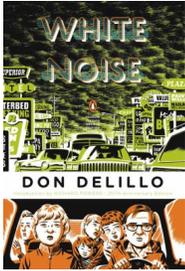


Books by the Stack



White Noise by Don DeLillo

A Midwestern family navigates the rocky passages of family life while a lethal cloud resulting from an industrial accident hovers over them.

Why you'll like it: *Black humor. Satirical. Offbeat. Thought-provoking. Stylistically complex.*

About the Author: Don DeLillo was born in 1936. He received a bachelor's degree in communication arts from Fordham University in 1958. His first novel, *Americana*, was published in 1971. His other works include *Ratner's Star*, *The Names*, *Libra*, *Underworld*, *The Body Artist*, *Cosmopolis*, *Falling Man*, *Point Omega*, and *The Angel Esmeralda*, a collection of short stories. He won several awards including the National Book Award for fiction for *White Noise*, the PEN/Faulkner Award for *Mao II*, the PEN/Saul Bellow Award for Achievement in American Fiction, and the inaugural Library of Congress Prize for American Fiction. (Bowker Author Biography)

Questions for Discussion

1. Do you find it believable that Heinrich (Jack Gladney's 14-year-old son) can form the kinds of ideas he does and express them so clearly? Why would DeLillo specifically want to express such complicated ideas through Heinrich?
2. What overall point is the eccentric Murray Siskind trying to communicate to Jack in this book? Is there an overall point?
3. Stylistically, what does DeLillo accomplish by constantly quoting the television or car radio that's always playing in the background of Jack's family conversations? What point does DeLillo make by including these quotations?
4. Why does Murray take Jack out of town to visit the "Most Photographed Barn in America"? What is it about this barn that makes people photograph it? How is the barn a symbol for the America DeLillo is sketching in this book?
5. Why is death such a looming presence in this book? Why does Jack Gladney tell his Hitler Studies class, "All plots tend to move deathward" (6.51)? Does this statement hold true for plots in novels? Plots in life? Why or why not?
6. How does being exposed to the "Airborne Toxic Event" change Jack Gladney's life? In what way is his life the same as it always was?
7. On a symbolic level, how might Babette's forgetfulness be connected to the experimental drug Dylar? What might DeLillo be trying to tell us about our efforts to erase death from our minds?

8. Why does DeLillo end the book with the description of Wilder crossing the highway on his tricycle? How does this scene tie together the themes DeLillo's been exploring throughout *White Noise*? Does it succeed?
9. What does DeLillo achieve by starting the book so slowly? When does the traditional plot really get started?
10. What role does the supermarket play as a setting? What role does consumerism?
11. What is the significance of contrasting Babette's exercise with Jack's question of who will die first?
12. What does the revelation of Babette's affair with Willie Mink reveal about both her and her marriage?
13. Is technology a good or a bad thing? What does *White Noise* have to say about the violence of contemporary life?

(Questions provided by shmoop.com and coursehero.com)



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