basement in New York City. He stops beaming and has to work very hard to figure out his true memories again. But the further he gets away from his memories, the more Adam begins to understand that his relationship with Cynthia was never real. It was a beamed memory from the start, designed by Quimbly as one of his dark memories. Despite knowing this, Adam continues to write love letters to Cynthia in the hope that he will be able to feel loved again.

## Analysis

Weinstein masks the work of Adam Woods in order to craft a strong theme of the fragility of one’s own memories. In this story, memories are depicted as precious although they are manipulated by Adam and his team. Memories have become a hot commodity in Adam’s world, not because people need them, but because the population wants to feel as if they have experienced amazing things. Adam becomes dependent upon these beamed memories in order to feel whole. He has Cynthia, a person who Adam believes to be helping him make genuine memories but Cynthia is not enough.





Adam feels the need for more exciting memories in more exotic locations. This proves that Adam, like many of the population alluded to in this story, only increases his demand for excitement.

One rather strong comment being made by Weinstein is the idea that the general population is too busy to create actual meaningful memories on their own. Instead of going on a family vacation, an event which can take days out of one's life, people now prefer to download the memory to feel equally satisfied. Readers are left to ponder what their own interaction with this technology would be if it were real. A common message about society in general is that everyone is busier than ever and more stressed than ever before. In this short story, people remain busy but they are left with the satisfying feeling that they did something relaxing or exciting. Everyone is allowed to get whichever type of break they feel they need without putting any effort in at all. This could be a nod to much of the smart technology we deal with today—machines that do tasks for us. In the story, people are depicted as wanting a quick fix of happiness instead of working hard to find the real thing. Adam is elated to find Cynthia, a woman who goes against everything his life currently stands for. There is a strong difference between the memories Adam beams and the real memories he makes with Cynthia. This establishment of such a stark difference is what makes way for Weinstein to draft a truly depressing ending to this story. Adam is already wrecked. He is at his lowest point when he calls a person who he assumes is his mother. An added layer of pity is established when the reader learns that Adam will never be able to get Cynthia back because Cynthia is a manufactured memory, beamed from Quimbly's imagination. The reader would expect this revelation to destroy Adam, but, looking at the story itself, that is not the case. Adam does not react with heavy emotions about the loss of the reality of Cynthia because everything else in his memory is a lie. Learning that Cynthia is also a beamed memory just adds to Adam's pile. He is not overly hurt, nor does he appear to be excessively surprised to learn that he was never actually in love.

However, while Adam is not upset about the fact that his girlfriend was never real, he continues to write the love letters, indicating that he has lost touch with reality. Adam knows it is illogical to communicate with someone who does not exist, but he writes the letters anyway. He chooses to pretend that Cynthia will read them. This is perhaps the largest indication that Adam's grip on reality is truly lost. He comments, "I sit, pen in hand, trying to remember what love felt like" (39). He does not actually want to get Cynthia back, yet he wants to get the positive feelings back. We get a bit of foreshadowing about the loss of reality when Adam's partner, Barrett, believes himself to be God. Earlier, Adam and Quimbly discover that Barrett has been beaming too often and has been making memories in secret. Barrett goes crazy to the point where he is taken away and hospitalized. We witness Adam's descent into madness through beaming, but it is a slow process so we do not fully recognize it until the final section of the story. Quimbly has successfully encouraged both Barrett and Adam to beam enough to the point where they have lost any sense of their own reality. Adam even comments that he ". . . looked up from the floorboards where I'd been staring, thinking about the years I'd spent in the war" (36). However, prior to this, he asked Cynthia if he was ever truly in Afghanistan and she responded that he wasn't born yet. Here, we see a beamed



memory, which has rooted in Adam's memory so deeply that he does not know whether or not it is real.

Something else to note here is Weinstein's play on the word "memory" within this story. He uses the word memory throughout the story as a way to emphasize the core of the tale he is weaving. We see this first when Adam laments his breakup with Cynthia: ". . . realizing the life we'd created together was now only a memory" (36). Later on, Quimbly says to Adam, "Go visit [Barrett]. Refresh your memory of what happens when you lose track" (37). This is an interesting choice of phrase. To refresh one's memory is, of course, correct usage here, but it is also intentionally done to sprinkle the word memory more throughout the story. This play on the word is also seen in Cynthia's goodbye letter to Adam: "I'm done. Goodbye, Adam. Thanks for the memories. Sorry you liked yours better" (38). Everything in this story centers around making, manufacturing, and losing memories.

## Discussion Question 1

What is ironic about Adams relationship with Cynthia?

## Discussion Question 2

Why does Quimbly create Cynthia with the personality traits she possesses? In what ways is she tailor-made for Adam?

## Discussion Question 3

What evidence do we have that Quimbly's creation of Cynthia is his attempt to prevent Adam from having a break down like Barrett?

## Vocabulary

tarpapered, caipirinhas, timbre, ribbed, satori, taciturn



# “Heartland”

## Summary

This story is told from a first-person limited point of view by an unnamed narrator. The narrator feels lost and hopeless. He lost his job one year ago for punching his boss after the boss made a nasty comment about his daughter. Since then, the narrator has been blackballed, causing a huge strain on the family and on his marriage. The narrator’s wife, Cara, is home alone most days and feels overwhelmed with taking care of the children. The narrator takes his son, Sam, on a television show where he is competing for money and for the hope of getting a television-acting job. Sam blows his chance, which means no money for the family, and the narrator is very disappointed at his whole situation. He brings Sam home and quickly leaves the house to get a beer at a local bar, leaving Cara upset and alone while she is nursing their daughter, Laurie.

At the bar, the narrator laments over his situation with a friend who encourages him to move his family away in order to find employment. The friend also offers an email address of a person who will purchase naked children’s photos for quick cash. The friend gives the email to the narrator in case he wants to make money this way later. The narrator drives home drunk and observes how truly ugly this world is. He dreams that he lives a happier life, in a happier marriage, in a green place where Sam can “. . . trust he will protect him against the monsters of this world” (55).

## Analysis

To say this story is fatalistic would be a massive understatement. The unnamed narrator is completely hopeless. He has lost everything he used to have, including a happy marriage. He sees the world as a place which is being destroyed—as a thing being killed slowly. The reader observes this extremely negative outlook in the first paragraph of the story when the narrator comments that he does not want to get emotional about Sam’s loss of TV because he does not want to be “one of the usual schmucks on TV crying” (41). The narrator continues to fight back his misdirected anger but he says hurtful things to both his son, Sam, and his wife, Cara. With Sam, the narrator manages to hold himself quite well, but he lets loose on his wife after he arrives home. Everything his wife does angers him. Everything she says or asks for causes the narrator to feel enraged. He is not home for very long before he intentionally drinks a beer in front of his wife, which is something the two have fought over in the past. He does not try to comfort Cara because the narrator cannot comfort himself. He needs support but he does not know how to ask for it. However, he admits that he needs support with Jim at the bar. Jim offers two pieces of advice, both of which are rejected. The reader expects this struggling father to reject the option of selling his children’s photos for child porn, but the narrator also rejects the option of moving away. He comes up with quick excuses for why he cannot move his family or change careers. It appears as though the narrator wants to change his situation without actually changing anything himself. Instead, he



wants an easy fix like his son getting a job on television or winning game show money for the family.

We can see that the narrator loves his family. After all, he loses his job when his boss makes fun of his daughter's looks. The narrator wants great things for his family, but he does not know how to provide them. The final two paragraphs of this story are the most telling. Here the narrator fantasizes about the life he wants to give his family, although he does not actually take any action to make those changes. The last sentence of this story contains the idea that the narrator wishes he could be the type of father whose son ". . . trusts he will protect him against the monsters of this world" (55). Directly, this quote relates to protecting his son from people who would buy child porn. However, there are multiple meanings one can interpret from this thought. To begin, the narrator himself feels like a monster. He does not provide the type of stable and happy home he wishes he could give his children. He tries to be kind, but he fails each and every day. This makes the narrator feel as if he is a monster who needs to be kept away from his son. The narrator is also referring to the evil state of the world. Earlier, he comments that, "We're done for" (51). He sees the world as collapsing. He sees the state of the world as an evil, or as a monster, that he wants to protect his son from. This narrator is struggling with his own demons, but it takes alcohol and away-time to fully realize what he wants to provide.

It may appear that there is not an incredible amount of action in this story. This is because the setting is one of the main characters. Weinstein describes this town as having constant rain and piles of clay. Mysterious companies have come and carted off everyone's topsoil, leaving the town filled with pits. The word "pit" is of importance since this is often a word used to describe a place where many people are buried. Pit is not a word that evokes a feeling of hope or security. The town they are living in seems to be forcing the narrator to sink, just as his boots sink in his clay-covered backyard. Everything about the setting is wet and murky and dirty. This adds to the visualization of the narrator's dark and murky personality along with his hopeless feelings toward life.

## Discussion Question 1

This story provides a lot of internal thoughts and feelings about the narrator. However, what can we infer about the thoughts and feelings of his wife, Cara? What evidence do her words and actions provide about her attitude and outlook?

## Discussion Question 2

Why does the narrator examine the breathing chest of his son in the final scene of this story?



## Discussion Question 3

The narrator claims to have an innumerable amount of obstacles blocking him from success. Which obstacles are actual and which are in the narrator's mind?

## Vocabulary

schmucks, flush, stout



# “Excerpts from The New World Authorized Dictionary”

## Summary

This story stands in contrast to the previous stories in both its structure and style. There is no narrator in this story, nor is there an actual story. Instead, this story is comprised of a collection of fictional transcripts, articles, blogs, and statements all circling around a few seemingly related issues. The story takes place after 2026 because many of the sources are dated as being published at that time.

There are many new trends happening with technology and young people. In particular, there is a high amount of experimentation with things that alter reality for the user. This chapter introduces some new terms, such as “brainflea,” with commentary related to that information. Weinstein nods at the previous short story, “The Cartographers,” when he mentions that a person named Quimbly creates brainfleas, or digital advertisements that last the blink of an eye but are projected and remain on the memory of that blink. Human beings are all living near each other while avoiding any real interactions with one another.

Another large chunk of this chapter addresses warfare. There is a new weapon being used in Turkey called the orange-blossom, which uses phosphorous as a weapon. This information does not seem connected to any of the other technological advances described other than the fact that it spurs a fashion trend in the young population not fighting overseas. People outside of the warzone are wearing something called “urban outfitting,” a style of clothing that makes it appear as if you are prepared for battle.

## Analysis

This chapter illustrates Weinstein’s opinions about what society will look like by the year 2026 and beyond. The technologies depicted in this chapter are largely gadgets, which the public thinks are helping them improve their lives when really they are simply allowing people to find new ways of ignoring each other.

On the surface, this chapter seems a bit unrelated. After all, the frantic transitions between definitions of sex positions to interviews with rappers followed by testimonials about social rejection due to flagging seem to be unrelated to each other. To fully understand the purpose of this chapter we must think about the overall theme of the stories prior to this. So far, each story has made it clear that readers have been thrust into a futuristic world. Readers do not know when this futuristic world is set, but this chapter indicates that these stories hover around the year 2026. We know that these stories take place in roughly the same time period because Weinstein includes a nod to Quimbly, the antagonist from the story titled “The Cartographers.” Here, Quimbly has



moved onto the job he left Adam Woods for. However, this is a very important clue because it indicates that these stories, while seemingly disconnected, are all taking place during the same future time period. That means the reader can gather information and carry details throughout the rest of the book.

The people in this futuristic society are all very connected to their own personal technology. No one seems to be connected to other humans. The tech gadgets that have come out allow people to recede into themselves and literally filter out people they do not think they want to meet. This comment on the future society is rather directly related to the warnings people receive about technology use today. However, in Weinstein's world, this technology has truly taken over.

## **Discussion Question 1**

How does the information in this chapter connect with information in the previous chapters?

## **Discussion Question 2**

Use evidence from this chapter to discuss how the people in this futuristic society view war. How are their perceptions of war different from those today?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Which forms of social media available to us today have something in common with the technology cited in this chapter?

