



RECURSION DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Did you have any theories early on about the False Memory Syndrome?

“Because memory . . . is everything. Physically speaking, a memory is nothing but a specific combination of neurons firing together – a symphony of neural activity. But in actuality, it’s the filter between us and reality. You think you’re tasting the wine, hearing the words I’m saying, in the present, but there’s no such thing. The neural impulses from your taste buds and your ears get transmitted to your brain, which processes them and dumps them into working memory — so by the time you know you’re experiencing something it’s already in the past. Already a memory [....] Just what your brain does to interpret a simple stimulus like that is incredible. The visual and auditory information arrive at your eyes and ears at different speeds, and then are processed by your brain at different speeds. Your brain waits for the slowest bit of stimulus to be processed, then reorders the neural inputs correctly, and lets you experience them together, as a simultaneous event – about half a second after what actually happened. We think we’re perceiving the world directly and immediately, but everything we experience is this carefully edited, tape-delayed reconstruction.”

- What did you think of the passage on page 37?
- On page 46 “But what do you cling to, moment to moment, if memories can simply change. What, then, is real? And if the answer is nothing, where does that leave us?” How do you view your memories? Do you view them as something real, as something trustworthy?
- Characters in the book at times suggest that the past isn’t meant to be changed and it’s best to accept the past as it is. Do you think it would be fundamentally wrong to try to redo the past if it was possible?
- What did you think of Helena’s relationship with her research? Page 27 “What teachers and professors never told her was about the dark side of finding your purpose. The part where it consumes you. Where it becomes a destroyer of relationships and happiness. And still, she wouldn’t trade it. This is the only person she knows to be”. Do you think it’s worth it to have something that entirely consumes your life but gives you such a strong sense of purpose?
- What did you think of the character of Slade? Did he seem like an obvious villain in the beginning? What did you think of his motivations and his decisions on how he used the chair?
- If you were transported 5, 10 years into the past what would you do? Would you try to make different decisions or re-follow your steps as closely as possible? Would you try to immediately re-connect with loved ones you didn’t know back then and if so how would you try to re-introduce yourself?
 - On the flipside, if someone - either a stranger, or a loved one, told you deeply personal things about yourself and things about the future that they shouldn’t have been able to know and claimed they were from the future / in a time loop would you believe them?
- In the last half of the book, we start to see characters, especially Helena, deal with the consequences of housing many years of alternative timelines memories. It is mentioned that the brain isn’t built to hold that many timelines at once. How is this similar to Stories of Your Life? What do you think about the brain’s limitations in how we experience reality?
- In the final / first timeline, do you think Barry will ever tell Helena about all the past timelines?

