

AN ILLUSTRATED READING & DISCUSSION GUIDE

A PAST WITH TWO FACES

Every changed choice creates another reflection



BOOK CLUB KIT

Grief • Time • Identity • Family • Redemption

Based on the novel by Michael D. Young

One Life. Two Histories.



Frank Edison has built a loving family, but the motorcycle accident that killed his brother Todd still shadows every year of his life. When an impossible bazaar offers him one day in the past, grief turns into a bargain: save Todd, return home, and live with whatever follows.



The book-club question

If you could repair the worst moment of your life, what would you owe the people whose futures your choice rewrote?

How to use this kit

- Pages 2-5 are safe for readers who have only begun the novel; later pages contain complete spoilers.
- Plan six meetings of 60-75 minutes, or select the one-night question bank for a single event.
- Invite interpretation before explanation. The novel deliberately makes promises, bargains, and identities slippery.
- Treat grief, pregnancy loss, death, depression, and altered-family scenarios with care. Participants may pass.
- End each meeting by naming one choice, image, or relationship that changed meaning during the discussion.



Six Stops Across a Fractured Timeline

The group can read the whole novel first or follow these chapter clusters. Do not read the session pages before completing the assigned chapters.

#	MEETING	READ	FOCUS
1	The night ride	Chs. 1-3	Grief, memory, responsibility
2	The bargain	Chs. 4-8	Bazaar, essences, price, Andrus
3	One day rewritten	Chs. 9-15	Rescue, pursuit, altered present
4	Far from home	Chs. 16-24	Identity, family, war, lockets
5	The Crystal Tower	Chs. 25-31	Power, loyalty, memory, choice
6	Two faces	Chs. 32-Epilogue	Confrontation, redemption, crossroads

A useful meeting rhythm

5 min

Opening image or memory

15 min

Plot and character turning point

25 min

Three discussion questions

15 min

Activity or moral dilemma

10 min

Reframe one earlier scene

Spoiler threshold

The full-spoiler section begins after the next page.



Before the Timeline Breaks

Use this page after Chapters 1-3. It focuses on character and emotional stakes without revealing what the bargain changes.



Discuss

1. How does Frank's competitive impulse shape the night ride? Where does responsibility end and survivor's guilt begin?
2. Why is the mask-shaped locket an effective object to connect Todd's death, Christine's fear, and Frank's unresolved questions?
3. What do the carnival, bumper cars, yearbook, canyon, and anniversary ritual reveal about how Frank lives beside grief?
4. How does Frank's humorous narration change the way the novel handles loss?
5. At the end of Chapter 3, what do you believe Frank wants most: Todd's life, freedom from guilt, an explanation, or a different version of himself?

Prediction card

The price of a miracle

Before continuing, write one thing you think Frank will gain, one thing he will lose, and one rule the story's time travel should obey.



The People at the Center of the Choice

These descriptions are safe through Chapter 8. The second character guide on the next page contains full spoilers.

Frank Edison

A husband, father, advertising professional, former motorcycle racer, and grieving brother. His jokes protect a deep reservoir of guilt and longing.

Todd Edison

Frank's charismatic older brother, killed during their final canyon race. His locket and unfinished rendezvous keep the past from staying buried.

Christine Edison

Frank's perceptive, playful wife and Annie's mother. Her reaction to the locket hints that Frank does not possess the whole story.

Annie

Frank and Christine's young daughter, whose delight in bumper cars embodies the family life Frank could endanger by looking backward.

Cornelius C. Trezzlepeg

The blue, winged proprietor of an impossible bazaar. He offers solutions through barter, but every object carries a history and every price has edges.

Andrus

A tiny, invisible winged Shadow resembling a panda bear. Witty, capable, and assigned to guide Frank through the hazards of time travel.

Relationship lens

Draw a line from Frank to each person. Label it with what he wants from them and what they need from him.



Allies, Adversaries, and Divided Selves

From this point forward, the guide assumes the entire novel has been read.

Samot

A formidable Gyemen physician and survivor whose losses, loyalty, and growing bond with Todd make her more than Frank's guide through an alien war.

Tomas

Samot's husband and a gifted physician. His past with Mercos reveals how rescue, absence, and resentment can look radically different from two sides.

Mercos / Mercas

A warrior marked by a phoenix and empowered by the ultimate lockets. The division between destructive and redeemable selves literalizes the novel's title.

Lord Gyem

Leader of the Gyemens and keeper of the Crystal Tower, burdened with political survival and the dangerous work of scattering the lockets.

