

Reading Group Guide

Windup

1. Consider Tommen's Apprentice review, the knowledge aspect, the skills aspect, and the psychological exam. Do you believe these are effective at assessing the candidate's skills and weeding out Runners? Is the test moral/ethical? How would such a psychological exam be received in the modern workforce? What do you think other such psychological exams would look like from other characters?
2. Consider the role of sex throughout the series so far. What does Tommen believe currently, and how does it differ from what he would have been taught growing up in the nineteenth century? As a sixteen year old boy, how much does it affect Tommen's decisions? Do you believe he would have as willingly gone with Sifura had she been an ugly D'Bok? Do you believe that his encounter with the white Borelian in his hallucination really scared his porn addiction out of him? How do you think things will change moving forward, if at all?
3. The secretaries are the driving force of the Wheel, taking care of everything from sensitive paperwork to trash, but most agree that they have more power than most Earth-side CEO's. What do we normally think about secretaries and janitors, compared to the Wheel? How do you think this affects ordinary business? How would you feel about it walking around in any of the marketplaces, or anywhere in the Wheel?
4. In the original outline for the book, Tommen was planned to regain his hearing fully. Instead, his hearing loss was made permanent. How does this affect his character development? How does this affect his moods and actions going forward? Have you ever experienced some physical disability that you had hoped would heal and right itself, but ultimately became permanent? How has that affected you?
5. Consider the statistics for the warehouse: ten dead, more lost to injury or simply not returning. How does this affect Walter, both short-term and long-term? Should he have been forced to retire or quit on the spot? What other events shape Walter's mindset, both in his personal history and as a police officer?
6. From day one, Becky is nosy and has a big mouth, prying into Tommen's business and basically forcing herself on him. While he gets irritated and snaps at her, they slowly make it work into a tentative friendship. Whose approach to Tommen's emotional situation do you believe is more effective: the adults, who merely keep an eye on him and tell him he ought to get help; or Becky, who makes his business her business and speaks very candidly? Do you believe such an approach would be effective in most or all situations? Why or why not? How do you think such emotional distress and suicide watch could be handled better?
7. When confronted by Tadashi, Tommen points out that he is only at school, work, or home—hardly hiding from Rifun who is still at large (and later kills Tadashi). Why do you think Rifun has really left him alone? Do you think his hand injury changed his plans or his attitude toward Tommen or Walter?

8. Consider the transfer of power for the Hands. What do you make of the exit oath? Do you think it is a good idea? How would something similar be received today? What do you think is the purpose of doing everything individually instead of *en masse*? Do you believe it could have contributed to the success of the coup? What other factors of the ceremony itself could have aided Rifun and Cassius?
9. Was the idea to swap Cassius for Rifun in the ceremony a good one (for the plan itself)? What does the swap and the takeover say about the power dynamic between the two? Considering everything about them thus far, who do you believe is really in charge?