# Leave the World Behind

by Rumaan Alam




## About the Book

**A magnetic novel about two families, strangers to each other, who are forced together on a long weekend gone terribly wrong.**

Amanda and Clay head out to a remote corner of Long Island expecting a vacation: a quiet reprieve from life in New York City, quality time with their teenage son and daughter, and a taste of the good life in the luxurious home they?ve rented for the week. But a late-night knock on the door breaks the spell. Ruth and G. H. are an older couple --- it?s their house, and they?ve arrived in a panic. They bring the news that a sudden blackout has swept the city. But in this rural area --- with the TV and internet now down, and no cell phone service --- it?s hard to know what to believe.

Should Amanda and Clay trust this couple, and vice versa? What happened back in New York? Is the vacation home, isolated from civilization, a truly safe place for their families? And are they safe from one another?

Suspenseful and provocative, Rumaan Alam?s third novel is keenly attuned to the complexities of parenthood, race and class. LEAVE THE WORLD BEHIND explores how our closest bonds are reshaped --- and unexpected new ones are forged --- in moments of crisis.

## Discussion Guide

**1.** What were your first impressions of Amanda and Clay? Ruth and G. H.? Did your understanding of them change as the novel progressed, or did they uphold your initial expectations?

**2.** At the beginning of the novel, Amanda makes a grocery list. How may this list reflect her background and her hopes for the days ahead? Think of a trip or a vacation you?ve taken in recent years and how you prepared for it. What do you think your approach to planning a trip says about you? How is it similar or different from Amanda?s approach?

**3.** LEAVE THE WORLD BEHIND is a work of fiction, written before the COVID-19 outbreak and the societal uprisings that have shaped 2020. If you had read the novel before 2020, do you think you would have had a different response to it? If so, in what way?

**4.** For much of the novel, Amanda, Clay, Ruth and G. H. can?t agree on whether or not they are truly in danger. Why do you think they found it so hard to assess their situation? What would you have done if you were in the shoes of Amanda and Clay? Ruth and G. H.?

**5.** Ruth and G. H. are separated from their daughter and grandsons for the duration of the crisis, while Amanda and Clay have their kids with them. Do you think that changes their response to the situation they are facing together?

**6.** How do you think the children, Archie and Rose, see the world in comparison to their parents? Do they share a similar vision of it? If not, how so?

**7.** In LEAVE THE WORLD BEHIND, the families grapple with the sudden loss of communications technology --- cell phone, internet and satellite services all fail. What is your relationship to technology? Do you embrace it? Do you wish our society handled its role in our lives differently?

**8.** This novel pairs two couples together who are from different demographic backgrounds in terms of race and wealth. How did those qualities impact the way they interact with one another?

**9.** What do you think this book says about the role of friends and neighbors? Do you think these characters will have to fend for themselves, or is there hope that they will have others to lean on? What do you think happens to these families after the book ends?

## Author Bio

Rumaan Alam is the author of the *New York Times* bestselling novel LEAVE THE WORLD BEHIND, which was a finalist for the National Book Award and adapted into a major motion picture, as well as three other novels: ENTITLEMENT, THAT KIND OF MOTHER and RICH AND PRETTY. His writing has appeared in *The New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *The New Yorker* and elsewhere. He lives in Brooklyn.

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