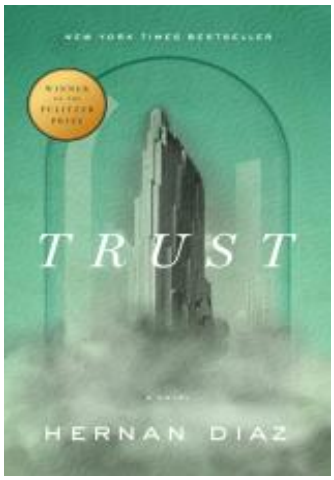
Trust

by Hernan Diaz



About the Book

Even through the roar and effervescence of the 1920s, everyone in New York has heard of Benjamin and Helen Rask. He is a legendary Wall Street tycoon; she is the daughter of eccentric aristocrats. Together, they have risen to the very top of a world of seemingly endless wealth --- all as a decade of excess and speculation draws to an end. But at what cost have they acquired their immense fortune? This is the mystery at the center of *Bonds*, a successful 1937 novel that all of New York seems to have read. Yet there are other versions of this tale of privilege and deceit.

Hernan Diaz?s TRUST elegantly puts these competing narratives into conversation with one another --- and in tension with the perspective of one woman bent on disentangling fact from fiction. The result is a novel that spans over a century and becomes more exhilarating with each new revelation.

At once an immersive story and a brilliant literary puzzle, TRUST engages the reader in a quest for the truth while confronting the deceptions that often live at the heart of personal relationships, the reality-warping force of capital, and the ease with which power can manipulate facts.

Discussion Guide

1. TRUST is a novel that is told through four separate documents --- a novel-within-the-novel, an unfinished manuscript, a memoir and a diary. Why do you think the author chose to tell the larger story this way? How do the different sections speak to each other?

2. Each separate piece of the book offers a different character?s perspective on the same period, subjects, relationships and events, revealing new truths and calling others into question. Which revelations surprised you most? Whose perspective and narrative did you most enjoy or value, and why?

3. One of the major themes of TRUST is power --- who has it, how they got it, how they maintain it. Another theme is history --- how it gets decided and shared, and who gets to tell the story. How do these two themes work together in the book? How do you think the different characters would describe their own power, or their own voice, and the relationship between the two?

4. Related to the theme of voice is the theme of visibility. Which characters are the most visible to the public and which are less seen? Why? What accounts for the differences in visibility? How does a given character?s public visibility affect the larger perception of history? How does Hernan Diaz encourage the reader to think about ideas of visibility in the book?

5. What do you think is the relationship between power and money? Can you have one without the other?

6. Did TRUST make you think about the ways that history has traditionally been recorded, shaped and remembered? Or about which people or elements get overlooked, or even erased?

7. TRUST encourages the reader to consider the place of women and minorities in relation to institutions and narratives that seem to bolster the expansion of wealth in this country. Was this something you ever considered before? How do you see the importance of gender or race in the power-wealth dynamic today as compared to the time period of the novel?

8. TRUST considers the reputation or aura surrounding one couple and seems to ask: What is fact and what is fabrication, and how can we ever know? Consider how this question, as it pertains to this one couple, can be extended to apply to much broader historical subjects. What do you think the author might be saying about the accuracy of our foundational narratives?

9. Diaz looks at the different ways in which capital distorts and shapes the reality around it. Consider classic novels you may have read from the literary canon, depicting affluence and class. How do they depict the place of women in the story of accumulation of wealth? How do they depict the role of immigrants? Were they written by men or women? When were they published?

Author Bio

Hernan Diaz is the Pulitzer Prize?winning and *New York Times* bestselling author of TRUST, one of *The New York Times* ?s 100 Best Books of the Century. His previous novel, IN THE DISTANCE, was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and the PEN/Faulkner Award. He has received the John Updike Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Kirkus Prize, a Whiting Award, and a fellowship from the New York Public Library?s Cullman Center. His work has been translated into 37 languages. Diaz's latest novel is PLY.

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