## **Vocabulary**

ocular, invasiveness, occipital, quadrant



# “Moksha”

## Summary

This story is told in a first-person limited point of view from the perspective of a man named Abe. Abe is in search of enlightenment by hooking up to a machine. One of these virtual experiences is called “Moksha,” and it is something Abe wants to experience badly enough that he breaks up with his girlfriend Sandra, drops out of college, and travels to Kathmandu, Nepal.

In this world, Abe knows that the US government has “. . . strong armed Easter religions” (69), which is why he decides to travel so far away. It takes him a while, but, while in Nepal, Abe finds a place willing to offer Moksha. He tries it and feels a phenomenal experience. However, this feeling of love and elation fades quickly, leaving Abe returning for more Moksha.

A tourist tells Abe to visit a distant temple called Muktinath in order to get better Moksha and better enlightenment. While there, Abe still feels a bit empty. However, he decides to leave because he has no more money. He decides to visit an ancient and holy waterfall nearby, but he is disappointed when the only thing he feels there is a dissatisfaction with the icy cold water.

## Analysis

Moksha is a real word in Hinduism and Jainism that means to release oneself from the cycle of rebirth impelled by the law of karma. It can be considered a liberation from the cycle of rebirth and reincarnation. However, it is plain to see that Abe gets nowhere near this state, despite the large sums of money he pays to get there.

This is yet another story where the reader sees members of society taking lazy shortcuts when they have the ability to complete tasks themselves. At the very end of the story, Abe makes the comment: “The water, it turned out, was freezing” (81). Abe cannot enjoy this spiritual experience because he is not spiritually connected or in tune with the world around him. He has not completed any of the personal steps involved to achieve actual enlightenment, so his focus is in all the wrong places.

During this walk, Abe is daydreaming about how happy he would be back in his dorm room with Sandra. Abe even remarks that this feeling of happiness was “. . . done back in the days when he was unenlightened” (81). He has come all this way and spent all of his money to find enlightenment and yet he hopes this journey will bring him right back to where he started. The question then remains: Why bother taking this journey in the first place? Abe would have been happier staying put and holding onto the precious things he had in his life rather than ditching those things in an effort to try Moksha. He has convinced himself that this easy form of technology is the best way to feel more





connected, but he tries to find these synthetic connections by separating himself from any real ones.

A similar feeling of wastefulness is illustrated when, earlier in the story, Abe comments that, "He'd risked his freedom for a split-second vision of his mother in the kitchen" (69). In reality, Abe's mother is alive. He can visit her anytime he wants. Yet instead of visiting his mother in person and watching her in the kitchen while he is in her home, Abe chooses to find an illegal and underground Moksha location. He continues to look for artificial places instead of finding real feelings that are available to him.

A major theme in this anthology is the danger of becoming dependent on synthetic experiences. The author makes nods to this particular laziness in previous stories. In particular, the stories titled "The Cartographers" and "Excerpts from The New World Authorized Dictionary" have characters that choose lazy shortcuts for synthetic happiness. Even the supporting characters in the story "Moksha" are lazy. Abe reports that none of the so-called enlightenment seekers wanted to make the trek to a holy fountain. Instead, Abe observes that ". . . they stayed on the porch smoking joints or sung by the fireplace" (79). This shows how fake and lazy the enlightenment seekers are in this story. They want to pay for quick fixes instead of working for true enlightenment. This is yet another example of false memory created through shortcuts to reach happiness and fulfillment.

This story centers around the idea of enlightenment because it is the most opposite idea from what Abe and the others are trying to do. To people who take part in this lifestyle, enlightenment is a lifetime achievement and a constant struggle. It is something which is deeply personal and requires a lot of focus, hard work, and dedication. The characters in this story want nothing to do with the hard work associated with true enlightenment. There is even a humorous poke at this mentality when Weinstein writes that one of the tourists at Abe's temple leaves for Goa because she hears that there are great "trance raves" (78). The idea of a rave being involved with true enlightenment is quite contradictory, and it is this juxtaposition that adds to a bit of playfulness in this story.

The final line of this story can be considered a strong metaphor for the outcome of a person who chooses to take the lazy path Abe takes. He finds himself in search of an authentic experience. Abe thinks he is enlightened enough to participate in a truly spiritual event. He can only think of two things: he wants to be back in the dorm with his girlfriend where he started and that the water is cold. This comment proves that Abe is nowhere near actual enlightenment. He has experienced something euphoric by paying people to hook him up to a computer, but he does not have the personal skills to appreciate an actual spiritual event. Abe has replaced reality with technology.



## Discussion Question 1

Abe thrusts himself into a subculture that is obsessed with finding spiritual awakenings through technology. How do people in this culture view spiritual awakening and awareness? How do they use it as a symbol of status?

## Discussion Question 2

Was Abe's journey worth it if he desires going back and returning to his life before he left? Why or why not?

## Discussion Question 3

Why does Abe's spiritual experience and elation from Moksha fade so quickly? What is the larger message being delivered here?

## Vocabulary

mate, gourd, cannibalized, thangka, kundalini, rapture, disemboweled, dharma, ashram, sadhus, chillums

# “Children of the New World”

## Summary

In “Children of the New World,” an unnamed narrator tells the story of how he and his wife enter a virtual reality world, make two children together, find digitally-based happiness, and then are forced to reboot their corrupted system. This all sounds very common with computers today, but the difference is that the rebooting of their system means that they have to delete, or kill off, the children they have created.

The couple spends a lot of time on something called “New World.” Here, they touch each other and experience the passionate lives they do not live in person. They learn how to work the system and the wife, Mary, gets pregnant. The couple produces two virtual, but realistic, feeling children named June and Oscar. The narrator and his wife become bored and decide to explore a place called “Dark City.” This setting is part of the same simulation but is designated for dangerous or sexual acts.

Shortly after visiting Dark City for the first time, the couple begins to notice viruses appearing in their virtual world. A naked man appears in their bathroom and another man rings their doorbell asking for information and money from them. The narrator learns that his account has been corrupted. All files must be deleted for a restart. The couple attends a support group with other people who have lost their digital children to computer viruses. The story concludes with the narrator and his wife at a support group meeting hugging other people who are hurting in the same way they are.

## Analysis

The author employs a great deal of foreshadowing in this story. Readers are left wondering why the main characters are “wondering whether we are truly monsters” (83). The narrator and his wife ask for each other’s confirmation when they say, “They weren’t real, we say, looking for confirmation. Right? Right.” (83). This dialogue takes place at the very beginning of the story and causes readers to read on with curiosity. It seems clear that the main characters did something which causes them pain and feelings of regret now. They feel as if they did something evil, but readers are unsure of what they did. The placement of this foreshadowing allows for readers to sympathize with the characters’ pain before understanding their actions.

After completing the story, many readers will feel sorry for the parents. They are so hurt by this event that they attend sad group therapy sessions. However, when readers take a step back and think about why these things happened to them, they may see the parents differently. On the surface, the narrator and his wife have made two babies on accident and without knowing why. They choose not to delete the files because they are curious. At first, it is not because of any love or desire to be a parent. However, the introduction of viruses into their happy family is entirely because of their own inability to



connect with one another in real life. The couple seeks intimacy and sexual pleasure from the virtual world and ignores each other when they are in the real world. This selfish desire is what leads to the children being harmed and, eventually, deleted. Looking at the story from this perspective, readers can argue that this tale is about selfish parents who only seek their pleasure. However, Weinstein weaves this narrative in a way that draws out sympathy from readers, who are left viewing this couple as sad and stifled and, now, childless.

The narrator alludes to something bad his wife and he did, but the narrator also alludes to their rookie mistake. Before the reader learns what happens to their children, the narrator compares his wife and himself to being like Adam and Eve (84) and excusing his actions by stating, "Who can blame us for being reckless?" (84). The reader knows they are about to make a mistake they regret very much, causing the reader to feel sorry for them.

The narrator feels true sadness over the loss of his virtual children despite the fact that he knows they were never real children. This is another example of Weinstein's comment related to a society where people become dependent on synthetic feelings over real ones. There is a gorgeous quote in this story that depicts the core problem with this couple: "There was a beautiful playfulness to it all, and we rekindled our passion, which was restricted to our online lives. For when we returned to our chambers at home and changed out of our clothes, we did so with cybernetic exhaustion, barely noticing our naked bodies, which brushed against each other in the bedroom" (89). Within New World, the couple enjoys sexual pleasure together and has a happy family-based life. However, the moment they exit the virtual world, the couple is cold and uncaring for one another. They have allowed technology to take over their relationship. Now lazy forms of pleasure and entertainment come to them as opposed to them working for them in the real world.

This story also includes the lesson of Weinstein's entire novel. His message and his comment on today's society can be found at the end of this story when a person from the support group comments that "We all have to reboot this. This world, with all its pain and loss. This is where we learn to love again" (95). Thinking back to the various stories encountered thus far, each of the characters must learn to love again. This is seen most strongly in the story "Heartland," where the hard-working father must learn to let go of his anger and simply love his family. In "Children of the New World," the narrator and his wife must learn to love one another in real life. They are not sure how to do it nor are they sure that they will enjoy real human touch. "In this world," the narrator comments, "we seemed to understand, we were free to experience a physical connection that we'd always longed for in the real world but had never been able to achieve" (84). After the virus causes them to reboot their system, they no longer have the desire to gamble with their feelings. The synthetic intimacy option is gone and they are left only with each other. However, they must learn to find that satisfying. Because, although they know, "It was just a beautiful illusion" (84), they must ask each other whether it was truly a fantasy world or not.



This story is cleverly placed in the middle of the book as a way of jarring readers into viewing the title of the book differently. Up to now, readers have been left to assume the title, *Children of the New World*, is referring to this new and unimproved, digitally dependent society at the center of Weinstein's stories. However, the actual children of New World refers to June and Oscar, digital children who were killed off in a reboot. Now readers are left to wonder about the connection between the title of the novel and the comment Weinstein is making. The argument can be made that the title is a comment on the fact that society is currently "rebooting" themselves and, along the way, killing their own essence off. Each of the characters within this book so far has been sucked into synthetic realities that cause them to ignore actual reality. They are choosing to behave like the narrator and his wife of this story, like beings stuck in a virtual world and hoping no viruses corrupt their memories or files. The title of the previous story, "Excerpts from The New World Authorized Dictionary" connects to the title of this one. This further supports the idea that each fragmented chapter is telling different stories from the same world and in a chronological order. Whatever "New World" is, the reader knows they authorize dictionaries and that they provide extremely realistic virtual reality for people.

## Discussion Question 1

What is the connection between the events of this story and similar real-world events related to computer viruses?

## Discussion Question 2

Why does the couple decide to avoid logging on again?

## Discussion Question 3

Did the couple know the risks before they went to Dark City? Did they knowingly harm their digital setup?

## Vocabulary

resigned, piqued, cybernetic, transmogrified



# “Fall Line”

## Summary

This story is told from Ronnie Hawk’s first-person limited point of view. Ronnie is a returned professional skier who recently recovered from a terrible injury. Snow has disappeared from the planet, leaving the Utah-based ski lodge he works at in a terrible state. Ronnie is not happy about his current life circumstances and he spends his days fantasizing about the person he used to be and the glamorous life he used to have.

Most people wear special contact lenses in order to hook up to a social media service called “Third Eye.” This allows followers to see exactly what the person sees while they are wearing their contacts. Ronnie laments about the fact that his followers have dwindled since he has stopped skiing. He misses being famous, popular, and desired. One night, Ronnie manages to find a young girl who wants to have sex with him. She asks him to wear her contacts because she runs a site where her followers get to watch her have sex with people.

The ski resort business is closing soon, leaving Ronnie without even a job he hates. He does not know what he will do afterward or where he will go. The story finishes with the first snowstorm in decades. The ski resort gets two feet overnight, and Ronnie decides to try skiing for the first time in years. However, Ronnie’s ride is a suicide mission and his final attempt to be remembered on Third Eye. The story concludes with Ronnie telling potential followers, “You’re all going to want to see this” (117).

