



## ***Cloud Cuckoo Land* by Anthony Doerr**

### **Book Discussion Guide**

Created by Madeline Bugeau-Heartt

#### **Introduction**

**words by Tyler Mark Nelson**

The Summer Fiction Book Club is an invitation for participants to become immersed in the creative world of fiction books while daring to explore challenging topics related to climate change and environmental injustice. Each month, participants read a selected book on their own time, and then we gathered virtually to discuss as a group. In addition to small group discussion, a guest conversation partner joined to offer their thoughts on the book and share about its impact in their life.

Simply put, fiction has the potential to reveal present realities and imagine possible futures. Through truth-telling, a good story confronts the current systems of power, the unequal material conditions, or the overwhelming circumstances that prevent all life from flourishing. It gives voice to whomever or whatever has been silenced, forgotten, or ignored — the lives of marginalized humans and exploited nonhumans, the values or perspectives that advocate for collective good, or the complex emotions that humans may experience during planetary polycrisis. Fiction can also be a window through which we envision compelling and creative possibilities, whether social, ecological, political, or economic. Imagining what worlds are possible creates the opportunity for us to build towards a better and more just future.

Reading fiction together is a dynamic way for humans to make sense of the world(s) in which we live. By coming together to discuss these books, we also collectively share the weightiness of the subjects. Readers may find a book club to be a space where they can encounter fictional worlds, exercise their imaginative capacities, and even explore and experience their own emotions through the narrative lens of fiction.

The following discussion questions can be used by any group wishing to engage around the novel *Cloud Cuckoo Land* by Anthony Doerr. A video clip from the discussion of the novel during our Summer Fiction Book Club in August 2024 is offered to provide additional perspective and basis for discussion.

## Introduction to *Cloud Cuckoo Land*

**From the publisher:** From the Pulitzer Prize–winning author of *All the Light We Cannot See*, comes the instant New York Times bestseller that is a “wildly inventive, humane and uplifting book for adults that’s infused with the magic of childhood reading experiences” (The New York Times Book Review).

Among the most celebrated and beloved novels of recent times, *Cloud Cuckoo Land* is a triumph of imagination and compassion, a soaring story about children on the cusp of adulthood in worlds in peril, who find resilience, hope, and a book.

**Guest conversationalist from our August 2024:** Tory Stephens (with Ash Temin)

- Link to Session Recording: <https://vimeo.com/1005840616>
- Discussion: Minute markers 10:00- 48:00 (38 minutes long)

### Discussion questions

1. What role does Time play in this book? What is Doerr saying about past, present, and future?
2. How do you make sense of the layered themes and intersecting threads of this book: (War? Futurism? Eco-terrorism? Love? Learning? Etc?)
3. In a climate-changed world, what role does storytelling play? What about the care of perpetuating a particular narrative?
4. What do you think The Call of this book is? What is the charge being offered?
5. Would you consider this book to be “climate fiction”? How might reading this help someone facing the real-life realities of climate change in our world today?