
Gravity

Posted by Mary Dunn - 2009/05/28 20:57

This is where we will begin our discussion of our first read of the summer, Gravity, by Tess Gerritsen.

So grab a copy of Gravity and check back to this area later in June to see when the discussions begin.

Robin and Mary

Here's the book jacket from the amazing thriller, Gravity:

"Emma Watson, a brilliant research physician, has been training for the mission of a lifetime: to study living beings in space. Jack, McCallum, Emma's estranged husband, has shared her dream of space travel, but a medical condition has grounded and embittered him. He must watch from the sidelines as his wife prepares for her first mission to the International Space Station.

Once aboard the space station, however, things start to go terribly wrong. A culture of single-celled organisms known as Archaeons, gathered from the deep sea, is to be monitored in the microgravity of space. The true and lethal nature of this experiment has not been revealed to NASA. In space, the cells rapidly multiply and soon begin to infect the crew-with agonizing and deadly results.

A recovery attempt ends in catastrophe; the NASA shuttle crashes, and the space station is left dangerously crippled. Emma struggles to contain the deadly microbe, while back home, Jack and NASA work against the clock to retrieve Emma from space.

But there will be no rescue. The contagion now threatens Earth's population as well, and the astronauts are left stranded in orbit, quarantined aboard the station-where are dying one by one..."

<http://mainescienceteachers.org/images/fbfiles/images/Gravity.png>

=====

Re:Gravity

Posted by Lynn Farrin - 2009/06/25 16:36

This was the first book of Tess's that I read. I loved it and it got me hooked on her style. My goal is to read all that she's written before coming to MSTA this fall. I just finished the Apprentice which was a good read. :cheer:
Lynn

=====

Re:Gravity

Posted by Mary Dunn - 2009/06/29 10:21

It was the first of Tess's books that I read too Lynn. And it also got me hooked on her work. You have quite the ambitious goal! I am just rereading Gravity to get ready for our Summer Read with Tess. But I've also begun her book Vanish.

Keep you eyes out for a posting from Tess telling us about how she conducts the research for her books, can't wait!

Happy summer Tess reading! B)
Mary

=====

Re:Gravity

Posted by Jan Rollins - 2009/07/03 08:04

Hi, Lynn. I have read several of her books and got very excited about her appearance this Fall. Read Harvest, as well. Would love to know what you think of this book. I will read Apprentice.

=====

Re:Gravity

Posted by Lynn Farrin - 2009/07/03 09:36

I've read Harvest - that was good as well. So far I have read Gravity, The Bone Garden, Harvest, Vanish, The Mephisto Club, The Surgeon, and The Apprentice. Several of these maintain the Detective character, Jane Rizzoli who I think is so much fun. Gravity was what got me hooked for sure and is up there in my "favorites" list. The Bone Garden I found particularly enjoyable because it has a story within a story - one modern day and one historical (set in Boston). I would highly recommend the Bone Garden! I'm not sure which title I'll read next - I'm looking forward to her newest work The Keepsake but it's not available until fall. Decisions, decisions!

=====

Time for Lift Off.....

Posted by Mary Dunn - 2009/07/07 06:13

Houston - It's time for Liftoff!

Happy July 7th and welcome to MSTA's first summer read!

The purpose of this summer read is to read adult literature with a science focus for pure enjoyment and to discuss the books with other folks who also enjoy reading and science. We chose 3 books by Tess Gerritsen because she is a fantastic writer who lives in Maine. And because she weaves science through her books beautifully and realistically. For this reason Tess will be the keynote speaker at the MSTA annual conference in October.

Each week we will plan to read and discuss approximately 100 pages. For this week, week 1, we will read through the two sections, The Sea and The Launch. Week 2, July 12-18th, we will focus on the sections, The Station and The Sickness. Week 3, July 19-25th we will focus on The Autopsy and The Chimera. And we will end our Gravity read the week of July 26th with the sections, The Origin and The Sea.

As you read through these sections think about the many science related areas and ideas that arise and how they make this story so engaging and real! Without the science there just wouldn't be a story here worth reading. There are examples from space science, biology, geology, physics, and meteorology. Are there any others that I missed? We'd love to hear which area of science caught your interest and curiosity.

As you begin to read Gravity, notice the Dedication and the Acknowledgments; they really help set the tone of the story...
"to the men and women who made spaceflight a reality. Mankind's greatest achievements are launched on dreams."