## Analysis

A strong theme in this story, which resonates in our own contemporary, social media-driven world, is the dangerous repercussions for a person who is obsessed with remaining famous and relevant. Ronnie is angry at the world for forgetting him. He disappeared after his accident and lost a significant amount of fan base, which is a consequence he cannot deal with. He is consistently worried about Third Eye and how many people are watching him. He is angry that his agent dropped him, and he is even more bitter at the fact that he feels forced into a job he feels too good to work at. The reader can see this feeling of resentment affect him negatively when he angers Angie, his girlfriend. Ronnie exclaims, “I was from a place built off those blueprints, where sprinklers went off in the morning and whole neighborhoods became ghost towns during work hours. I’d look out at all those empty houses, the exhausted adults returning home, the whole sorry bunch living at low throttle, and it seemed like death. I wanted to see the stars over Kilimanjaro . . .” (107). Angie immediately defends her hard-working self and family. She resents Ronnie’s attitude that the only life worth living is one where everyone is watching you on Third Eye and sending supportive emojis. When the announcement is made that the ski resort will shut down, Angie’s first reaction is to go



somewhere where she can help other people. She is a very different person from the entitled Ronnie Hawks.

In this story, Angie symbolizes the common, everyday working person. She is unimpressed by celebrity and does not care how many followers she has. Instead, her pride comes from knowing that she is working hard and will make a difference in the world. She does not seek fame and fortune the way Ronnie does. This confuses Ronnie, and it forces him to examine himself. However, when Ronnie does look inside himself for answers as to what he can do with his life, his reaction is to end his existence. The story concludes with Ronnie back in an environment that once made him happy. He is surrounded by tons of unmarked snow. This used to bring him a sense of worth and purpose. He was the guy who was meant to conquer all of these snow-drenched mountains. He does attempt to find peace, but he tries to find it by avoiding making any changes to his life. In this respect, Ronnie proves himself to have absolutely no resilience. He is a weak spirit, crushed by the loss of fame and lost because he cannot perform the dream he had when he was younger. "Even if it's a suicide run, at least I'll be watched again," he comments (117). This proves that Ronnie values his fame more than he values his own life. He is not concerned with his personal happiness because he requires fulfillment from outside sources. Furthermore, these outside sources are virtual "friends." They are followers of his Third Eye whom he has ever met. Ronnie discards his relationship with Angie because he is heavily fixated on the synthetic love and support he receives from his Third Eye followers.

There is a bit of word play with the title of the story. In skiing, a fall line refers to the portion of the mountain with the most severe angle. It is the downward angle where skiers and snowboarders coast in order to accelerate at the fastest rate possible. However, the word play comes in when Ronnie chooses to make the mountain's fall line his own personal fall to death. Ronnie reaches the top of the snowy mountain with the intention of hurling his body downward in a rare and, hopefully, popular video for his contacts. Earlier in the story, Ronnie mentions that, "If you die [while skiing], at least you die by your own rules. That's why I gave my life to extreme sports" (107). The reader learns that this was foreshadowing when he reaches the end of the novel. Ronnie uses the fall line as his propulsion back into fame as he descends the fall line of the mountain.

## Discussion Question 1

Ronnie is frequently described as being childish, but what evidence do we have that Ronnie has matured throughout the course of his life?

## Discussion Question 2

We know why Ronnie is with Angie, but why is Angie with Ronnie?



## Discussion Question 3

How does Ronnie show a lack of resilience? How does Angie show her resilience?

## Vocabulary

fall line, retrospectives, gnarliest



# “A Brief History of the Failed Revolution”

## Summary

This story is written in an APA style format and takes on an academic and objective tone. Throughout the chapter, several “experts” are referred to in relation to Global BrainWeb Interface and the several products they developed, tested, and distributed.

There are two groups that are addressed in the story: supporters and anti-interfacers. The anti-interfacers believe that it is dangerous and illegal to access a person’s consciousness with cybernetics and technology. However, the supporters, who are pro-Global Interface, believe that this is an untapped market that should be open to advertisers and product developers. This chapter objectively presents both sides of the argument.

## Analysis

The title is of particular puzzlement in this short story. The title indicates that there has been a failed revolution. That means something tried to change and was not successful. However, within this story, we receive no direct information about which part of the revolution failed. Looking at the footnotes, many of the referenced publications are from 2032 or later. A previous story with dates, “Excerpts from The New World Authorized Dictionary,” has references from dates in the 2020’s. However, this installment appears to be from about one decade later. This tells the reader that something has gone awry in society. There has been a revolution, but which side of the revolution is Weinstein referring to as failing? On one hand, there is the revolution of human consciousness being tapped into with technology. This is revolutionary because it is a new concept being tested on people in the world. However, on the other hand, there is the anti-interface movement, which could also be referred to as a revolution. If the world passively accepted Global Interface into their minds, then it is possible that the revolutionaries are people who want to change it back. Weinstein has now presented the reader with two very opposing sides but has left him wondering which side was defeated.

The footnotes within this chapter are something that should not be skipped over as they refer to fictional sources. Looking at the footnotes can be a great indicator for tiny clues and hints Weinstein wants the reader to find. For instance, the footnotes indicate that this chapter is focused on a time around the 2030’s or later because each reference is from the 2030’s. Additionally, page 122 contains a large footnote wherein readers learn about a mental illness called “Interface Dysfunction” where users are left in a semi-brainless state after being hooked up for too long.



The tone of this story is a striking break from the writing styles of previous chapters. This is the second seemingly objective chapter, the first one being “Excerpts from The New World Authorized Dictionary.” This is Weinstein’s attempt to make this futuristic world more realistic. He wants to show readers a slow brewing of the history related to how technology finally overtook the human race, so he is presenting the narrative in the most believable and logical way possible. Each story is an intimate look at how technology affects everyday people. However, both “Excerpts from The New World Authorized Dictionary” and this story provide the reader with what feels like a solid base for this history. The effect created is that the book begins to feel more like an in-depth anthropological study rather than a purely fictional dream world.

A main argument in this story, which should be noted, is the importance of natural intelligence worded by Samuel Krotzky. The final paragraph is a long excerpt from one of Krotzky’s articles wherein he mentions that “Intelligence should henceforth be seen as a kind of capital. Ideas, hypotheses, and arguments are the only assurance the individual still has of buying power in the marketplace of consciousness” (123). In previous stories, readers have witnessed intelligent people choosing lazy paths that require little to no effort on their part. In “Moksha,” for example, Abe wants enlightenment without doing any of the mental work it requires. In this story, Krotzky mentions the importance of intelligence in fighting to change something. His anti-interface movement shifts from physical protest to mental because he believes people are more influenced by their brains. It is an interesting reminder of the power of the human brain, and the dangers that lurk when people choose not to utilize their own mental strength.

## Discussion Question 1

What is the main theme in “A Brief History of the Failed Revolution”? How is this theme illuminated?

## Discussion Question 2

What comment is being made by the fact that Proctor and Gamble is one of the fictional sources cited in this chapter?

## Discussion Question 3

How is Google and “googling” portrayed in this chapter?

## Vocabulary

crux, sovereign, imbecility, latent, quelled, fortuitous



# “Migration”

## Summary

An unnamed narrator tells his story from the first-person limited perspective in “Migration.” The narrator, his wife, Ann, and his son all live inside their home. They have not left their house in years, and it seems that no one leaves their house anymore. The narrator works as a teacher online, which is the only type of school there is now, and his wife is a virtual designer for companies. The narrator’s world is filled with virtual reality as the only form of entertainment. Everyone has an avatar that they use when online, and the only people the narrator actually knows are the people he lives with.

The narrator’s son is quite angry and rebellious. One day, he escapes from the house by riding a bicycle. The narrator believes this is a dangerous act and goes outside looking for him. The son ends up throwing a tennis ball against the wall of a dilapidated Toys R Us store. The narrator and the son talk about what life used to be like and the son tells him that he wants to play outside. A man appears in the parking lot and the two of them immediately run away. Before approaching their home, the narrator and the son run across a herd of migrating deer. They stop to witness the beauty.

## Analysis

Again Weinstein’s clever title has multiple meanings for the story “Migration.” On the surface, one can recognize that the idea of migration is a labeling of the migrating deer that the father and son come across when they go outside. However, the humans in this story have migrated also. It is very clear that the human race as a whole has migrated into their homes. No one in the family leaves, and it seems that no one in the neighborhood leaves either. This is an unnatural and forced migration for the humans in the story. The reader sees how damaging this change is when the son yearns to leave the home in order to simply throw a real ball against a real wall. He has been cooped up in such an unnatural environment for so long that his body fights to go outside and move. It is impossible to comment on the migration pattern of the deer because the reader does not have enough information to know whether their movements are natural or not. However, the reader does know that the family lives in a once-lively suburb with many other residents. It would be quite odd for an entire herd of deer to graze and migrate directly through a developed area with a Toys R Us. This informs the reader that the animals have also changed their migration as a result of the disappearance of the human race in the area.

Colors seem to be of vast importance to the characters in this story. To begin, the son is drawn to, what the parents refer to as drugs, which is a set of colored dots that flash across a computer screen. These colors seem to soothe the son back into his dreadful life of virtual reality within the walls of his home. The wife in this story is employed to recreate natural beauty. She focuses on the amount of light coming into the lobby of the



Whole Food virtual headquarters and ensures that the lighting “highlights the natural colors of human skin” (129). Everyone in this society is trapped inside, so there is even more importance placed on making something feel entirely realistic. Color continues to be important to the narrator of this story. He calms himself by taking a virtual walk with his five year-old virtually recreated son. They walk in an autumn park created by the mother and the narrator places particular importance on the vivid colors of the park, noting how the leaves covered, “the ground in yellow and orange” (131). The narrator depends on his memories of real life visions from before the world collapsed into their homes. He flashes a visually connected memory to Toys R Us and relishes in his memory of how toys “used to shimmer in the lights of the store” (146). These humans live unnaturally and in a way that bores their senses. There is no replacement for reality no matter how hard they try to replace it with digital exactness.

In this story, the author further explores a recurring theme of characters who develop into lonely solitude despite their proximity to the person they want to connect to. The narrator chooses to spend time with a virtual reality son rather than walking down the hall to speak to his real son in the house with him. This replacement causes everyone to feel much lonelier since they avoid actual human connection.

The narrator is so happy to go for a simple walk with his son. Of course, this walk is not really walk but a digitally created walk they can enjoy through virtual reality. Either way, the narrator wants to spend time with his son, so he chooses to do so within the virtual world. At the same time, his own real-life son is down the hall being ignored. The narrator has chosen to replace his son with a digital avatar that looks and acts exactly how he used to.

This loneliness continues when the wife in this story replaces the narrator with virtual sex with other avatars. She enjoys the anonymity of reaching orgasm with people she does not know. This bothers the narrator, but he does not directly word his hurt. However, the wife is doing a similar thing to the narrator that the narrator does to his son: obvious replacement. And the orgasms they achieve are from anatomically incorrect places, with some avatars toting three vaginas in order to achieve maximum sexual pleasure. This is a great example of a probable aftermath one would experience if they lived unnaturally for as long as this family has. People begin to seek more extreme pleasure as a way to numb their disappointment for the life they are living. These sexual avatars are merely a way for people to act things out in a way that helps them expand on their boring and limited lives.

The most puzzling addition to this story is the man in the parking lot, who does not appear to be dangerous but is assumed to be a threat. Readers get but only one paragraph worth of words about this man spending time outside. They have no evidence that he is a threat in any way. In fact, he waves at the narrator and his son. This leads readers to assume that the man in the parking lot was instantly judged simply because he was not doing exactly what other people expected him to. Both the narrator and the son are so used to being afraid of the outside world that they do not take the opportunity to meet a new person, instead opting for panic and running away.



## Discussion Question 1

How do each of the characters cope with being stuck inside their house for such a long time?

## Discussion Question 2

Why do you think people retreated into their homes? What could have happened to cause this change?

## Discussion Question 3

The narrator tells his wife that he wants to talk to her about something. Based on information we have from this story, what is the most likely conversation topic the narrator wants to bring up?

