



Q: A Novel

By Evan Mandery
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Introduction

'You must not marry Q.' This is the fateful and heartbreaking message delivered to the protagonist by someone who knows him very, very well; yet Q is the love of his life and they are engaged to be wed. But now, for clear and painful reasons, he knows that for her sake, he can't go through with it. And so his journey begins following a dramatic Thanksgiving Day dinner with a houseful of odd guests. He must find a way to spare Q any pain and then embark on a new path possible to happiness or any semblance thereof. He loses himself in his writing and in research of historical figures, notably Freud and his own unhappiness, and is also given regular updates on how to live life by the same well-meaning but disturbing friend.

Evan Mandery takes the love story and turns it on its head all over New York City, in the sweetest and most thoughtful way, with humor and angst in equal measure, and with a totally surprising ending that

will melt the darkest heart.

Questions for Discussion

1. Q raises some important moral questions. Was it ethical for the older version of the main character, I-55, to encourage the main character to change the path of his life? What about the other older versions?
2. Relatedly, and perhaps most importantly, was it ethical for the main character to decide to abandon Q? Did Q have a right to know the basis for his decision?
3. Are the main character and the future versions of himself the same people? If not, what implications does this have for how we think of ourselves? Is a ten-year old version of myself the same person as me? A thirty-year older version? Fifty?
4. In Q, the price of time travel is extremely high. Does it matter whether a new technology is egalitarian, meaning that it is accessible to all people? Would time travel, on the terms discussed in Q, be an improvement to society?
5. The debate between Herbert Spencer and Sigmund Freud in Chapter 18 is central to the theme of the book. All of the future versions of the main character believe they are making the main character's life better. Is this belief in progress real or is faux-Freud correct in saying that it is something humans have created to make their lives palatable?
6. Is Q's father a believable character? Is it possible that he is a different person with Q than in his business dealings?
7. The author writes the entire book in present tense. What do you think of this as a literary technique? What, if anything, is the author's message in making this choice?
8. Q is a comedy with a supremely tragic premise. Are these choices compatible or incompatible?
9. If you could visit yourself at an earlier point, where would you go and what, if anything, would you say?
10. If you could visit another place and time, where and when would you go?

About the Author

Evan Mandery is a graduate of Harvard Law School, a professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York City, and the author of two works each of fiction and nonfiction.