Ezra and Melchior

Sentient lockets associated with opposing emotional forces. Their voices expose how power can anticipate need, intensify desire, and cultivate dependence.

Xiaphius

The rightful shopkeeper, freed after Trezzlepeg's defeat. He restores moral weight to time travel and requires service rather than casual barter.

Identity question

Which characters are divided by magic, memory, role, grief, or competing loyalties? Which divisions can be healed, and which must be accepted?



The Night Ride and the Shape of Grief

READING	OPENING LENS
Chapters 1-3	Begin with the canyon: is it a memorial, a temptation, a crime scene, or a place where Frank keeps himself emotionally suspended?

Frank's adult life appears stable and loving, yet he repeats an anniversary ritual that returns him to the scene of Todd's death. The lost locket transforms memory into a physical mystery and makes the past feel unfinished rather than fixed.

Discuss

1. What details make the accident feel like a consequence of character rather than random fate?
2. Why does Frank keep returning to the canyon despite Christine's fear?
3. How does the novel distinguish remembrance from self-punishment?
4. What does Christine know or fear about the locket before Frank does?
5. If Frank had processed his grief differently, would Trezzlepeg's offer still have reached him?

Activity

The object that holds a past

Choose one object from the opening - helmet, motorcycle, yearbook, photograph, locket, or amusement-park prize. Explain what memory it stores and what action it invites.



The Bazaar: Every Desire Has a Price

READING	OPENING LENS
Chapters 4-8	Notice how Trezzlepeg shifts between host, salesman, teacher, comedian, and manipulator.



The bazaar turns emotion, memory, identity, and creatures into inventory. Frank's grief becomes both a call for help and a market opportunity. Andrus is the one guide who consistently treats consequences as real.

Discuss

1. What does the barter system reveal about the difference between value and price?
2. How do emotional essences literalize the ways feelings spread, accumulate, and become weapons?
3. Why is Frank charmed by the bazaar even when its dangers are obvious?
4. What early clues suggest that Trezzlepeg's rules are incomplete or self-serving?
5. How does Andrus's comic appearance complicate his role as the most responsible time-travel guide?

Marketplace dilemma

You may trade one memory for one relic. What could justify the exchange? Who else has a claim on a shared memory?

Save One Day, Lose Another



READING

Chapters 9-15

OPENING LENS

Separate Frank's intended change from the consequences no one told him to imagine.



Frank prevents Todd's original death, but Mercos's interference, erased memories, and the revised future expose the fantasy of changing only one event. The altered home makes the cost intimate: Annie is gone, Andrew is dead, and Christine's life belongs to a different history.

Discuss

1. When Frank saves Todd, is he acting from love, guilt, self-interest, or all three?
2. Which changes in the altered present wound Frank most, and why?
3. Does Frank have a right to reclaim Christine or Annie when the revised people have lives and loyalties of their own?
4. How does the novel use memory to make Frank both uniquely informed and dangerously isolated?
5. What time-travel rule becomes clearest only after Frank returns home?

Cause-and-effect chain

Write the changed event at the center of a page. Add every consequence Frank intended in blue and every consequence he did not foresee in gold.



Family, Memory, and the Stranger You Love

READING	OPENING LENS
Chapters 16-24	Track how often a character's identity depends on who remembers them, who names them, or which history survives.

The adventure expands beyond Earth as Frank, Todd, Christine, Samot, Tomas, and Mercos become entangled in the Gyemen-Gnotomite conflict. Disguises, missing memories, sentient locket, and false histories turn identity into contested ground.

Discuss

1. Why does Frank conceal or reshape parts of Todd's former life while helping him remember?
2. How does Samot's relationship with Todd complicate the idea that restoring the original timeline is automatically just?
3. What does Mercos believe Tomas failed to do for him, and how does that grievance mutate into cruelty?
4. How do Ezra and Melchior differ from ordinary tools? Where does responsibility fall when a magical object encourages its user?
5. What does the City of Phantoms reveal about lives that persist as echoes after history changes?

Memory testimony

Choose one character and argue: 'This person is still the same because...' Then argue the opposite case using evidence from the novel.