## Vocabulary

superimposed, misnomer, timbre, fallow, slaloms, palpable



# “The Pyramid and the Ass”

## Summary

This story is told from a third person limited point of view. The main character, Douglas, is a man who has been artificially reincarnated nine times by Soul Co. He loves staying home and having sexual pleasure from both looking at asses and sharing downloads with other users. We learn that Douglas' world includes all reincarnated people, from President George Bush to Brad Pitt. Tibet is now US enemy number one. The Dali Lama has gone into hiding and the US is officially at war with Tibet, where Buddhist terrorists are hiding as they kidnap tourists looking for enlightenment and using artificial forms of reincarnation. Douglas works from Soul Co. as a courier for souls which are in the process of being reincarnated. Each soul is packaged in a small crystal and then transported by Douglas to wherever they need to go.

Douglas begins to have visions. He sees pyramids and he feels a terrible itch in his abdomen. He has visions of a woman he does not remember knowing, and he sees himself atop a temple while police come after him. Douglas arrives with 57 souls in his briefcase. His business partner takes him to an “ass bar,” where women shake their asses on display. However, Douglas cannot enjoy it because he is getting stronger and stronger visions of the same woman, the same pyramid, and the same temple. He leaves the ass bar, but he is drugged and taken away. Douglas wakes up to discover that he has been taken to a cave. He is no longer connected to eyetunes or the innernet, and he can now see colors. Douglas believes Buddhist terrorists have kidnapped him because there is a picture of the Dali Lama on the wall. The woman welcomes him home (175) and calls him by the name of Louis. She explains that this is where they live now.

## Analysis

To take a closer look at this story means to examine the use of the color white throughout the storyline. The color white is continually used in even the most minute descriptions. To begin, Douglas is drawn to white light, thinking, “Of Innernet’s three color preferences, white, black, or gray, [he] liked white best” (157). White appears as the color of the waitresses’ skirts (164) and in the skin color of the women on display in the ass club (165). A random man in the club is depicted as wearing a white T-Shirt (168) and Phillip Monto, the coworker who picks up Douglas, is described as wearing a, “thin white suit” (169). White continues throughout the story when Douglas sees a white cloth appear at the corner of his screen right before it covers his mouth and his brain shuts down (170). Lastly, a small hint of white appears on the doors of the room in the dessert where “Blockbuster” takes Douglas. He is described as having a flashing white light shoot through him when a woman who he is intimately connected to in a past life shares information about the importance of Douglas infiltrating and destroying Soul Co. (168).



This is definitely the author's attempt to establish a continual motif of white throughout the story. However, it is important to note that the color white is of significant importance related to reincarnation, and reincarnation is the center of this story. The color white is often used to describe the color of a young soul, of a living thing that has not gone through the process of reincarnation yet. Douglas begins to experience what he thinks are flashbacks but actually turn out to be connections to his past life. The color white is used often with him because he is a young and somewhat lost soul that is trying to reconnect with the mission that caused him to come back as an employee at Soul Co. He does not yet know how to reconnect to his previous memories and, as a result, feels haunted by them. White is also considered to be a color of purity, which connects to Douglas's struggles to remain pure in a world where he is surrounded by temptations. Douglas is in no way a pure person. He is obsessed with asses and he does not take very good care of himself or other people.

The color white is sullied by the color yellow when people from Douglas's previous life show up. The people who come to "take" Douglas are wearing yellow. Additionally, the light in the cave where they take them is described as being of a yellow hue, and there is a book, which is described as having yellow pages (174). If the color white can be viewed as being in the infant stages of reincarnation, yellow can be considered as being in childhood. It represents young souls with more experience than a person with a white soul. No matter one's personal religious preference, it is clear that Weinstein did his research and used the colors white and yellow to represent the various stages of life these reincarnated souls have.

The woman who "liberates" (172) Douglas comments, "You're seeing colors. It's a beautiful experience" (173). This is when Douglas goes offline and finally sees the world around him with a new type of clarity. We know that reincarnation is a commonplace thing in this society. People are named with which version they are living, meaning how many times they have collected their souls and been reincarnated. We also know that the program provided by Soul Co. only offers the colors white, black, and gray (157). Beyond the lack of colors people are manipulated with, they are also limited with information, which is pumped into their new souls. Douglas comments that Soul Co. programs people's minds with pro-government and pro-Soul Co. sentiments. Douglas has been reincarnated in order to infiltrate Soul Co. and bring its demise. However, due to their programming, he himself has a hard time fighting against the programming Soul Co. gave him. He has been swallowed up by his new life and does not question his allegiance to Soul Co. Even after waking up in the desert, after the woman coined as "Blockbuster" tells him, "Don't be afraid. You're being liberated" (172), Douglas fears that he has been kidnapped. He is completely unable to separate himself from the deeply rooted pro-Soul Co. allegiance that has been inserted into his memories and feelings. Unfortunately this story ends before we learn if Douglas ever changes his mind.



## Discussion Question 1

What does the prominence of worshipping assess in this story say about the current state of the society depicted?

## Discussion Question 2

Why is Douglas able to get an erection when he has a flashback to "Blockbuster" but is unable to get an erection at any other time?

## Discussion Question 3

Which tone does Weinstein take on when he describes airplane travel in this story?

## Vocabulary

mitigated, parietal, screeds, troth, edifice, iconography





# “Rocket Night”

## Summary

An unnamed first-person limited narrator tells the tale of Rose Hill’s annual Rocket Night, a school ceremony where the least liked child is blasted off into outer space in a small rocket. A boy is chosen to be shipped off.

The custodian has placed food and water in the rocket, and the children of the school forcefully place the unwilling boy into the rocket as well. Before taking off, the boy asks for one of his pencils, but the request is denied. He is launched off and the narrator forgets about the boy before nightfall.

## Analysis

This story is an allegory for the idea that children who are different are sent away from the mainstream, popular side of society. In the story, unpopular children are shipped away on rockets, but that does not change the fact that outcast children in today’s society are typically seen “at the edges of the field, playing alone with sticks or staring into mud puddles at drowned worms” (177). Not every child is well liked. Many children are rejected for even the tiniest things. In this story, Daniel is rejected by his peers because of his short pencils and used clothing. Weinstein uses the rocket as a symbol for the solitary pod ostracized people often feel they are living life in. They may be surrounded by people, but no one listens to them. For unpopular or rejected individuals, they might as well be talking into a microphone, “. . . reporting to themselves about the depths of the unknown” (181).

This story also has a strong comment on how parents view their children’s place in the social hierarchy of schools. When the narrator views Daniel, he thinks to himself that, “He was the sort of child who makes one proud of one’s own children . . .” (178). The narrator instantly compares his own daughter to every other child, making sure his daughter does not lack in social popularity or outward intelligence. This seems to be important for all of the parents, for they encourage this Rocket Night and they allow their children to approach Daniel and literally rip him away from his mother and father.

The third and final comment Weinstein is making in this allegory is that society as a whole does not stop to pity or help people who have been socially outcast. Instead they forget about them and move on with their own lives. The narrator notes that “the boy faded from our thoughts, replaced by the lateness of the evening and the pressure of delayed bedtime schedules” (181). Even mundane tasks and chores are more important to the narrator than the happiness and life of a “Daniel,” who, in this case, represents unaccepted beings within society.

This is the shortest chapter of the book, but it is rich with importance. Here, Weinstein applies technology not seen in today’s world (the rocket ship) but reminds readers that



the social problems of today's world will not be fading any time soon. Social competition will remain fierce, and might just become worse in the future.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Why is Andy outcast? What are the repercussions of his being outcast from society?

## **Discussion Question 2**

Why aren't the parents involved in selecting which child should be launched each year?  
Why aren't the teachers involved in the selection process?

## **Discussion Question 3**

How does the school benefit from launching off unwanted children?

## **Vocabulary**

reticent, moot



# “Openness”

## Summary

Andy meets his girlfriend, Katie, while riding the train one day. In this world, everyone keeps their personal memories and details held either publically, in layer one, or privately, in deeper layers. Katie grew up in a special cabin with her father, Ben. The cabin is not connected, so everyone must go offline and actually talk. Katie invites Andy to the cabin one weekend.

Andy enjoys his time there, but he struggles trying to remember how to talk. Katie tells him that she loves him, and she asks him to share all of his layers with her, giving her full access to everything that ever happened to Andy. They agree and open up to each other.

Soon after doing this, both Andy and Katie use their new information to hurt one another. Katie projects a picture of her dream future, which includes a family that does not include Andy. They break up and, as a result, Andy is completely cut off from all of Katie's memories. He goes offline for a long time after and returns to painting, trying to sketch his memories of Katie's cabin in Maine.

## Analysis

There is a sharp juxtaposition between the common world, where Andy meets Katie, and the disconnected world, where Katie spends time with her father at the cabin. Andy and Katie's world is devoid of verbal conversation. People no longer feel the need to converse with one another since they have the ability to simply receive and download information sent from other people. This is a huge change from the talkative area around Katie's cabin in Maine. Here, Andy is forced to use his own voice in order to communicate, but he struggles to learn how to talk again. Andy is not sure if he knows how to connect to a person through human connection because he has become accustomed to learning about other people through technology. He does not maintain his openness, and he makes her feel uncomfortable. It is obvious that Katie enjoys being offline. She likes talking and she likes the idea of connecting to a person the way people used to connect. When Andy proves his inability, and unwillingness, to change his ways; Katie determines that he is not the right person for her.

While it is Andy's inability to accept life at the cabin that drives Katie away, Andy believes it is his dark past that drives them apart. Katie is the one who asks for full openness in the relationship, but Andy clearly states that he does not feel they are ready. Katie is desperate to find a solid partner. She wants to bring her walls down. Andy, on the other hand, feels much more comfortable burying painful information. Unfortunately, the results that come about from this revelation within their relationship are what leads to the deepest hurt Andy has ever felt. He allowed himself to feel raw



and exposed. Of the sensitive information he allowed Katie to learn, she took it and used it to hurt him. This causes Andy to feel a new kind of betrayal and regret. The reader sees Andy react to this pain by going offline for good. Katie worked so hard to get him to open up, but Andy becomes hurt and he ricochets further back into a state of privacy and anonymity that he has ever been in before.

The openness that causes Andy to collapse back into himself is a direct connection to the title of this story: "Openness." However, the title does not only refer to the emotional opening up Adam is expected to do. Katie's cabin in Maine is located in the openness of nature as well. She uses this open terrain to escape the stress of everyday life, but Adam finds the open cabin to be more frustrating than his normal living situation. In this story, Weinstein presents both a tangible and an intangible form of openness. Andy rejects both forms, and it is his rejection of being open that leads Katie to shutting him out.

## **Discussion Question 1**

What are the different meanings which can be understood from the final sentence of this chapter?

## **Discussion Question 2**

If people are communicating but not talking, can we say that the art of conversation was lost?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Many of the families portrayed in this entire novel are disconnected. What message could Weinstein be making about families in the way he shows Katie's family?

## **Vocabulary**

denuded, gradations, kitsch



# “Ice Age”

## Summary

A man named Gordon is the main character of this story, and he relates the narrative in the first person limited point of view. Gordon and his family have survived a massive ice age, leaving them among only a handful of survivors. The people in the area have formed a close-knit community. Gordon hunts with the men in the village and the women of the village spend their days repairing clothing and blankets and preparing what little food the community has available. There is a hated family that lives far off in the distance.

The Paulson family, headed by Mr. Phil Paulson, is a family with a humungous, two-story igloo and a constantly burning fire. Tom, a man who hunts with Gordon, becomes increasingly more upset about the fact that Phil and his family are wasting so much of the precious wood in the area available for burning. Tom threatens to visit Phil's house and put the fire out. He claims that he will kill the Paulson family if that's what it comes down to because he is tired of watching the fuel burn up at the Paulson igloo. Gordon does not want bloodshed and murder to infiltrate the community. He visits Phil alone as a way of calmly requesting that he stop burning so many fires. Phil's house is filled with conveniences lost in the ice age. He has carpeted floors, decorative ice walls, and leather furniture. Phil tells Gordon that he gets these things by looting the exposed houses in the closest town nearby. He asks Gordon to trade the animals he hunts in exchange for luxuries such as alcohol, children's toys for Gordon's daughters, and a generator for electricity. Gordon refuses to betray his community and urges Phil to work as a team.