As I read this I found myself reflecting on the history of spaceflight since Kennedy's famous speech of May 25, 1961 when he muttered the words, "First, I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the earth." You can hear excerpts of this famous speech at:
<http://www.jfklibrary.org/Historical+Resources/Archives/Reference+Desk/Speeches/JFK/003POF03NationalNeeds05251961.htm>)

Tess opens her mystery, which is predominantly set in the International Space Station, with mysterious life forms found thousands of feet below the ocean surface and includes references to the ocean floor's physical features. As you read this you may wonder if and how she is setting the stage for life in microgravity a few thousands of feet above! As I read I found myself wondering which of the many details was Tess going to hold onto and weave throughout this thrilling mystery. Since many of us are coming from a variety of science backgrounds some science references may be familiar to us while others are not. Due to this, different areas of the book will catch our attention differently. What areas grabbed you? How does Tess's style add to the effectiveness of grabbing your attention?

What do you think of the story so far?

As they say at NASA, "We are a go!" So as you travel through Gravity, "Good luck and Godspeed!"

Mary

=====

Re:Gravity

Posted by Beth Chagrasulis - 2009/07/10 19:53

I've read all of Tess's books ! I'm jealous of those of you who are just discovering her since you have so many good books you can read this summer. Lynn, The Keepsake is already available. Maybe you mean it comes out in paperback this fall? :unsure:

Thank you for lining up Tess Gerritsen for the fall conference. I've heard her talk about her research for The Bone Garden at Borders Books, and she was generous enough to come to Lake Region and talk to my student book group a couple years ago too. Everyone is in for a treat :blink:

Beth C

Re:Gravity

Posted by Mary Whitten - 2009/07/10 19:56

Wow - What a book. I started it at the airport waiting for my plane to Florida. A week later I was done. I am not a fast reader either. The science in the book was great. Along with the sciences already mentioned, you could use it to start a discussion about how engineers and others solve problems. I was also surprised that the astronauts "campout" before talking a space walk as Jim mentioned in an earlier post.

It was a great read!! look forward to meeting and hearing Tess at the conference in October.

Mary W

Re:Gravity

Posted by Mary Dunn - 2009/07/13 07:45

It was a great book wasn't it!? To piggy back the idea of incorporating technological design throughout science here's an interesting passage to begin week 2 of the forum when we look at the chapters "The Station" and "The Sickness":

Pg 90 - "ISS looked like a majestic sailing ship soaring through the heavens. Built by sixteen diffeent countries, the components had been delivered into space on forty-five seperate launches. It had taken five years to assemble her, piece by piece, in orbit. Far more than merely a marvel of engineering, she was a symbol of what man can achieve when he lays down his weapons and turns his gaze skyward."

Speaking of skyward, can you imagine looking out your window and seeing the image below,our amazing and ever more frail planet!?

Something that shines through Tess's books is her ability to weave science throughout a very human story. This book is no exception. As we read and get excited about all that goes on aboard the ISS there are always those human elements such as living in very close quarters, folks who get along better or worse than others, language barriers, homesickness, living in microgravity, bodily functions...

And then there is the death of the mouse...

How does the gruesome medical details of this story grab you or do you savor the details of living aboard the ISS?

Mary
Earthrise:
<http://mainescienceteachers.org/images/fbfiles/images/Earthrise.png>

Re:Gravity

Posted by Kathy Renfrew - 2009/07/13 11:14

I think you have a great goal Lynn! I read Gravity a long time ago and I have since read all of her books. I read them with

a different lens. This time I hope to be able to elicit the science as I read.

Kathy

=====

Re:Gravity

Posted by Susan Kistenmacher - 2009/07/13 11:15

Hi Gravity readers,

I was amazed at how much I enjoyed the book. It completely took my attention during a 3 hour bus ride. These days everyone has a book group but I like the idea of a science teachers' book group especially with the culminating event being a visit from the author.

Thanks for organizing this and now I off to read "The Bone Garden"

Sue Kistenmacher

PS I got all three books from Alibris used books (on line)

=====

Re:Time for Lift Off.....

Posted by Robin Kennedy - 2009/07/13 21:00

I have found the lingo to be so realistic. She has a great grasp of the acronym.

On page 115 is starts an IV?? I don't believe that can be done inn space? I took a workshop in risk on the space station and one of them was the fact that you can't have an IV. I am surprised. My be it has changed in the passed couple of years I will have to find out and let you know.

=====

Re:Gravity

Posted by Abby Manahan - 2009/07/15 09:44

I just started reading Gravity and I'm hooked! I've been on a non-fiction kick for about a year now and decided that this would be a good reason to take a fun, page-turning break. My first Gerritsen was Vanish and it wasn't a great read for me. I don't think it had enough "science" in it for me. I am enjoying Gravity and it reminds me of one of my other favorite authors, Dan Brown. I really enjoyed Deception Point along with his other more popular titles.

