

RADIANT SHIMMERING LIGHT

BY SARAH SELECKY

Author of the Scotiabank Giller Prize—
shortlisted *This Cake Is for the Party*

SARAH SELECKY

RADIANT SHIMMERING LIGHT

A NOVEL

"This book is a dazzler." —Karen Joy Fowler,
author of *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves*

BOOKCLUB DISCUSSION GUIDE

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RADIANT SHIMMERING LIGHT: BOOKCLUB DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. *Radiant Shimmering Light* is a story about two women, neither of whom are married or have children. Yet it's not a novel about romance or relationships (it passes the Bechdel test—where at least two women must talk to each other about something other than a man—with flying colours!). It's not even really a novel about friendship. **Why is this such a rare story?**

2. This book is near-historical fiction (set in 2016). How is it already dated? **Why is it important that it's this particular slice of time?**

3. **Did you notice the subtle differences between the Canadian and American parts of the story?** Why do you think this tension is so persistent? What did you notice changed about the characters depending on which country they were in?

4. Looking at each of the characters in the book with equanimity—**who is the antagonist?** If everyone—including Eleven—is doing the best they can, is the antagonist systemic? How does that perspective change who you like or don't like in the book, and why? Why are we so fixated on liking the protagonist and disliking the antagonist in books?

5. Sarah Selecky has specifically stated that this book is not a work of satire. **If it wasn't her intention to satirize the women's empowerment movement, how are we supposed to look at it?**

6. **The women's empowerment space is very privileged.** It's often made up of wealthy white women “empowering” other wealthy white women. Eleven comes from this kind of privilege—and one could say she has blinders on when it comes to the rest of the world. Does this discount some of the lessons she's sharing with her community? How do we wrestle with that reality?

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7. At the beginning of the book, Lilian considers inviting Yumi to Eleven's talk in Toronto, but she worries Yumi won't fit in. **How would a gender-fluid character navigate a binary space like Ascendancy?** Where else in the book are there binaries, and where else are they dissolved?

8. A lot of the communication in the book takes place over text or social media. **Are the friendships in the book what you would define as "real" friendships?**

9. Have you ever bought or sold something to a friend? **What happens when the personal becomes transactional?** Is it problematic? Or is it a great way to empower women?

10. Why does it take Lilian so long to surrender and see people auras, not just animal auras? **What's holding her back?**

11. At the end of the book, a family happens upon Lilian making sand art on the beach. She hears them making comments about her being "not quite right"—but she doesn't care. She's finally unafraid to be herself. To be weird. **How does our culture make room for women who are making art that's not commodified?**

12. A lot of the themes in this book—digital overwhelm, anxiety about money, the commodification of everything—are real sources of stress. **But, in the end, is it a hopeful book?** How did you feel at the end?