That night, Tom takes a small mob of men up to Phil's house with the intention of destroying the home. Gordon stays home, but feels nervous enough that he follows the mob's tracks later. He gets to Phil's house and finds an intricate weaving of tunnels that lead deep below. These tunnels connect to houses that have been buried under many feet of snow. The men of the mob did not kill Phil. Mr. Paulson offered the men alcohol and stolen goods, a deal which all the men happily accepted. It becomes clear to Gordon that they now work for Phil, and Gordon begrudgingly notices that this new setup is, “spoiling what was once our community” (226).

## Analysis

In this story, humans have lost their access to high-tech software, but that does not mean that they have gained anything in loyalty or humanity. Like everyone else in this world, Gordon is a person who remembers what life was like before the ice age destroyed the world he knew. He has adapted to his new life, and he does not complain much about it. Gordon gains strength in knowing that he is not alone in this desolate place. He is strong because he feels that he has a strong community of like-minded



people. He is comforted with the idea that everyone works and hunts and gives to the group. Gordon walks into the pit of temptation when he visits Phil Paulson's home. He sees all the things he wants to provide for his family but cannot. He is tempted to accept Phil's offer, but this would mean betraying his fellow villagers—a commitment Gordon holds dearer than any of the material wealth Phil has to offer. When Phil mentions how easily he will be able to buy off any mob that comes to harm him, Gordon scoffs the comment off and is confident that everyone in the village values the camaraderie as much as he does. The end of the story leaves Gordon alone in his sentimental attachment for the village mentality. Everyone else quickly and thoughtlessly traded in their functioning life in the village for easy, and greedy, goods given by Phil. Gordon is crushed, not because other people got gifts before he did, but because he is watching the community he holds near to his heart fade and crumble away with just a few drinks of liquor.

Gordon's character approaches life in the ice age pretty positively. He is happy with his choice in wife and he is pleased with his daughters. He feels fulfilled hunting each day and does not even complain much about the cold. Tom, on the other hand, approaches this new life with anger and resentment. He is jealous of the Paulson family's fire and he wants more of it. Tom wants to feel better about his life by making everyone appear equal. The fact that this ice age still has a "have" and "have not" section between tiny igloos and ice mansions makes Tom feel blind with rage. He cannot focus on hunting because he is angry about a distant fire at a large home. But Gordon ignores all of these signs. He ignores the passionate faults of Tom because Gordon needs to feel as if his community is impenetrable. He depends on the knowledge that people will be there for him and for his family.

Phil Paulson is a great example of a person who plays a social game in order to advance. Neither he nor any of his workers seem apt to go out hunting. Gordon notices that he seems to be suffering from malnutrition (216), which suggests that the Paulsons have focused more on interior decorating than on survival. However, Phil operates under a different social and moral code than Gordon. Phil understands that he can barter for goods. Phil needs food and other people want material wealth. Instead of hunting, Phil sets up a store for the village. However, in Gordon's mind, the new setup that Phil organizes will put the village in a position of working for Phil. They will now be his employees and will bring him valuable chunks of food instead of to the hardworking people living near one another in the village. This can be interpreted as a parallel statement to how much of the real world works today. Some people work very hard in order to bring their spoils to a person who is merely managing everyone's actions. Even in this ice age there is a boss and a working class, proving that, despite the lack of technology, people are still unwilling to be loyal neighbors to one another.

The reader is never told how or why this ice age came about. That is because the cause for this change is not important for understanding this story. At the core of "Ice Age" are community, neighbors, and loyalty. Each of the three main characters—Gordon, Tom, and Phil—sees the core values of this story differently. Phil desires to control people. He does not see a community but rather sees an opportunity for his own monarchy in the sparse land. Tom is the willing subject who does not care for labels because he is



wooded by the promise of material wealth. Meanwhile, Gordon is a person in the community who wants pure loyalty. He himself is loyal to the village, but this loyalty does not help him in any way. Weinstein's world in this novel can never reach a place where the dream of neighborly support comes to fruition. Various characters struggle to feel comforted by a blanket of society but there is never any blanket and there is never support. Even a detrimental natural disaster like an unexplained ice age cannot manage to bring about supportive humanity.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Would Gordon have been better off if he accepted Phil's offer before returning to the village? Why or why not?

## **Discussion Question 2**

What are some of the positive effects of the villagers working for Phil in exchange for goods? What are some negative outcomes of this situation?

## **Discussion Question 3**

In this chapter, who is the best survivor? Why?

## **Vocabulary**

chinook, commiserate, complicit, stalagmites, pyre

# Characters

## Yang

In "Saying Goodbye to Yang," Yang is a robot that has been designed to provide comfort, friendship, and information to people. Yang is purchased for a family with a daughter who has been adopted from China. Yang comes programmed to look Chinese and contains information about Chinese culture, history, and fun facts.

The owner used to try taking Yang to baseball games, but Yang lacks emotional feedback like that of a human. He enjoys collecting bugs that he finds under the bug zapper. Yang malfunctions one morning. His owner quickly shuts him down, but Yang is an old model and cannot be repaired. The owner has Yang disassembled and buries his body in the backyard. However, the owner keeps his voice box and computer so that the adopted daughter can continue to have her brother around.

## Adam Woods

Adam appears in the short story "The Cartographers." He is a young computer programmer who designs synthetic memories for people. Adam comes up with memories of vacations, fights, and relationships and then sells them to the public for a profit. He works in partnership with two other people: Barrett and Quimbly.

Over time, Adam begins to use these synthetic memories, referred to as "beaming," more often. This causes Adam to lose track of real memories and beamed memories. Adam believes that he is in a relationship with a woman, but, after a mental breakdown, he learns that the woman was a synthetic memory as well. Adam is last seen at his parents' house, where he is still trying to piece together who he truly is.

## The Narrator from "Heartland"

The reader never learns the name of this character, but does learn a lot about his emotions and fears. He is a father of two and has a wife named Cara. The narrator lost his job more than one year ago for punching his boss after he made a rude comment about the narrator's daughter. He has been blackballed ever since and his family is struggling for cash. He drives his son to a television game show, an act the narrator hopes will result in prize money and an acting job for his son. The narrator wants to provide everything to his family, but he falls short each time. This leaves him feeling bitter and hopeless, and it causes him to pick fights with his wife.





## Abe

In the story "Moksha," Abe is a college student who drops out of school and goes to Kathmandu, Nepal in search of something called Moksha. Abe wants to find spiritual enlightenment and he hears that Moksha is the best thing to try. He travels to Nepal and searches for Moksha, but, when he finally finds it, Abe is disappointed that the effects are amazing but short lived. He uses it more and more until he runs out of money. On his way home, Abe thinks about how nice it will be to be back at school with his girlfriend.

## Narrator from "Children of the New World"

This character is married, and, along with his wife enjoys plugging into a virtual reality system called "New World." The couple enjoys their passionate time in the system. Eventually, the narrator's wife gets virtually pregnant. They have two children overall, and they frequently log on in order to spend time as a family. However, the narrator and his wife begin to feel bored with the family-centered virtual reality they have created.

The narrator takes his wife to a place on the system named Dark City. While there, he visits various virtual locations where he receives sexual pleasure. These visits cause the narrator's system to become infected by a virus, which forces him to wipe out his system and start New World over. This results in deleting his children, leaving the narrator feeling as if he murdered his own children. The narrator now attends support group meetings where other parents of "deceased" virtual children talk about the void that now exists in their lives.

## Ronnie Hawk

Ronnie Hawk is the protagonist of "Fall Line." Ronnie used to be a professional alpine skier. He was world famous and had millions of fans on social media, helping him enjoy fame and constant attention. However, Ronnie now lives and works at a dying ski resort in Utah. A few years ago, he had a terrible accident while skiing and was unable to walk for close to one year. Now that he has his mobility back, he has no desire to ski again. That's not a problem because the mountain where he works has no snow.

Much like the rest of the world, natural snowy landscapes have become a thing in the past and skiing is a dying sport. Ronnie spends his days maintaining the mountain and the lodge. He is depressed about his current state of living and he thinks this boring life is beneath him. He dates a coworker named Angie, but Ronnie's immaturity and arrogance causes her to end things with him.

The first snow storm in years comes to Ronnie's mountain in Utah. He ventures out into the snow and heads to the top of the mountain to ski. Ronnie calls this ride a suicide mission and activates his social media before hurling himself down the mountain.



## Narrator from "Migration"

In the story "Migration," the world has changed and people now live entirely isolated in their homes. The narrator lives in his home with his wife and son. He is a literature teacher who attends his own lectures virtually by wearing a suit and mask. The narrator and his wife have a deal that they are each allowed to engage in sexual relations with other avatars online whenever they feel the urge to do so. The narrator's avatar has multiple sexual organs as a means of increasing his sexual pleasure while logged on.

In real life, the narrator and his wife do not engage in physical touch or sexual acts. The narrator struggles with his son, who wears a hockey mask each day and plays angry music while taking virtual drugs on his computer. The son runs away from the narrator's house one evening. The narrator chases after him to see where he is going. He finds his son in the parking lot of a Toys R Us, throwing a tennis ball against the wall. The narrator takes the time to reminisce about how life used to be before everyone moved in their homes for good. He finds life inside his house to be mundane and non-stimulating and, while he finds it dangerous to be outside, he likes feeling air on his skin again.

## Douglas Duncage

In the short story "The Pyramid and the Ass," Douglas is a middle aged man who was reincarnated in order to infiltrate a large reincarnation corporation named Soul Co. In this life, Douglas works for Soul Co. He enjoys life as a courier for the company while being surrounded by his favorite thing in the world: asses. As a courier for Soul Co., Douglas transports unrooted souls to a location where they will be reunited with the bodies of their owners.

Douglas is in the process of delivering 57 souls for the company when he begins to experience visions of his past life. The problem is that Douglas does not know if this is from a past life or if he is having a mental breakdown complete with hallucinations. Douglas is kidnapped in front of an ass club while he is on a business trip. The group that kidnaps him informs him that he has been taken offline and that he has succeeded in his mission to harm Soul Co. by giving them the 57 souls to destroy. As the story ends, Douglas is convinced that information is not real and that he has been kidnapped by Buddhist terrorists.

## Andy

In the short story "Openness," Andy is a college student who uses the modern day technology that allows him to selectively share information by sending it to other people's knowledge. He comes from an abusive and sad childhood, so he does not like to share this personal history with anyone. He meets a girl named Katie on the train one day and the two of them begin dating. Andy enjoys time with Katie, but he likes communicating by sending and downloading information from other people.



Katie invites Andy to her father's cabin in Maine. Here, there is no internet connection so Andy must communicate using words. He quickly finds that he is not longer capable of having a conversation and that he does not find it enjoyable. Katie begs him to open his memory drive to her, allowing her to see everything about him and his past. Andy does not want to share this much information because he likes to keep his past private, but he agrees to open up in an effort to make Katie happy. Katie breaks up with Andy shortly after doing this, and Andy becomes deeply hurt. As a result, he goes offline and stops talking to people altogether.

## Gordon

In the story "Ice Age," Gordon spends his days hunting for food to bring back to the village. Before the ice age occurred, he was a cabinetmaker who enjoyed listening to the Grateful Dead while smoking weed. Now, he is married to a sturdy woman and is a father of two daughters. He is miserable in this life because he wants to see his daughters experience the same normal childhood he was able to enjoy as a child. Gordon spends long days outside waiting for the occasional moose to walk by. People in the village consider him to be an excellent talker, so they ask him to speak with a man named Phil Paulson, whose flaunted wealth and constant fire burning have angered the villagers.