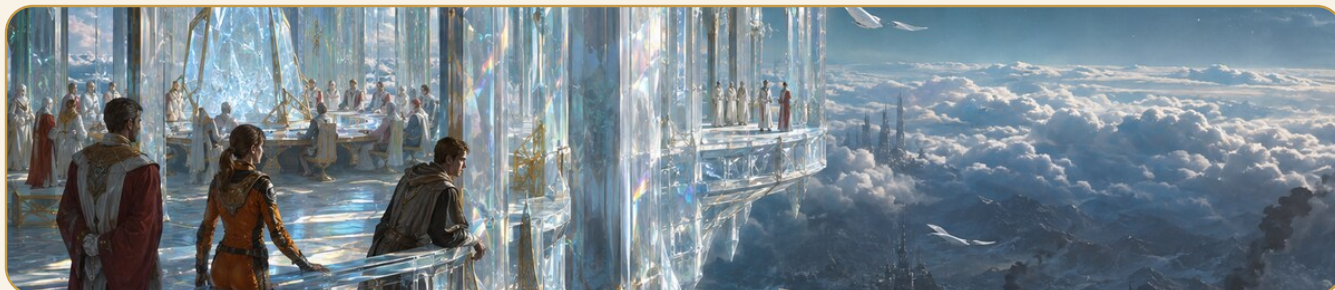
The Crystal Tower and the Uses of Power

READING

Chapters 25-31

OPENING LENS

Look beyond who possesses power to how institutions explain, limit, distribute, and fear it.



The Crystal Tower offers beauty, order, and political authority above a world scarred by war. Yet the tower also contains secrets, fractured loyalties, and the difficult task of managing powers that can rewrite bodies, memories, and existence.

Discuss

1. Why does safety in the Crystal Tower feel both genuine and fragile?
2. How does Gyem's leadership differ from Trezzlepeg's authority in the bazaar?
3. What do the ultimate lockets reveal about the danger of power that answers desire faster than wisdom can form?
4. When is concealment protective, and when does it become manipulation?
5. How does Frank's jealousy affect his interpretation of Todd and Samot?

Council vote

The lockets cannot be safely used, easily destroyed, or trusted to one person. Propose a policy and defend its risks.



Shattered, Redeemed, and Chosen Again

READING

Chapters 32-Epilogue

OPENING LENS

Ask which victories restore a relationship and which merely make restoration possible.



The final movement reveals divided selves, the Blue Messenger's identity, the locket's addictive pull, the Soul of the Hero, and a last crossroads. Redemption does not erase damage; it creates a chance to choose service, repair, and relationship over control.

Discuss

1. What does the separation of Mercos and Mercas suggest about guilt, responsibility, and the possibility of change?
2. Why must Frank surrender the locket rather than defeat their temptation through willpower alone?
3. How does Trezzlepeg exploit Frank's desire to rescue people while insisting that he merely offers choices?
4. Why is Xiaphius's price for one last journey - service repairing the bazaar - morally different from Trezzlepeg's bargains?
5. Does the ending restore the original life, create a third life, or teach Frank to receive a life he cannot fully control?

Final image

The changing family locket is a gentler answer to the dangerous masks. How does it preserve connection without granting control?



What the Two Faces Reflect

Use these lenses to connect scenes that may appear, at first, to belong to different genres or worlds.

Grief versus control

Frank's love is genuine, but grief tempts him to treat the past as an object he can repair without consent.

Identity and memory

Amnesia, altered photographs, disguises, Shadows, divided selves, and sentient lockets ask whether identity resides in memory, relationship, body, or choice.

The ethics of rescue

Nearly every rescue creates new obligations. The novel asks whether saving someone can become another form of possession.

Emotion as power

Essences transform fear, love, sorrow, joy, and anger into forces that can heal, manipulate, intoxicate, or wage war.

Family across histories

Frank's deepest struggle is not choosing between past and present, but recognizing that every timeline contains real people with real claims.

Redemption through repair

The ending replaces magical correction with service, patience, and ongoing work.

Motif trail

- Masks and faces • what is shown and hidden
- Locket and photographs • memory made portable
- Motorcycles and flight • speed without control
- Blue and gold • guidance, authority, temptation
- Mirrors and shadows • selves separated from selves



Questions for a One-Night Book Club

Select six to eight questions for a 75-minute conversation.

