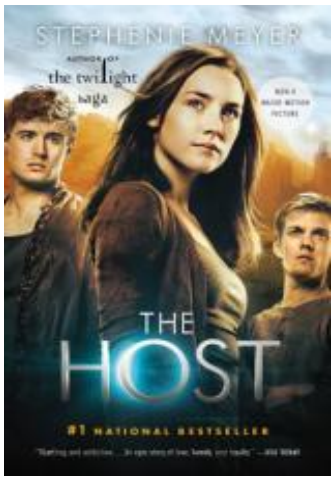
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The Host

by Stephenie Meyer



About the Book

Melanie Stryder refuses to fade away. The earth has been invaded by a species that take over the minds of human hosts while leaving their bodies intact. Wanderer, the invading "soul" who has been given Melanie's body, didn't expect to find its former tenant refusing to relinquish possession of her mind.

As Melanie fills Wanderer's thoughts with visions of Jared, a human who still lives in hiding, Wanderer begins to yearn for a man she's never met. Reluctant allies, Wanderer and Melanie set off to search for the man they both love.

Featuring one of the most unusual love triangles in literature, **The Host** is a riveting and unforgettable novel about the persistence of love and the essence of what it means to be human.

Discussion Guide

1. How does the poem ?Question? by May Swenson, which appears as the epigraph at the beginning of the novel, relate to some of the important themes in The Host?

2. The souls are described as bright silver ribbonlike creatures with hundreds of tiny tentacles. To some they seem beautiful, while others liken them to ?worms? and ?centipedes.? Do you think the souls? physical form suits their nature? If you were to imagine a different form to give the souls, what would it be?

3. There is an ongoing debate in The Host about the true nature of humans. Wanderer refl ects, ?The humans were brutish and ungovernable. They had killed one another so frequently that murder had been an accepted part of life? (page 47). Do you think this brutality is innate to mankind? If so, does this make the peaceable souls? decision to take over the earth more ethical?

4. While most of **The Host** is narrated by Wanderer, Melanie occasionally takes over the narration to relate important memories. Why might Stephenie Meyer have chosen to tell the story in this way? Did you connect more with one voice than the other?

5. The souls believe they are transforming the vicious human world into a utopia. Is the society the souls construct better than the natural society of humans? Melanie tells Wanderer that humans realized the souls were taking over bodies ?when the evening news was nothing but inspiring human-interest stories?when everything morphed into Mayberry? (page 108). How does the society of the souls on earth compare to your image of ?a perfect world??

6. The souls are morally complicated creatures. On one hand, they are ?all things good: compassionate, patient, honest, virtuous, and full of love? (page 3). On the other, they survive by taking over the bodies and minds of unsuspecting hosts. Does the parasitic nature of the souls overshadow their virtuous qualities? Did you sympathize with the souls, or did you view them as the clear enemies of humans?

7. When Wanderer is lost in the desert searching for Jared and Jamie, Melanie tells her, ?You?ve finally found the place and the body you?d die for. I think you?ve found your home, Wanderer? (page 113). What is the significance of ?home? in The Host? Why has Wanderer chosen to move from world to world for so many millennia? Can earth ever really be home for a soul?

8. When Wanderer first arrives in the caves, she reflects, ?This place was truly the highest and the lowest of all worlds --- the most beautiful senses, the most exquisite emotions?the most malevolent desires, the darkest deeds? (page 141). Are these extremes inevitable? Are our darker inclinations essential to the richness of human experience? Do you agree with the premise that more purely ?good? beings like the souls can?t experience life as fully as humans can?

9. The humans in the caves are divided about how to view and treat Wanderer. Do you think it is more reasonable to extend kindness to Wanderer or to ostracize her as a potential threat to the group? If you lived in the caves, how would you greet her arrival?

10. Of everybody in the caves, Jared reacts to Wanderer in a manner that is perhaps the most complex. Does the way he treats her surprise you? What do you imagine is going through his head in the first days after Wanderer?s arrival? What instigates the change in his attitude toward her?

11. When Wanderer /Melanie first arrive at the caves, Melanie is eager for them to explain their situation, but Wanderer insists on staying mute, even if it means being subject to imprisonment and abuse. Why does Wanderer make this choice? Do you think it is a wise one? How might things have played out differently if they had done it Melanie?s way?

12. While Wanderer describes many of the worlds where she has lived in great detail, we learn very little about her birth world, The Origin. How do you imagine The Origin? What would a world populated only by souls be like?

13. Near the novel?s end, Wanda makes a deal with Doc. Do you think she makes the right decision about Melanie?s fate and her own? Were you satisfied with the humans? response to her decision?

14. Jamie tells Wanderer he chose Pet because ?I was looking for someone who looked like you. And I thought this looked like you? (page 605). Do you agree with Jamie? Do you think Pet?s body matches Wanderer?s nature?

15. Imagine a prequel to **The Host**. Of the different worlds Wanderer lived on before arriving on Earth, which would you be most interested in imagining more fully? Similarly, each of the humans living in the caves during **The Host** has a back story. Which of these would you be most interested in learning more about?

Author Bio

Stephenie Meyer graduated from Brigham Young University with a degree in English literature. Her internationally bestselling TWILIGHT Series has sold 155 million copies worldwide. In 2008 she published THE HOST, her first novel adults which debuted at #1 on *The New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* bestseller lists. THE HOST has sold more than 5.3 million copies in the U.S. and was released as a feature film in 2013. She lives with her husband and three sons in Arizona.

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