Phil offers Gordon conveniences such as electricity and children's toys in exchange for food, but Gordon refuses and cites the fact that the village is a close community where people must work in order to eat. Gordon revisits Phil's home because he knows a mob has gone to harm Phil and his family. By the time Gordon gets there, the mob has turned into a drunken party. The other villagers have struck the same deal with Phil that Gordon turned down earlier, and Gordon laments about the fact that his community has been altered and tainted.



# Symbols and Symbolism

## Flowers

In "Saying Goodbye to Yang," flowers symbolize acceptance. George gives the flowers to the narrator's family to show his sympathy for their loss of Yang. These flowers show the narrator who George truly is at the core. They show the narrator that he should give people the benefit of a doubt and that people are inherently good and supportive. This neighbor, who the narrator sloughed off as being unemotional, is the person who shows the most care by bringing the family flowers in their time of need. George accepts the narrator and the narrator now accepts George.

## Mud Pits

The mud pits in "Heartland" symbolize the filth of humanity. The narrator cannot see past these abandoned mud pits that are sprinkled around his town. They are symbols for the companies that came and raped the land for a small profit. They are small, forgotten pits left there to be ignored. They are problems that everyone drives past but no one tries to fix.

## Computer Viruses

In "Children of the New World," computer viruses are a symbol for greed. This symbolism is seen in two places: the narrator whose system is corrupted and the computer hackers who make the viruses. The narrator is greedy for more pleasure. He has found happiness online with his wife. They have two children who they love very much, but this feeling of happiness is not enough to keep them in their home. Instead, they feel the need to venture into Dark City as a way to greedily find more pleasure. The hackers in this story are greedy as well. The narrator describes them as being, "the real monsters" saying that, ". . . the hackers and scammers [are] faceless men and women who destroy lives for the joy of testing a virus, and who sacrificed our children to make a buck" (95). These hackers are greedy for information and money. They desire things from as many users as they can get.

## Snow

In "Fall Line," readers come across snow as a symbol for escape. Ronnie sees snow as his escape from a life of boredom. His ability to ski well is what helped him create an enviable life when he was younger. Now that the snow is gone, Ronnie feels it is impossible to escape and find happiness again. However, average skiers find it difficult to escape when there is no snow around also. When snow finally does arrive at the end of the story, Ronnie takes the opportunity to escape for one last time. He uses the snow



to escape from the average life he has waiting in front of him—from the life he can't stand the idea of living.

## Deer

In the story "Migration," deer symbolize Mother Nature. The human beings depicted in this chapter have been living unnaturally. They have retreated into their homes where they live each and every day by not stepping into fresh air or natural sunlight. With the absence of people, the deer have returned to a more natural way of living, with undisturbed migration routes and the ability to graze for food wherever they wish. The narrator sees this juxtaposition. He sees the stark differences between how his family and he are living and how the deer are living. The deer appear majestic on the street. They are behaving naturally, as intended. It is the humans in this story who have rejected Mother Nature and, by eliminating them from the equation, the rest of Mother Nature can go back to a more normal state.

## White

In "The Pyramid and the Ass," the color white represents a connection to Douglas's previous life. Douglas sees white everywhere he turns. Characters in this story are described as wearing white, signs are written in white, and Douglas's favorite Soul Co. color is white. This proves that he is deeply connected to his younger soul, to the lie he had before signing up to destroy Soul Co. White is often seen as a color of purity. However, Douglas' fixation with the color white is quite ironic here because he is far from being pure. Douglas is obsessed with asses. He watches ass videos and goes to ass bars. He uses various mood enhancers to alter his actions and state of being, yet he is drawn to the purest color there is despite his lack of purity.

## The Rocket

The rocket ship from "The Rocket Night" symbolizes social isolation. While the story is quite short, this allegory says a lot about the social aspects of society. Children place unwanted peers into a rocket ship in total isolation. These children disappear and are forgotten about. In the real world, socially unaccepted children are placed in social isolation. Their peers ignore them and do not care for them, much like the uncared for children wind up in a rocket ship in outer space. The proximity of the unwanted child's body does not matter because socially ousted individuals are shoved away so far that they might as well be in a rocket ship.

## The Cabin

The cabin in the story titled "Openness" symbolizes the old world. Weinstein's world in this novel is futuristic. However, the cabin represents an earlier time when people's brains were not directly hooked up to software. This is a location where a person fishes



to catch dinner. It is a quiet, uncrowded location where people have to connect to one another by talking. These ideas seem absurd to Andy, who is a modern man in Weinstein's fictional world. The cabin is a place where people are forced to disconnect and interact with one another in ways they stopped using.

## Fire

In "Ice Age," fire is a symbol for wealth. Only lucky people have enough fuel for a fire. The larger the fire, the more fuel a person has; which means the more time a person has to gather firewood. Most families in the village do not have time to gather mounds of firewood. They are far too consumed with gathering food to eat. Phil Paulson and his family have a large fire that is constantly running because they never go out in search of food. They have plenty of time to burn all the fuel they find because they do not occupy their time with anything else due to their material wealth and their ability to hire people to do things for them.

## Children's Toys

In both "Migration" and "Ice Age," children's toys represent a happy childhood that is unavailable to children. These children have been born into a time when a "normal" childhood is unavailable to them. Their parents remember their childhoods. They remember how happy they were playing outside with friends. However, for the children in "Migration" and in "Ice Age" the idea of playing with toys outside is completely foreign. The parents in these stories want to give these childhood experiences to their kids, and they are willing to take minor risks to do so. In "Migration," the narrator allows his son to remain outside in an effort to provide his child some relief playing outside. In "Ice Age," the narrator seems willing to strike a deal with Phil Paulson as a means to get children's toys for his daughters. Both sets of parents want nothing more than to provide the childhoods they loved in a world where those childhoods are no longer an option.



# Settings

## The Crows Nest

This setting appears in the story "The Cartographers." Located in New York City, this is where Adam's office is located. This is the location where Barrett, Quimbly, and Adam create their memories for beaming. It is described as having "massive oak beams and a triangular plate glass window . . ." (23).

## The Clay Mud Town

In the story "Heartland," the narrator describes a destroyed town that has been ruined by developers abandoning projects. There are half-built houses left to rot in the constant rain and muddy front yards that never got the sod planned for them. The rain is relentless in this story, leaving the entire town under a blanket of slippery clay. On the side of the road, there are large pits of emptiness from other developer teams that took all the precious topsoil they could so the town could make a profit. Now the town is simply slippery and slimy and overtaken by brown muck.

## Kathmandu, Nepal

In the story "Moksha," Abe wants to find an outlawed and dangerous form of technological and instant spiritual enlightenment called "Moksha." He travels to Kathmandu because it is the only place where he can find Moksha. Kathmandu is described as being socially divided between people who are seeking true enlightenment in the form of lifelong dedication and other people, like Abe, who want instant gratification. It is a city filled with people who are ready to hook up to a computer and feel inner peace.

## Dark City

This "city" in the story "Children of the New World" is an area located in virtual reality. It is a place where one's fantasies can come true. Dark City hosts fetish hotels including thousand finger massages and wind hotels. Each of these offers sexual pleasure. Many adult avatars visit this location to feel passion and sexual excitement. However, this is also a dangerous town that frequently infects users' programs with viruses. The viruses can travel out of Dark City and into the happy virtual homes of the users that get infected.



## The Ski Lodge in Utah

In the story "Fall Line," the ski lodge is a large ski resort, hotel, and restaurant that has little to no customers. The world in this story has no snow, making it difficult to entice people into visiting the mountain. This was once a location where many people would come and party during ski trips, but now no one comes. The owner of the ski lodge announces that the resort must close down and that it is finishing its last season.

## The Abandoned Suburbs

The city in "Migration" has been abandoned. Everyone lives in their own homes and no one leaves their houses for anything. School, jobs, and shopping are all done from inside individuals' homes. The town is developed. It has parking lots, strip malls, and stoplights; but there is not a single trace of humanity other than abandoned structures. The son in this story ends up in front of an empty Toys R Us store, which is a store he has no concept of. His father must explain to him what life used to look like in this town.

## Mesa Verde

From "The Pyramid and the Ass".

This setting appears in "The Pyramid and the Ass." Mesa Verde is a desert outside of town where "Blockbuster" takes Douglas. It is described as having yellow light and very little noise. Mesa Verde itself is not described as much as the small cabin in Mesa Verde is. This is the structure where Douglas finally goes offline and it reeducated about his mission to take down Soul Co.

## Rose Hill

Rose Hill is the name of the school where an annual celebration is held in the story "Rocket Day." This celebration is when students gather to select one rejected student who they want to launch into space. That rejected child is never seen again and is sentenced to living in a tiny capsule alone.

## The Cabin in Maine

In the story "Openness," Katie and her father spend most of their time in this cabin that does not have any internet connection. While here, they play games, fish, and talk to one another. It is isolated and set in the middle of Mother Nature.



## The Village

This setting appears in “Ice Age.” After some sort of unexpected ice age has frosted over the established neighborhoods, survivors are forced to live in a flat and desolate location covered in bland-looking ice. Each survivor’s family built themselves small survival igloos that lack comfort, although Phil Paulson and his family hired people to build them a two-story igloo mansion. The environment is harsh and cold, lacking in animals to hunt.



# Themes and Motifs

## The Willingness to Trade Human Connection for Technological Advances

Weinstein's theme of replacing human interaction with technology-based experiences is his way of warning people about the deep hurt that sets in when synthetic experiences are favored over real ones and the eventual societal crumble that will take place if true disconnection occurs.

In the first story, "Saying Goodbye to Yang," people are starting to replace caretakers for robots. When Yang is disassembled, many neighbors offer to babysit the daughter since Yang is no longer available. We see this replacement process advance when, in "The Cartographers," Adam is fooled into thinking that his relationship with Cynthia is real. Even after he learns that it is not a real human connection, Adam is still seen working on his love letters to his fictional memory. In "Excerpts from the New World Authorized Dictionary," people are described as using technology that completely erases individuals who do not match a certain social filter set by the user. People do not want to waste their time with the humans of the world when they have software that eliminates undesirable traits and characteristics. Even stronger, Abe in "Moksha" chooses to receive fast enlightenment rather than take years to focus on learning about the topic from a master. He does not desire learning from another human, or getting to know one, and he leaves his girlfriend back at college in order to avoid meeting other people. Lastly, Andy from "Openness" chooses to remain in a state where he does not talk to other people despite ample opportunities to open up with Katie.

This lack for human interaction continues into the marriages described within this novel. The most obvious examples for this theme are the couples in "Children of the New World" and "Migration." In "Children of the New World," the narrator coldly comments that he and his wife no longer feel the need to be physically affectionate in the real world. This couple waits to show affection until they are logged on. The narrator comments that, "In New World, Mary and I proved to be a completely different couple, our bodies became freed from habit independent of hormonal changes. We grew hungry for the electronic hum of each other" (85-86). The couple receives so much pleasure from a synthetic experience of interaction that they do not feel the need to use their energy for human interaction. He describes their evenings after logging off as being overcome with "cybernetic exhaustion" and with kisses that "didn't linger" (89). However, the narrator is happy with this replacement. In fact, he states that it is "a small price to pay" (89) for the pleasures he receives while being online. This couple does not regret their decision for greedy pleasures until it winds up disturbing other sections of their lives.

Another couple that chooses virtual reality affection over human sexual encounters is the married couple in "Migration." The narrator's wife, Ann, desires having sexual experiences with other avatars online. She does not consider this cheating, and she



encourages her husband, the narrator, to engage in these acts as well. The narrator sometimes struggles with this idea because he would prefer to have both virtual sex with avatars and physical affection from his wife, asking her, "Are you really okay with this?" (130). The narrator remembers being younger, when he, "still had time to be idealistic about what the future held" (131). He is happy in his marriage, but he is also lonely. His wife's obsession with being online has affected how they interact with each other. His wife seems perfectly happy with these synthetic and programmed pleasure sessions. However, the narrator feels that, while pleasurable, they are, "not the same" (134). The narrator wants to touch his wife, he wants to feel the warmth of her skin, but she does not allow it to happen very often. These couples have become unbalanced. Virtual experiences have entered their relationships and caused each partner to depend on online-based sources for their affection and sexual gratification. But this is not enough. The participants need more. They cannot fill the missing void that comes from all of these programs offering satisfaction.

