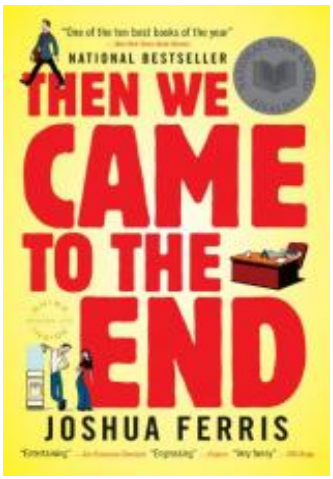
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Then We Came to the End

by Joshua Ferris



About the Book

This wickedly funny, big-hearted novel about life in the office signals the arrival of a gloriously talented new writer.

The characters in **Then We Came To the End** cope with a business downturn in the time-honored way: through gossip, secret romance, elaborate pranks, and increasingly frequent coffee breaks. By day they compete for the best office furniture left behind and try to make sense of the mysterious pro-bono ad campaign that is their only remaining "work."

Discussion Guide

1. Although **Then We Came to the End** is told predominantly in the first person plural, there is a brief departure to describe Lynn Mason?s last night before she undergoes surgery. Why do you think the author chose this point in the novel for the shift in perspective?

2. What was the most humorous moment in the novel for you? Does the author?s incarnation of the office remind you in any way of your own work environment?

3. Then We Came to the End features a large and diverse cast of characters. Which character is your favorite? Which do you find least likable? Does any character closely resemble a person with whom you work?

4. On page 57 the author writes: ?Yet for all the depression no one ever quit.? Did you find other seemingly contradictory passages in the novel? If so, why do you think the work environment lends itself to such contradictions?

5. The novel contains insights into many aspects of office life, but can you think of any office situations not included that you wanted to see the author address?

6. Near the beginning of the novel Marcia Dwyer accidentally sends an e-mail intended for Genevieve Latko-Devine to the entire office. Have you or anyone you know ever experienced a similarly embarrassing situation in the office? If so, how was it handled?

7. The author presents the office as an environment without secrets, writing of Old Brizz: ?He knew it because he was one of us, and we knew everything? (page 4). Do you agree with this statement? If so, why does this dynamic exist in offices?

8. Then We Came to the End is a novel that depicts many lighthearted moments and many dire situations as well. Did you find that one, either the whimsical or the grave, outweighed the other?

9. In a conversation between Lynn Mason and her boyfriend, Martin, Lynn thinks that ?technology would never advance past primal fear. It would never trump human instinct? (page 213). Aside from Lynn?s observation, how does the novel view technology as it relates to social interaction at the office?

10. Ultimately, what do you think is the overall tone of the novel? Do you think this is the tone the author intended?

Author Bio

Joshua Ferris is the author of four novels --- THEN WE CAME TO THE END, THE UNNAMED, TO RISE AGAIN AT A DECENT HOUR and A CALLING FOR CHARLIE BARNES --- and a collection of stories, THE DINNER PARTY. He was a finalist for the National Book Award, winner of the Barnes and Noble Discover Award and the PEN/Hemingway Award, and was named one of The New Yorker's "20 Under 40" writers in 2010. TO RISE AGAIN AT A DECENT HOUR won the Dylan Thomas Prize and was shortlisted for the Booker Prize. His short stories have appeared in *The New Yorker, Granta* and *Best American Short Stories*. He lives in New York.

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Publication Date: February 26, 2008
Genres: Fiction
Paperback: 416 pages
Publisher: Back Bay Books
ISBN-10: 031601639X
ISBN-13: 9780316016391