

The Tiny Bee That Hovers at the Center of the World

DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. What is it that fascinates David Searcy about Arcosanti? Have you ever visited a place that evoked similar feelings for you?
2. Searcy posits that all photographs are, by nature, startling. What do you think he means by this, and do you agree? Why or why not?
3. Throughout the book, Searcy references different machines he builds. These objects—a sort of pinhole camera, a device to detect signals from Mars, etc.—don't always work as intended, but for him that isn't the point. What does he gain from the process of building and designing these nonfunctional objects?
4. Searcy describes the way a friend's grandmother's stories of growing up in Buffalo made him feel like he, too, has memories of life there—despite never having been. Have you ever felt like you could remember something you had never experienced, or that someone had transmitted their memories to you? What was it like?
5. Searcy notes that there's a particular thrilling sensation we sometimes feel when we suddenly come upon a great vista, or are able to look across an almost inconceivable distance. What do you think is behind this phenomenon?
6. "Kids love undiscovered places," Searcy writes. His was an alley. What places gave you this same feeling as a child?
7. Searcy frequently returns to the idea of averted vision, of only being able to see something out of the corner of your eye. Why do you think he keeps returning to this concept? In what ways is it counterintuitive?
8. Themes of emptinesses and vacuums also reoccur throughout the book, from fontanelles in children's skulls to meteor craters to the "space" between the ground and the sky. Discuss Searcy's fascination with these spaces and what they can teach about ourselves.
9. Searcy writes, "We don't have to be religious to believe we're barely here. By the grace of God." Do you agree with what he's saying? Why or why not?
10. The book is full of repetition, continuously circling back around to the same images and themes, even while introducing new ones. How did this structure influence your reading experience?
11. "So here's a theory," Searcy writes. "We are lost. We're neither here nor there. There's you, and there's the you that knows there's you. And in that gap between the two—and we are always in that gap—we're migratory." Discuss this passage and how it relates to the larger themes of the work.
12. Why do you think Searcy titled the book after the hovering bee he and Nancy saw? What did the bee symbolize for him? What did it symbolize for you?