## The Confusing Realness of Synthetic Experiences

Synthetic memories are seen as equally authentic in Weinstein's depiction of a future where programmed encounters are designed to feel real and confuse users about their true reality. Several characters in this novel struggle knowing what has actually happened to them and what was placed there by software embedded in their brains. The story titled "The Cartographers" is the best example of blurring the lines between reality and a synthetic memory. Adam Woods has made a career out of creating realistic memories for people to upload into their brains. However, despite knowing how addictive and terrifyingly realistic these synthetic, or beamed, memories are, Adam himself allows his mind to be taken over. His memories become mixed, and he is no longer able to determine the difference between reality and virtual encounters. Adam's coworker, Barrett, officially crosses the line with this confusion and he is taken to a mental hospital for recovery.

While Adam's experience is a bit extreme, there is earlier evidence that humans tend to confuse actual reality with virtual reality. In "Saying Goodbye to Yang," the narrator longed to treat Yang like a son. He wanted to build father-son memories with the robot. When Yang malfunctions, causing the narrator to have the robot disassembled, the narrator begins to struggle with how he feels about his relationship with Yang. At one point, the narrator comments that, "Without realizing it, I had slipped into thinking of Yang as my son, imagining that one day he'd be raking leaves for his own wife and children" (14). He forgets the reality of the situation and that Yang is an unemotional computer designed to look human. When he is disassembled, the family has a funeral for Yang as if he were a real person in the family. Likewise, the family disassembling in "Children of the New World" is a painful loss for the humans involved. The human characters know that they are in a virtual reality system called New World. They know their children could have been deleted as "easily as dragging a file to the recycle bin" (85). They know all of this yet feel deeply heartbroken when they wipe their system clean of viruses and erase the children they made in this virtual world. For these



parents, their work as parents was not virtual. They allowed their hearts to get involved. They became personally invested, and now they have been deeply hurt.

While the characters in "Children of the New World" are shocked that their grief strikes them so hard in their real lives, other characters expect their synthetic experiences to affect them in a real and lasting way. In "Moksha," Abe searches for virtual enlightenment. He believes that this form of virtual reality will have long-term positive side effects for him. However, when he experiences Moksha for the first time, the elation of the experience wears off quickly. Abe continues to search for longer lasting virtual enlightenment and never thinks about learning it on his own. This leaves Abe feeling lost and empty, doubtful that any of his experiences were worth it. At the same time, the parents in "Children of the New World" are left to wonder if having children was worth the pain, and the narrator from "Saying Goodbye to Yang" regrets opening his heart up to a robot.

## No Hope for Change

While it once had the chance, Weinstein's hopeless world has progressed too far away from anything resembling humanity and is now in a state of hopelessness with no repair in sight. In "Children of the New World," Bill Thompson dictates a breaking point in the possibility for society's repair. "We all have to reboot this," says Thompson, "This world, with all its pain and loss. This is where we learn to love again" (95). And there, in the final sentence of Bill's statement, is the idea that humanity can heal. The world is not ruined. There is a possibility that people can overcome the sadness in the world to create a society filled with acceptance and personal happiness. The only trick, according to this, is that there must first be a terrible loss in the form of rebooting the current system of society. We must destroy in order to heal.

But it is obvious that humanity does not destroy itself, and this is why there is no turning back. This passing of an opportunity for a reset is exactly why every subsequent story is so hurtful and leads to the extremely hopeless final story, "Ice Age." The positioning of the chapter "Children of the New World" is very purposeful. This chapter, and this quote, are placed roughly in the middle of the novel. Prior to this, the world has been allowing small amounts of software and cybernetic technology into their lives. The change has been slow yet exciting. The family in "Saying Goodbye to Yang" could tell the difference between clones and robots and humans. But this awareness shifts as soon as this fictional society reaches "The Cartographers," where Adam Woods' version of reality becomes muddled with virtual memories he has beamed. This progression of society moving away from being human and moving toward being cybernetic beings continues until "Children of a New World." This is the time when reality truly becomes virtual. People no longer seek life away from their virtual systems, and their online life is much more satisfying than their real ones. This is where the break happens. Readers can consider the world after this story to be in a state of no return.

The first human sacrifice takes place in "Fall Line," where, due to his lack of fandom, Ronnie Hawks kills himself. The reaction to virtual society's rejection is to remove



oneself from that virtual society. Unfortunately that means total social separation. In "Openness," readers leave Andy hurt and alone. His reaction to his pain is to sacrifice his virtual self and unplug from the system. There is no way for Ronnie or Andy to fight the harsh virtual society they are forced into. There is no alternative. It is either plugged in and separated from other humans or disconnected and separated from other humans. This separation has reached its peak in "Migration." The family depicted here is entirely submerged in a society that does not actually exist. The rebooting requested by Bill Thompson has never happened and virtual reality has strengthened and improved. It has gone so far that the wife in "Migration," Ann, works as a person who designs real life outdoor spaces. No one in society desires seeing these places in real life.

All of this progression occurs slowly. The changes Weinstein makes to how the characters use technology is subtle until we reach "Ice Age." Readers experience an expectation of hope. It appears as if this was the reboot needed. The ice has coated the entire world. It has eliminated brain-fused software and all technology has been lost. However, despite the loss of electricity and virtual reality, society is still beyond a state of repair. Gordon hopes for the best from the men in his village. He thinks the world has transformed into a place where neighbors support one another; he hopes the world is now a place where dignity, honor, and loyalty reign supreme. But Gordon is wrong. These attributes left society long ago and, although there are no more computers, people are incapable of being good to one another. The idea of a close-knit community is foreign to the people in Weinstein's world. Hope is futile and dreams will always be crushed.

## **The Inability to Appreciate the Life you Have**

Several of the characters in *Children of the New World* possess a common human flaw, which is the lack of the ability to appreciate the simple and happy life one is already living. Instead, this happiness is left behind in an effort to search for something different, but that difference does not make them nearly as happy as they were prior to their big search. We see Abe in "Moksha" trying to find inner peace. He travels to the other side of the world and damages a relationship with a girlfriend for this personal journey. But he is never satisfied in Kathmandu because the center of his happiness was right where he was all along: in his dorm room with his girlfriend. Abe thinks that he, "would tell her about how he'd be happy just to be back on campus together with her, taking a walk" (81). It is fortunate for Abe that he sees how lucky he once was as, while he knows his girlfriend is likely to reject him when he returns (80) he still comes to the wonderful realization that he is happy with his life.

Adam, in "The Cartographers" also feels a ping of regret when he realizes how good he used to have it. In her break up note, Cynthia tells him, "Thanks for the memories. Sorry you liked yours better" (38). Adam knows that she breaks up with him because he cannot appreciate the simple happiness he has in his life so he goes out searching for something more extreme. He comments that it was, "a time when I had everything: a woman who loved me, a company worth millions, and bidders waiting in line to buy us



out" (34). Even after Adam realizes that Cynthia is not real, that she is a virtually beamed memory, this does not change the fact that Adam allowed himself to lose his own happiness. He emotionally exited from his happy life so that he could go out looking for something that might make him happier. It was his very restlessness that caused Adam to unfold and breakdown, leaving him only with the memory of being happy.

In "Fall Line," Ronnie Hawks chooses to end his own life over the fact that he cannot see a life path that will bring him happiness. He has convinced himself that his life is hopeless and that he will never find happiness in the options he has. Rather than going out to look, he chooses to exit from his reality and kill himself doing what he loves: skiing. Ronnie lacks resilience. He is unable to see positivity in his current life or in his future. Instead, he dwells on the impossible, which is his desire to change his past. Similarly, the villagers in "Ice Age" are blinded by their past and, as a result, unable to achieve true happiness in their present. The villagers convince themselves that material goods from the old world will bring them happiness. They do not wish to live in the moment, so they chase their past lives instead. The men from the village are easily bribed into working for Phil Paulson because he dazzles them with things the villagers think will make them happy. Of course, Gordon from this story can see that they are wrong to do what they are doing. He notes that watching the men play with Phil's buried treasure is, "spoiling what was once our community" (226).

## Rebirth

This anthology makes it seem as though rebirth and eternal life are all within the grasp of humans so long as they embrace cybernetics wholeheartedly. The most obvious use of rebirth through technology is seen in "The Pyramid and the Ass." The company at the center of the story is Soul Co., a corporation created specifically to recapture a person's soul and place it safely back into one's restructured body. The main character, Douglas Duncage, refers to himself and others by the amount of times they have used Soul Co.'s services, with Douglas being "Ninth Incarnation." This very term, "incarnation" is what separates this theme of rebirth from the possible theme of reincarnation. Reincarnation comes with the idea that a living creature's soul is placed in a new and different living thing again. However, in Douglas' world, everyone's bodies and souls are recycled, making it simple "incarnation." Douglas is unable to separate his previous life from his current one, and he begins to experience hallucinations. In the end of the story, readers learn that these are not flashbacks at all but memories of his past life. Douglas does not learn this about himself until he is reborn by being unplugged. He must first separate himself from his own self and wait to be reborn back into the world.

The narrator in "Heartland" hopes for rebirth but not for his soul. He aches for the suffering soul of the world, and, in particular, he aches for his town. The narrator in this chapter tries his best to be a loving father but fails frequently in this endeavor. He wants to move his family and bring them back to life in an entirely new environment. He himself feels that he can be reborn and return as a better, more loving husband and father if given the chance. The problem is that the narrator feels that the world will not



give him a chance. He feels trapped in a hopeless world where repair and second chances are merely impossible hopes. As the narrator drunkenly drives home after yet another day failing as a head of the household, he experiences hope in the dawn of day, commenting, "Soon it will be dawn and everything will be ugly, but for now there's an eerie radiance to the world. Perhaps it will be okay, I think. The earth will recover; the world won't ever truly end. Perhaps it will be green someday" (54). What is curious about the narrator's thinking here is that he desires a rebirth of his life and of the world, yet he feels that he can only feel hopeful for this rebirth when the day is at its darkest hour. He uses his memories of light to feel positive. Most of all, the narrator believes in the possibility that rebirth is possible citing, in this case, the color green.

The narrator in "Heartland" is a human, which is what makes his rebirth so much more difficult than the rebirth seen in "Children of the New World." In this story, the virtual children created by the parents are wiped out. Readers are reminded that "[the children] won't feel a thing; they're just data" (91). This is quite the opposite experience for the parents in this story. They live through their own reboot, their own family's rebirth. In this case, the virtual children feel nothing while the humans feel an immense amount of pain. However, despite the difficulty, a rebirth was possible; a quick and easy process. For the people who survived the coming of the ice in "Ice Age," the rebirth was anything but easy. Their lives have changed dramatically and they are forced to go back to a time where days are spent hunting and gathering. This has also been a difficult experience for some of the people who have survived, but not everyone chose to be reborn. The actions of Phil Paulson run parallel with the actions people used to take before the ice age occurred. He refuses to be reborn and forces the people around him to collapse their community in order to adhere to his personal idea of one.



# Styles

## Point of View

Each short story in this anthology has a different point of view, with most stories being told from the perspective of a limited narrator's point of view. What is unique about this collection of short stories is that, while different, all but two of the stories' points of view are written in the first person. The two chapters that are not written in this style are different because they are not stories at all but fictionalized articles. "Excerpts from the New World Authorized Dictionary" and "A Brief History of the Failed Revolution" are each written objectively, and in the third person, because neither has a narrative or characters. Both of these chapters describe a moment in the history of Weinstein's fictional futuristic society where definitions were necessary. For each of the remaining 11 chapters, there are different characters and very different storylines. Each chapter allows readers to slice into the psyche of a person who is living through changes within this world. Readers learn about the progression of computers from being next to humans to embedding themselves into humans' brains. Not every chapter is told from a character that is named. Many of the chapters have deeply personal revelations within them but the narrator is never named.