I'm at the point in Gravity where the mouse is about to lick the floating mass of Archaeon in the ISS lab. Is there anyone else out there just starting the book? I'm sure that Tess is going to tell me all about Archaeon but I am a bit OCD with research and do decided to get a head start by Googling Archeon. I am particularly interested in the biotech/biomed applications of Archaea. I was surprised that I didn't find too much in the way of current (07-09) research (at least not in a cursory search) but I did find a 2002 paper from the journal Archaea on the perspectives of biotech apps of archaea. If I were using this book with students (in particular college bound science interest students) I would want to make connections with the fiction and some practical skill applications (aka science literacy). I would use this journal paper as a way to supplement the info on archaea but also teach some technical reading skills, something I didn't truly learn until graduate school. Journal papers are not easy reads and to expose our students early on to this type of reading and writing format can only help them succeed. Combining Gravity with an activity like this doesn't make the technical reading seem so daunting. I've attached a PDF of this paper for anyone interested.

I'd like to ask Tess how she dealt with all the technical reading she must have done in the research for this book? Does she have any tips or tricks that she used when reading dry, data-oozing journal papers? I'll have to check to see if there's a forum for questions to ask Tess.

http://mainescienceteachers.org/images/fbfiles/files/Biotech_apps_of_Archaea.pdf

=====

Re:Gravity

Posted by Abby Manahan - 2009/07/15 10:00

Oh no I posted 3 times, that's what I get for sitting on the porch doing this blinded by the shiny orb in the sky...anybody know what that thing is? :ohmy:

Will the moderator please clean up my mess and delete my duplicate postings, thanks!

=====

Re:Gravity

Posted by Mary Dunn - 2009/07/15 14:14

All cleaned up Abby. Thank you for asking.

As for the questions for Tess. How about I start a thread for them. I cannot guarantee that she will answer. I can let her know that the thread is there but she's an incredible busy woman. But let's start a thread and see what happens.

Mary

=====

Re:Gravity

Posted by Mary Dunn - 2009/07/20 07:53

The Eagle Has Landed!!

It would be hard to begin this week without acknowledging the historic significance of today's date...July 20th... 40 years ago today Apollo 11 landed on the moon! Do you remember what you were doing on that date while you watched Neil Armstrong step onto the lunar surface? While it may not feel like we've taken a giant leap for mankind during this forum discussion we can say that by reading riveting literature with a strong science theme for no reason except for absolute pleasure we've made small step for the Maine science community.

In Gravity the ISS crew is facing a threat of staggering significance. While reading the sections, The Autopsy and The Chimera, we are exposed to the raw threat of an altered microbial life form. Chimera was a new word for me. I looked it up in Wikipedia and here's what it said: Typically seen in non-human zoology (but also discovered to a rare extent in human beings), a chimera is an animal that has two or more different populations of genetically distinct cells that originated in different zygotes; if the different cells emerged from the same zygote, it is called a mosaicism. As I read these sections I was of course enthralled by the life science. But I also found that I was reminded over and over again about the astronauts humanness. Whether it was in the minor errors they made that turned out to be not so minor or the intimate feelings they had for each other; the human aspect was always close at hand. I found myself wondering what role the human aspect continues to play in the ISS today as there are more astronauts aboard the ISS today than ever before.

What were your thoughts on these gruesome sections of the book?

Happy Lunar Landing Day. Be sure to take a moment and look up into the sky and marvel at its grandeur and remember the words, "We came in peace for all mankind."

Mary

PS - Here's a neat video clip on the moon landing and the scientific spin offs that we use today:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uw9azKj70kA>

<http://mainescienceteachers.org/images/fbfiles/images/moon.png>

=====

Re:Gravity

Posted by Mary Dunn - 2009/07/26 19:24

This is our final week discussing Gravity. What stood out to you as you read the final sections, The Origin and The Sea?

Something that stood out to me was the use of questions. It reinforced the notion that questions are an essential element

of science and thus science education. On page 333 Emma asks, "Why would a mammalian hormone like HCG suppress the reproduction of an alien life-form? Why would an extraterrestrial organism, so foreign to anything on earth possess properly fitting locks to our keys?" I notice that these questions are not yes/no questions or questions that require memorized facts. They are open ended and meaningful to Emma, the person asking the questions. They will require more research and will ultimately lead to more questions. They will lead to clarification of the world around her.

What were your thoughts on Gravity and did you enjoy the read?

Mary

=====