1. At what exact moment does Frank's understandable wish become an ethically dangerous choice?
2. Is Trezzlepeg lying, withholding, manipulating, or simply honoring the bargain as stated?
3. Which revised-life character has the strongest claim against restoring Frank's original history?
4. What makes Andrus a better guide than characters with far more power?
5. How does humor protect Frank, and when does it prevent him from seeing clearly?
6. Which locket would be most dangerous in your hands, and why?
7. Does emotional essence make metaphor literal, or does it change the novel's theory of responsibility?
8. How does the novel distinguish a person from the worst part of that person?
9. Which rescue in the story is most selfless? Which is most possessive?
10. What does Frank owe Todd after bringing him back into a history Todd did not choose?
11. How should Christine's agency shape decisions about the timeline?
12. Why does the story move from familiar suburbia into increasingly strange science-fantasy settings?
13. What is the most important meaning of the title?
14. Which early detail gains the most meaning after the final revelations?
15. Does the epilogue feel like closure, compromise, or a warning?

The Two-Faced Timeline

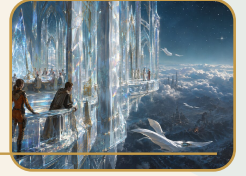


Track how a single intervention creates consequences across relationships, identities, and worlds.

STAGE	KNOWN CONSEQUENCE	WHO PAYS?
ORIGINAL EVENT	Todd dies during the canyon race.	
FRANK'S INTENTION	Prevent the death and return to his existing family.	
INTERFERENCE	Mercos enters the same day and targets the brothers.	
IMMEDIATE CHANGE	Todd survives, but memory and causality are disturbed.	
ALTERED PRESENT	Christine, Annie, Andrew, Todd, and Frank occupy different family histories.	
WIDER CONSEQUENCE	The open path through time connects Frank to the Gyemen war and ultimate lockets.	
FINAL CROSSROADS	Repair requires sacrifice, service, and another choice about what future may exist.	

The missing branch

Invent one plausible consequence the novel does not show. Which existing scene makes it likely?



Trezzlepeg's Ethical Marketplace

A good bargain is not automatically a moral bargain. Test each offer against consent, hidden costs, shared ownership, and downstream harm.

OFFER	PROMISE	ETHICAL QUESTION
Rose-colored glasses	See only pleasing qualities	What truth becomes inaccessible?
Essence of courage	Act without ordinary fear	Is fear sometimes information?
Face lift and body bag	Borrow another appearance	Whose identity is being used?
Memory trade	Exchange pain for a relic	Who else owns part of the memory?
One day in the past	Change a defining event	Who cannot consent to the new future?

Design a safer bargain

Choose one offer. Rewrite its rules so the buyer understands the risks and affected people retain agency.

The shopkeeper's test

Would Xiaphius permit the bargain? Would Andrus recommend it? Would Trezzlepeg profit from it? If the answers differ, why?

Discussing Grief, Agency, and Alternate Lives



Time-travel stories invite confident verdicts, but this novel works best when the group keeps every affected person's reality in view.

Protect personal boundaries

Participants may have experiences with bereavement, miscarriage, estrangement, or depression. No one must connect fiction to private loss.

Name the timeline

Clarify whether a comment concerns the original past, the rewritten present, the alien conflict, or the final restoration.

Keep agency visible

When proposing a fix, ask which characters were not consulted and who would cease to exist or lose a relationship.

Separate explanation from excuse

Trauma helps explain Frank, Mercos, and Trezzlepeg; it does not make every action harmless.

Welcome mixed endings

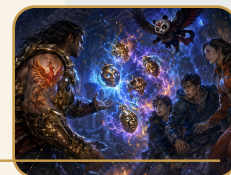
The conclusion can be hopeful and costly at the same time. Do not force consensus about whether every wrong is repaired.

Three questions that reopen a stuck discussion

- Whose point of view is missing from that solution?
- What changes if the magical metaphor becomes literal?
- Which earlier choice made this later choice necessary?

Closing round

Invite each person to complete: 'The face of the past I understand differently now is...'



The Face You Choose to Carry

Use this after the final discussion. Allow two quiet minutes before anyone speaks.



1 • REMEMBER

Name one past event that shaped a character without reducing that character to the event.

2 • RECOGNIZE

Name one person whose agency becomes easier to see when the story is viewed from the second timeline.

3 • RELEASE

Name one form of control the novel asks its characters to surrender.

4 • REPAIR

Name one relationship that can only heal through continued work rather than a magical correction.

The past may wear more than one face.
One is the face memory gives it.
Another is the face we imagine it might have worn.
Wisdom begins when we see both
without turning either into a mask for someone else's life.

Final question

If you could not change the past, what could you change about the way you carry it?

Prepared from A Past With Two Faces by Michael D. Young. This guide contains complete plot spoilers after page 5.