Additionally, each chapter takes a rather cynical point of view about the software people have allowed into their lives. Each person is hurt or damaged by certain connections to the new technology of their time, and they are struggling to overcome the hurdles they feel are firmly planted in front of them.

## Language and Meaning

Alexander Weinstein introduces readers to a set of new vocabulary in the chapter titled "Excerpts from the New World Authorized Dictionary." In this chapter, readers learn about terms related to new software that is embedded into people's brains such as "brainflea" (57); and of the complications arising from these new products, such as "togging-fatigue" (62). This chapter also includes a number of terms related to pleasure: both sexual and drug-related. This reminds readers that, as this society is advancing into more and more cybernetic blending, people are becoming even more sharply fixated on their own personal comfort and pleasure. We see this language carried out through many of the chapters within this novel. There are lengthy sexual encounters described, most of them being virtual encounters.

One particularly graphic scene that depicts how cybernetics has allowed humans to obsess over their own sexual pleasure can be found in "Migration." The parents in the household have created avatars for the purposes of sexual fantasy. Their avatars are anatomically incorrect yet bring them immense pleasure while online. Another graphic scene where virtual sexual encounters are described can be found in the story "Fall Line." Here, the main character is having sex with a woman who wants to broadcast her





experience with people who want to fantasize about having sex with her. This is yet another synthetic sexual experience being pored over by humans who are constantly seeking more and more personal pleasure.

Much of Weinstein's notable language is encapsulated within individual chapters. There is much wordplay seen within different stories, including the repetition of phrases to meet the theme of the individual story. "The Cartographers" is a story all about memories. Readers are treated to several instances where Weinstein includes the word "memory" naturally within the sentence, leaving readers fully engrossed in the story of Adam Woods and his programming friends. In particular, Weinstein uses the phrase, "refresh your memory" (36) while Adam is encouraged to make healthier choices. This is a carefully chosen phrase and inserts the word "memory" within the memories of readers.

The author names each story with a very specific purpose. Many of the story titles have double meanings related to the events of the story. In "Openness," for example, the story is set in an open cabin in Maine but it is also a tale of a young man who does not know how to open up to people anymore. In "Migration," there are migrating deer that are found by the narrator. This majestic scene is captured while the narrator and his son are migrating back to their home after the human race has retreated into their separate dwellings. Lastly, the title story, "Children of the New World" also explores double-meanings. Before beginning the anthology, one might think that this is a connection to the naive and new approach humans take to these technological advances. However, the titular short story itself is about children who were "born" in a virtual reality system called "New World." This brings multiple meanings to the name of the chapter and to the title of the novel.

## Structure

This novel is divided into 13 short stories. Each story is about different characters and each is placed in different settings. Readers can gather that this book, while written about a futuristic society, is actually a collection of stories placed in chronological order. This order begins in "The Cartographers" when beaming mastermind Quimbly leaves the narrator, Adam, for a new job placing advertisements into people's eye blinks. Later, in the chapter titled, "Excerpts from The New World Authorized Dictionary," the name Quimbly is mentioned in relation to complaining about these eye blink ads. In "Excerpts from The New World Authorized Dictionary," Weinstein includes dates around 2026. Later on, in "A Brief History of the Failed Revolution," subsequent citations are dated between 2028 and 2034. This gives readers the impression that this collection, while seemingly fragmented, is actually one world being described in depth by author Alexander Weinstein.



## Quotes

We all have to reboot this. This world, with all its pain and loss. This is where we learn to love again.

-- Bill Thompson (Children of the New World)

**Importance:** This quote is the center of Weinstein's message in this novel. The world has become a tangle of devices, cleverly designed to help us connect without connections and to feel without experiencing. The world is painful and malicious. It comes after people who embrace the technology wrong and it lacks humanity. Bill Thompson wants the world to reset. He wants humanity to strengthen itself by undoing the web it has already woven. This deconstruction is where the world can learn to love and connect again.

Wow, that's amazing," Kyra says, and I stand next to her, looking at the flowers George sent, acknowledging how little I truly know about this world."

-- Narrator (Saying Goodbye to Yang)

**Importance:** The narrator in this short story has strong beliefs that result in flash judgements of others. In particular, the neighbor, George, is a man who the narrator judges to be an unhelpful and unemotional man. But it is George's flowers delivered on the front porch of the narrator's house that teach him how wrong he was about George. This act of kindness is enough to remind the narrator of all the things he does not understand. The narrator does not fully understand his feelings for Yang's malfunction and disassembly nor does the narrator comprehend the complex people he places into stereotypical boxes of their public representations.

Here was the ocean, here the ships, here the hotel, here the path that led to town, here the street vendors, here the memories of children we never had and parents much better than the ones we did."

-- Adam Woods (The Cartographers )

**Importance:** Adam is a creator of memories. He builds a life and makes a living off of creating false memories for people in order to enhance their lives. His work, and his hobby of beaming, comes with a consequence. Adam loses touch with reality. Adam cannot tell when he is beaming and when he is truly alive, living a moment. There is parallel sentence repetition in this quote. Adam is trying to establish what he sees "here"; he notes what he sees and what he wants to see. The final sentence in this quote refers to the memories one hopes to establish. Parents can be made up or forgotten depending on the user's preference. In Adam's world, a programmer can make someone's life different . . . better.

Soon it will be dawn and everything will be ugly, but for now there's an eerie radiance to the world. Perhaps it will be okay, I think. The earth will recover; the world won't ever truly end. Perhaps it will be green someday."

-- Narrator (Heartland)



**Importance:** The setting in this story is harsh, muddy, brown muck that is described as a slippery and monochromatic mess. The narrator, and the person who says this quote, is hopeless. He sees the world as a horrible place that is destroying itself. In the light of dawn, while driving home, the narrator feels hope for the first time in a long time. He wants so badly to see the healing green on the brown earth but he can't. The narrator wants to see the positive side of things but is unable to. He needs to believe that his life can get better, that he can be a better father for his family. The narrator needs this hope to continue living and to find the motivation to drive home and wake up the next morning.

Enlightenment, it turned out, didn't last long.  
-- Abe (Moksha)

**Importance:** Abe's version of enlightenment does not satisfy his soul. His version is cheap. It is a drug. Abe does not feel satisfied by Moksha because it is a synthetic feeling, driven by technology and quickly downloaded. His experience with discovering his inner self is not a true experience at all, and he crashes back down to earth shortly after his experiences. Abe feels let down by his experience with enlightenment. He desires the outcome without putting in the effort, and, as a result, it is a short-lived feeling of peace.

While most of the guests at the lodge spoke of nothingness, Abe increasingly found himself returning to a deep something he couldn't shake. Perhaps it was the spotty connection."  
-- Abe (Moksha)

**Importance:** Abe comes close to inward thinking, but he quickly sloughs it off as having bad connection. He lives in a society where people have made both inter and inner-personal connections through downloads and computer hookups. He has lived this way for so long that Abe does not recognize when he comes close to true feeling. He is far away from home, he left home on purpose; yet he dreams of returning to his home. Abe feels this connection to his own inner-self but cannot understand the actual feeling.

I walk over to her, or kneel by her and place my head in her lap, and we'll stay like that, holding one another's pain, wondering whether we are truly monsters.  
-- Narrator (Children of the New World)

**Importance:** The narrator in this story has trouble separating the facts he knows to be true from the synthetic feelings he knows have affected him truly. The narrator knows that the children he once loved were never really children. At no point did these children exist outside of a computer program. However, this awareness does not change the deep affection he felt for his virtual children nor does this acknowledgement change his pain associated with terminating them. He wonders if he is a monster because he knows he destroyed his own happiness by fulfilling his own selfish sexual desires. This program was made for human pleasure, sexual or otherwise. He found pleasure in his family; he was satisfied with being a parent. This was no longer enough, and his journey



to find virtual experiences is what led to the destruction of his happiness with his family. He does not know if he is a monster because he knows the children had no feelings despite his immense personal feelings of regret and responsibility.

What I didn't want: a low-octane life of draining jobs, counting the days till I'd have time to mow the lawn again, counting the weeks till I could afford some plastic, beach-chair vacation, counting the years till retirement when I'd be too old to enjoy it. I was from a place built off those blueprints, where sprinklers went off in the morning and whole neighborhoods became ghost towns during work hours. I'd look out at all those empty houses, the exhausted adults returning home, the whole sorry bunch living at low throttle, and it seemed like death. I wanted to see the stars over Kilimanjaro, the sunrise after sleeping at the base of a killer range, to breathe powder."

-- Ronnie Hawks (Fall Line)

**Importance:** Ronnie is a man who never thought about growing up into anything but the dream version of himself. He thinks his only life option is to live uniquely. He yearns for a life of adventure and extreme actions. Ronnie is not unique in this hope. However, his personal hope bleeds into arrogance. He judges people who do not want his life. He sees their seemingly typical lives as something to be ashamed of. For him, his desires for living are the only acceptable outcomes, and he rejects other people who do not feel the same way he does.

Ethics, he stated, was hardly the basis to reject a leap in human/computer intelligence . . .

-- Ludov Dksvoskny (A Brief History of the Failed Revolution)

**Importance:** This anthology provides readers with a very slow transition from humans using computers to humans being computers to humans losing computers. This chapter ("A Brief History of the Failed Revolution") is in the middle of the book. It comes at a transitional time in history when technology is embedded in the human psyche. This is when people actually become computers. While there are two sides to this debate, Ludov Dksvoskny wholeheartedly believes that software has a place in the human consciousness. However, as this quote makes clear, ethics were not considered when this change is embedded software was developed. Developers did not consider the long-term effects this conscious-based software would have on humanity. And, as we see in later chapters, it takes a harsh toll.

Intelligence should henceforth be seen as a kind of capital. Ideas, hypotheses, and arguments are the only assurance the individual still has of buying power in the marketplace of consciousness."

-- Samuel Kotsky (A Brief History of the Failed Revolution)

**Importance:** Kotsky is a harsh critic of placing computer software into the consciousness of humans. He sees it as a dangerous and world-altering move. He quickly sees the power of human intelligence-- natural human intelligence. This non-synthetic and authentic use of ideas and argument is something Kotsky believes will be



of the utmost value in the future. He is a purist who sees the benefits of true intelligence and of traditional information sharing methods.

You're seeing colors. It's a beautiful experience."  
-- "Blockbuster" (The Pyramid and the Ass)

**Importance:** Douglas has been living in a bland, pre-programmed world. His color choice shave been black, white, and gray; and yet he has no idea what he has been missing. When the woman termed "Blockbuster" unplugs Douglas and Douglas disconnects from the technology running his life, he is capable of seeing the colorful world around him.

And there, in the cabin, feeling Katie's body against mine, I began to speak. I didn't stop myself, but leaned into my voice and the comfort of hearing my words disappearing into the air with only Katie and the crickets and witnesses."  
-- Andy (Openness)

**Importance:** Andy has lost his voice, both figuratively and actually. He remembers a time when speaking was the way for people to communicate, but he has lost the skill of conversation. In this moment, Andy allows himself to remember the feeling of conversation. He enjoys the thrilling feeling of his fleeting voice going out in the world. His sounds, his words, are spoken but not recorded. They disappear into nothingness but stick with the listener, Katie. This is a new type of communication for Andy--a more authentic communication--and Andy loves the temporary feeling of the experience.

And there will be no blood tonight, no bodies, and no murder among us-- just this sled full of pawned goods, and drunken men spoiling what was once our community.  
-- Gordon (Ice Age)

**Importance:** In a shocking turn, Gordon seems to be more disappointed in Phil's ability to strike a deal with the villagers than the villagers' possible ability to murder the Paulson family. Gordon takes his feeling of community very seriously. He remembers how the world used to be before the ice age, and he clings to the warm feeling of alliance to help him defeat the cold outside of his igloo. He is saddened to realize that greed is still present within the hearts of these men. They do not feel a strong alliance and they quickly sell out to a man who does no work to help the village. These men in the village strike this deal selfishly. They do not think about the long-term well-being of the community. This realization is heartbreaking for Gordon to accept.