



ONE BOOK, ONE ELMHURST 2025

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gabrielle Zevin is an American author and screenwriter who was born in 1977, in New York City. Growing up, she and her family regularly read and took trips to the library. She later attended Harvard University, graduated in 2000, and lived in Manhattan for almost 10 years before moving to Los Angeles in 2012. Zevin is known primarily for two of her novels, *The Storied Life of A.J. Fikry*, published in 2014, and *Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow*, published in 2022, as well as for books she wrote for teens. Her novels have been translated into more than 40 languages. Zevin wrote the screenplay for the 2022 film adaptation of *The Storied Life of A.J. Fikry*; her partner, Hans Canosa, whom she met at Harvard, directed and produced the film.

In a profile on the author by Nell Porter-Brown in the July-August 2020 issue of *Harvard Magazine*, Zevin noted, “As a reader, I want characters, through time, and I want love. Books suggest people beyond yourself, and places beyond where you currently find yourself. The slow contemplation and investment in a life that is not your own. Empathy might be deeply old-fashioned, but show me a better option for living in the world.”

BOOK REVIEWS

“Zevin has written a near-perfect novel. Punctuated by explicit references to classic short stories, implicit literary references, self-deprecating swipes at literary snobs (Is a twist less satisfying if you know it’s coming? Is a twist that you can’t predict symptomatic of bad construction?) and book club discussions, with humor and flawless characterization, *The Storied Life of A.J. Fikry* fills all the bills in straightforward, no-frills prose.” —*BookBrowse*

“Sometimes funny, sometimes true to life and always entertaining ... A likable literary love story about selling books and finding love.” —*Kirkus*

“Readers who delighted in Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows’s *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*, Rachel Joyce’s *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry*, and Jessica Brockmole’s *Letters from Skye* will be equally captivated by this adult novel by a popular YA author about a life of books, redemption, and second chances. Funny, tender, and moving, it reminds us all exactly why we read and why we love.” —*Library Journal*

“I don’t appreciate the position I’m in with *The Storied Life of A.J. Fikry*. I resent the skill and verve that Ms. Z. shows in this quirky, punchy novel. I don’t like that it’s so readable, so appealing. I disdain its damnable charm, its succinctness, its crisp, clear tone! AAAUGH! ... VERDICT: This lightning fast read is super-enjoyable; hide it inside a *Popular Mechanics*.” —*Books for Dudes Blog, Library Journal*

“A middle-aged bookseller mourning his lost wife, a feisty publisher’s rep, and a charmingly precocious abandoned child come together on a small island off the New England coast in this utterly delightful novel of love and second chances.” —*LibraryReads*

“Zevin is a deft writer, clever and witty, and her affection for the book business is obvious.” —*Publishers Weekly*

BOOK DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR THE ELMHURST COMMUNITY TO CONSIDER

- What was your first reaction to the book, as you began to read it, and did your opinion change as you read it?
- How did the book affect you? What emotions did you experience as you read?
- What were your feelings about the various characters at the start of the book? Did your opinions of any of them change by the end of the story?
- