

Book Club Kit Discussion Guide
The Power
By Naomi Alderman

Author:

Naomi Alderman is the recipient of the 2017 Baileys Women's Prize for Fiction for *The Power*. She is also the author of *The Liars' Gospel* and *Disobedience*, which won the Orange Prize for New Writers, has been published in ten languages, and has been made into a film by Rachel Weisz. Alderman was selected for *Granta's* once-a-decade list of Best of Young British Novelists and was chosen by Margaret Atwood as part of the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative. She is the cocreator and lead writer of the bestselling smartphone audio adventure app *Zombies, Run!* She contributes regularly to *The Guardian* and presents *Science Stories* on BBC Radio 4. She lives in London. (*From the publisher.*)

Summary:

In *The Power*, the world is a recognizable place: there's a rich Nigerian boy who lounges around the family pool; a foster kid whose religious parents hide their true nature; an ambitious American politician; a tough London girl from a tricky family. But then a vital new force takes root and flourishes, causing their lives to converge with devastating effect. Teenage girls now have immense physical power—they can cause agonizing pain and even death. And, with this small twist of nature, the world drastically resets.

From award-winning author Naomi Alderman, *The Power* is speculative fiction at its most ambitious and provocative, at once taking us on a thrilling journey to an alternate reality and exposing our own world in bold and surprising ways. (*From the publisher.*)

Discussion Questions:

1. The premise of *The Power* seems to be that if a new world order were created—with women in charge—it would look little different from the way it does now. That woman would use their power to oppress men. Do you agree with that premise? Does Naomi Alderman make her case convincingly? Do you see other possibilities?
2. *Follow-up to Question 1:* The book poses a question: why do people abuse power? What does the book suggest the answer is? What is your answer?
3. As an interesting exercise, go through the novel to identify those societal structures, both legitimate and criminal, that have been changed by feminine power. Look at how the book treats religion, the military, sex trafficking and porn, harassment, even bullying. What does the new power inversion say about the way gender and sexuality operates in "normal" society (i.e., today in the early 21st century)?
4. In what ways does each of the four characters—Eve, Roxy, Tunde, and Margot—illuminate the events of the novel and all that has changed? Whose perspective or story do you find most interesting ... or revealing ... or engaging?
5. What do you make of Neil Adam Armon and his gushing letter to Naomi Alderman, "I am so grateful you could spare the time," and "Sorry, I'll shut up now"? If you are a woman, does that tone, do those words, have a familiar ring? Also, what's the joke here about appropriation, given that Alderman's name, not Neil's, ends up on the novel? (If you haven't already, play around with the letters of Neil's name.)

6. *Vogue* reviewer, Bridget Read (really), calls parts of the book "revenge porn." Do you agree with her label? Do you find the revenge satisfying or twisted ... or both?

7. Neil ponders: "Gender is a shell game. What is a man? Whatever a woman isn't. What is a woman? Whatever a man is not. Tap on it and it's hollow. Look under the shells: It's not there." What does Neil mean, and do you agree or disagree? How do you see gender? Is it "real" or a social construct?

8. The novel: bleak or hopeful?

(Discussion Questions Source: LitLovers.)