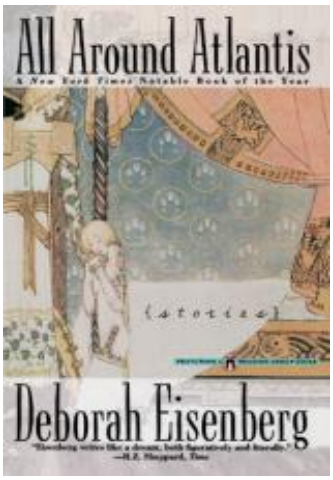
All Around Atlantis

by Deborah Eisenberg



About the Book

Small masterpieces...[a] dazzling collection....Like Alice Munro, virtually her only equal in the field, Deborah Eisenberg here seems incapable of writing a bad short story...She focuses on misfits, people who don't feel at home in the world. So skilled is she at developing these characters as engagingly "ordinary" that we find ourselves identifying with them without realizing how we got there....Eisenberg's writing at times approaches the beauty of a line of poetry. She manipulates her readers with a master's blend of humor and poignancy. Her stories are wondrous....

-- David Wiegand, *San Francisco Chronicle*

Discussion Guide

1. In "Across the Lake," Rob notices that "humanity everywhere was at ease with the barbarism of his [American] countryfellows." Identify characters in the other stories who are at ease with humankind's cruelty and those who are uncomfortable with it.

2. Who are the mermaids in "Mermaids?" Why?

3. In "Someone to Talk To," Shapiro finds himself becoming an unwitting accomplice with a brutal, oppressive government. Discuss how the girls in "Mermaids" and Rob in "Across the Lake" also become unwitting participants in troubling situations not of their own making. How do the characters' various ages insulate and protect them or confer responsibility?

4. Do you find Rob's "untested integrity" and "convenient innocence" appealing or appalling? Why?

5. Beale in "Someone to Talk To" and the Jean in "Tlaloc's Paradise" both seem as if they will never return to England or

the United States. What holds them in their adopted countries?

6. In "All Around Atlantis," Anna's European heritage is as lost to her as the lost continent of Atlantis. Compare Anna's irretrievable past with Francie's in "The Girl Who Left Her Sock on the Floor" and Rosie's in "Rosie Gets a Soul."

7. Why does Anna address her thoughts to Peter?

8. Discuss how the author's notion of a soul is tied to time and memory in "Rosie Gets a Soul."

9. Discuss Eisenberg's use of blood as a motif, such as the blood oozing through a meat package in "Rosie Gets a Soul" or the "bloody lump" of meat on Anna's plate in "All Around Atlantis." What effect does the author achieve?

10. In the final story of the collection, the narrator comes to believe that we are all involved in everything that ever happened. Do characters in any of the other stories come to similar realizations?

Author Bio

Deborah Eisenberg is a MacArthur Foundation Fellow and the recipient of honors including the 2011 PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction, a Whiting Writer?s Award, and a Guggenheim Fellowship. Eisenberg has published four collections of stories: TRANSACTIONS IN A FOREIGN CURRENCY (1986), UNDER THE 82ND AIRBORNE (1992), ALL AROUND ATLANTIS (1997) and TWILIGHT OF THE SUPERHEROES (2006). Her first two story collections were republished in one volume as THE STORIES (SO FAR) OF DEBORAH EISENBERG (1997). All four volumes were reprinted in 2010 in THE COLLECTED STORIES OF DEBORAH EISENBERG (2010). She is a professor of writing at Columbia University.

Critical Praise

" Breathtaking....Eisenberg's dreamy, absorbing, often heart-stopping collection of seven novella-length stories...(set all over the map, from Manhattan's West Tenth Street to a guerrilla-infested village in Central America) reverberates with pitch-perfect dialogue and characters whose ragged edges scrape against the world. "

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