

Writing

- Choose one of these two statements from the book and write an opinion essay showing that you agree or disagree with it, and why.
- Mila: "One of the things she's learned . . . is that you just have to take the opportunities life presents. If the rules are set against you, then you have to cheat a little, just to even things up."
- The Minister: "All around me I see mediocrity. No one strives anymore. No one works. If they do, they make a token effort. Everyone just takes and takes."
- Compare and contrast the life of a Citizen in the Isles and in one of the Third worlds. Would everyone choose to live in the Isles if they had the choice? Share some reasons why life in the Third worlds might be preferable, even though it is not as privileged.

Research/current events

- The book seems to take place in the not-too-distant future. One similarity in politics and government is the topic of immigration. Research the history and ongoing conflict regarding the border of the United States and Mexico, and write a report discussing similarities between it and the world in *Seven Second Delay*.

This guide correlates to Common Core State Standards in grades 7-10:
 Reading Standards for Literature 7-8.1-3, 9-10.1-3, 5
 Writing Standards 7-10.1-2, 7-8 • Speaking and Listening Standards 7-10.1

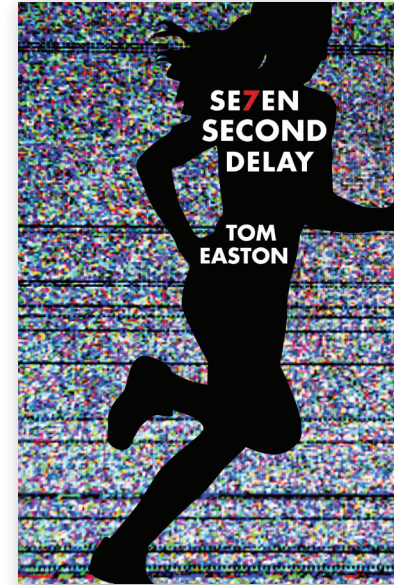
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READING GROUP GUIDE



HC 978-0-8234-3209-7 • Ages 12 up • E-book available

SE7EN SECOND DELAY by Tom Easton

Seven seconds is all she has.

In a futuristic world of constant surveillance, Mila is hunted by government agents. She has only one advantage: a seven second delay on her monitored video feed. On her lightning-fast getaway she must take an unpredictable route to thwart her pursuers. In just seven seconds, she can fake one direction and take off in the next. As she runs, the government positions Mila as a dangerous terrorist in the media, and soon the entire nation is watching her feed! Against all odds, Mila gains a few unlikely allies and must use her seven seconds wisely to prevent a nationwide disaster—and save her own life.

Questions for Discussion

- How do you know that Mila is in danger just from reading the first chapter of the book? What did you learn about her personality, her history and her skills? What clues are you given about her relationship with Julian? Did the author tell you enough about her and her situation to make you want to read more?
- Are the technology and medical advances in this futuristic world appealing to you? Why or why not? Are these advances many years away from our current technology, or rapidly approaching? Discuss some specific examples of the book's technology that you would like to have, and also that you would NOT like to have. Would you like to send a text by simply thinking the words? Are there disadvantages to everyone having an "ID" app?
- In chapter three, Rebecca tells Adam that Mila is a terrorist. Do you understand why she believes that? Do you think it's easier to be sympathetic to Mila, even if she might be a terrorist, than it is to side with the Minister and the Agents? Why? Does your sympathy waver when she commits murder? How does the author attempt to keep us on Mila's side, even when she does bad things?
- Why doesn't Adam think Mila is a terrorist? When does the author begin to show readers that Adam is a nice guy? How do you know when he begins to trust Mila? Does she begin to trust him before she has no other choice? What makes someone trust another person? Is it easier or harder to trust someone when the stakes are high? Is it important to the story that Mila has some allies? Why?
- Isle-Dwellers such as Adam and Rebecca work on a volunteer basis by Contributing. Even though they are not paid, they do receive benefits and privileges. Do you think a system such as this could work in the United States today? Why or why not? If you did not have to work, would you want to anyway? What could you contribute?
- What is the Minister's political agenda, and how does he intend to gather support by using Mila? Can you think of current events that relate to his point of view? Do you think his agenda has any merit, or is it completely wrong? Why do politicians have such a bad reputation, in general?
- There are multiple themes running through the book (politics, class, equality, etc.). What message does the author convey regarding these themes? What evidence from the story supports the author's argument?
- Julian dies at the very beginning of the book, but he's still a major character in the novel. The reader learns about him through flashbacks. Is this an effective device? Did the flashbacks add to your understanding of Mila, or were they distracting from the main story? Did you care less about Julian because he wasn't "present" in the story? He is presented as both a good man and a traitor. How did you see him?
- Can you think of times in your life when a seven second delay would be helpful? Problematic? Fun?
- In the last chapter when she is talking to the Minister about the Agents she killed, Mila says: "I had no choice. . . I was acting in self-defense." Do you agree? Is everything she does for survival justified? How do you think you would have handled some of the choices Mila had to make? Would you do "whatever it takes" in order to survive?
- Even though the Third worlds have rich resources, the Corporations control them. Is our society headed in that direction with the "one percent" on their way to owning half of the world's wealth? What can be done to prevent that? In what ways is this kind of class division a bad thing? Is there anything good about it if you are not one of the one percent?
- Julian explains to Mila that the phones record everything and show their whole lives on the Web. Mila "can't imagine why anyone would want other people to watch everything they did. But she could imagine maybe wanting to watch others." Do you feel as Mila does? Would you be eager to show your whole life, or do you just want to watch others? Do you like to watch reality TV shows? Would you like to star in one?
- The epilogue depicts a quiet ending for Mila, retired and living on a farm. Why might this simple life look attractive to her but seem boring to other young people? How did her childhood experiences shape her character? Do you think she deserves a happy ending?