

## Reading Group Guide/Discussion questions

We hope the following questions will stimulate discussion for reading groups and provide a deeper understanding of *Psyclone* for every reader.

**Spoiler Warning! The following questions reveal details of *Psyclone*.**

*Psyclone* has been described as being 'data-dense'. Did the amount of information in the story affect your reading of it? If so, how?

The introduction to the appendix states that every piece of information and fact conveyed through internal and external dialogue in the novel with one exception is based on facts and information expanded on and linked to in that section. What does that tell you about the author's aim?

Pat eschews non-violent resistance, saying, 'This is the twenty first century. Gandhi and Martin Luther King would get detained indefinitely, no appeal, no representation, no doubt about it.' Do you agree with that statement? Do you think there are situations that justify armed resistance over non-violent resistance?

Dan and Kay describe themselves as pacifists, but each find violence justified by a particular situation. Do you think pacifism and violence are mutually exclusive? Could there be situations where pacifists could resort to violence whilst remaining pacifist?

The earlier chapters seem to be advocating armed resistance over non-violent resistance. Do you feel this is the overall message of the book?

According to the author the connection between the name of the resistance fighters in the story and the Palestine Liberation Organisation was intentional. At one point Jared draws parallels between his situation and the situation in Palestine and Iraq. Although unstated, the environment of Leon's war experiences suggests the Middle East. What do you think was the intended effect of these aspects?

The activities of the characters, especially the People's Liberation Organisation, would be labelled 'terrorist' in current parlance? Does the story help you to understand the issue of actions labelled 'terrorist actions' ?

When asked by Dan why he took on the job of liberating Jared, Leon quotes members of the Red Army Faction, also known as the Baader-Meinhof Gang, a German revolutionary libertarian group in the 1970s. Do the communiqués and strategy papers of that group linked to in the appendix help in understanding current armed struggles around the world?

The description of Jared's torture is based on the experiences of several one-time political prisoners in US institutions around the world. What image does a phrase like 'terror suspect' create in your mind?

Does Jared's experience of torture and the information he later finds in the form of academic overviews of three psychological experiments, alter your perception of the subject? If so, how?

Throughout the story are multiple references to fascism. The 'oddly familiar speech' overheard by Leon is from the transcript of a speech by Adolf Hitler. Fascism is an often misunderstood word. What is your definition?

The degree of surveillance described is based on technology currently in place in the UK. Has reading *Psyclone* made you more aware of the technology in your own environment?

The characters in the novel view the technology as threatening and oppressive. Does technology like CCTV and public sound recording, digital face-mapping, gait recognition, and trackable microchips make you feel safe or threatened?

What do think about the validity of the out-of-body experience? On what is your opinion based? Have you researched any further on the topic using the links in the appendix. If not, do so and then see if your perception of the subject changes. What do you think influenced that first impression?

Existence outside of the physical body and/or after death is a recurring theme. Has its inclusion in the story and the supporting research linked to through the appendix changed your perception of the subject? If so, in what way?

Were your perceptions of war affected by reading Alex's dialogue in Chapter 5 and Leon's war experiences in Chapter 6? If so, how?

What do you think of Jared's view of 'the system' in Chapter 7? What do you think of Leon's response to it?

Suicide bombing is rarely seen from the point of view of the bomber. Do you think that the subject was given deep enough treatment?

The introduction to the appendix states that *Psyclone* was written to inform, not entertain. Was Edward's being the vehicle for the delivery of a substantial amount of information in keeping with the character? Could this have been achieved more effectively like, for instance, 'the Book' in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-four*?

Orwell and *Nineteen Eighty-four* are both mentioned in dialogue. Certain elements of the environment of *Psyclone* and Jared's interior dialogue have parallels with elements of *Nineteen Eighty-four*. *Nineteen Eighty-four* is also listed in the recommended reading section of the appendix. Why is Mael trying to bring that work to readers attention?

In the introduction to the appendix, Mael states that he considers it to be the most important section in the book. Do you share his view?

One reader read the appendix along with the novel. Did you read it alongside, after, or not at all/yet?

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More information on the themes and subjects in *Psyclone*, including streaming video, can be found on the *Psyclone* website at

[www.centreofthepsyclone.com](http://www.centreofthepsyclone.com)