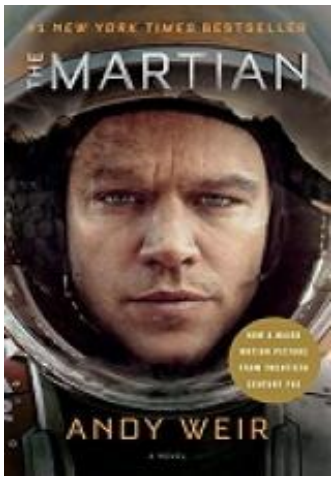
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The Martian

by Andy Weir



About the Book

Six days ago, astronaut Mark Watney became one of the first people to walk on Mars.

Now, he's sure he'll be the first person to die there.

After a dust storm nearly kills him and forces his crew to evacuate while thinking him dead, Mark finds himself stranded and completely alone with no way to even signal Earth that he?s alive --- and even if he could get word out, his supplies would be gone long before a rescue could arrive.

Chances are, though, he won't have time to starve to death. The damaged machinery, unforgiving environment, or plain-old "human error" are much more likely to kill him first.

But Mark isn't ready to give up yet. Drawing on his ingenuity, his engineering skills --- and a relentless, dogged refusal to quit --- he steadfastly confronts one seemingly insurmountable obstacle after the next. Will his resourcefulness be enough to overcome the impossible odds against him?

Discussion Guide

1. How did THE MARTIAN challenge your expectations of what the novel would be? What did you find most surprising about it?

2. What makes us root for a character to live in a survival story? In what ways do you identify with Mark? How does the author get you to care about him?

3. Do you believe the crew did the right thing in abandoning the search for Mark? Was there an alternative choice?

4. Did you find the science and technology behind Mark's problem-solving accessible? How did that information add to the realism of the story?

5. What are some of the ways the author established his credibility with scientific detail? Which of Mark's solutions did you find most amazing and yet believable?

6. What is your visual picture of the surface of Mars, based on the descriptions in the book? Have you seen photographs of the planet?

7. Who knew potatoes, duct tape, and ?70s reruns were the key to space survival? How does each of these items represent aspects of Mark's character that help him survive?

8. How is Mark's sense of humor as much a survival skill as his knowledge of botany? Do you have a favorite funny line of his?

9. To what extent does Mark's log serve as his companion? Do you think it's implicit in the narrative that maintaining a log keeps him sane?

10. The author provides almost no back story regarding Mark's life on Earth. Why do you think he made this choice? What do you imagine Mark's past life was like?

11. There's no mention of Mark having a romantic relationship on Earth. Do you think that makes it easier or harder to endure his isolation? How would the story be different if he was in love with someone back home?

12. Were there points in the novel when you became convinced Mark couldn't survive? What were they, and what made those situations seem so dire?

13. The first time the narrative switched from Mark's log entries to third-person authorial narrative back on Earth, were you surprised? How does alternating between Mark's point of view and the situation on Earth enhance the story?

14. Did you believe the commitment of those on Earth to rescuing one astronaut? What convinced you most?

15. To what extent do you think guilt played a part in the crew's choice to go back to Mark? To what extent loyalty? How would you explain the difference?

16. How does the author handle the passage of time in the book? Did he transition smoothly from a day-to-day account to a span of one and a half years? How does he use the passage of time to build suspense?

17. Unlike other castaways, Mark can approximately predict the timing of his potential rescue. How does that knowledge help him? How could it work against him?

18. When Mark leaves the Hab and ventures out in the rover, did you feel a loss of security for him? In addition to time, the author uses distance to build suspense. Discuss how.

19. Where would you place THE MARTIAN in the canon of classic space exploration films like *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *Apollo 13* and *Gravity*? What does it have in common with these stories? How is it different?

20. A survival story has to resonate on a universal level to be effective, whether it's set on a desert island or another planet. How important are challenges in keeping life vital

Author Bio

Andy Weir built a two-decade career as a software engineer until the success of his first published novel, THE MARTIAN, allowed him to live out his dream of writing full-time. He is a lifelong space nerd and a devoted hobbyist of such subjects as relativistic physics, orbital mechanics and the history of manned spaceflight. He also mixes a mean cocktail. He lives in California.

Photo Credit: Aubrie Pick

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