



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR UGLIES

BY SCOTT WESTERFELD

1. This is the billion-dollar question: before Tally and Shay go to the Smoke (and learn about the brain lesions), who do you agree with? Do you think the world would be better if everyone were pretty (like Tally argues)? Or do you think that this sort of surgery is dangerous to identity (like Shay argues)? Did you ever agree with both of them? Or neither?
2. If you had the chance to be made pretty, would you take it? What if everyone was being turned pretty—would you still want (or not want) to be made pretty?
3. Do you think that we're the Rusties, the civilization that collapsed because it relied too much on oil? In what ways are we (in the US) like the Rusties? If we are the Rusties, does that change your opinion of the history we hear about how the Rusty civilization ended?
4. How did you feel about the language that the characters used, especially the slang that gets tossed around?
5. Was it easy to understand terms like "bogus" and "bubbly"? Was there ever a moment where you had trouble understanding the slang? What about the terms "littlie," "ugly," "pretty"—did they ever confuse you? How did you figure out what they meant? What about Shay's use of strange (to Tally) terms like "Barbie," terms that we know?
6. Let's ignore the existing sequel for a moment—if you were to write a sequel, what would you write? What should happen to Tally after she turns herself in? Is there anything about the end of this book that you would want to change if you were writing it? And, if you knew about the sequels, did that change the way you read this first book?
7. Putting aside the whole pretty surgery for a moment, what do you think of the different ways that people live in the city vs. the way they live in the Smoke? Does your life seem more like the city-life (uglies going to school, pretties partying, older pretties doing jobs) or like the Smoke (everyone working)? What do you think of the different attitudes toward stuff—with the city folk getting whatever they want and throwing it away easily, and the Smoke people fixing and trading their old stuff?



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8. In "Burning Bridges," Az says that "History would indicate that the majority of people have always been sheep. Before the operation, there were wars and mass hatred and clear-cutting. Whatever these lesions make us, it isn't a far cry from the way humanity was in the Rusty era. These days we're just a bit... easier to manage" (23). Do you agree with this statement? Does that argument change the way you feel about the lesions and the surgery? After all, if things in the Rusty era were pretty close to what they are now, does the surgery matter all that much? Or do you disagree with Az about the idea that most people are sheep? If you disagree with him, does that statement change your feelings about Az or do you still trust what he says?
9. When do characters sacrifice in this book? When Tally finds the Boss after the Specials kill him, she thinks he sacrificed himself either to help her escape or to save the magazines—which do you think? Are there other things that people sacrifice for? What is Tally willing to sacrifice and what is she trying to save?
10. Dr. Cable says that the city lets uglies do tricks in order to develop their "creativity and independence"(13.53). Why would the city want the uglies to do that? Are there other reasons why the city would let the uglies do tricks? Tally later says that tricks are "a way for uglies to blow off steam until they reached sixteen, nothing but a meaningless distraction" (42.14). Is this alternate explanation surprising? Who do you think is right, Dr. Cable or Tally? If you were running the city, would you let the uglies do tricks?
11. *Uglies* shows a lot of new technology, including toothbrush pills (yes), hoverboards (sweet), dehydrated food (eh), and interface rings to track the uglies (uh, no thanks). Does this book show that technology is positive, or negative, or a little of both? Are there certain types of technology that are more positive than others in this book? Are there any patterns you can see in what makes good technology vs. what makes bad technology?
12. What scenes in this book would make exciting scenes in a movie? What aspects of this book would be hard to translate into film? Who would you want to play each character?

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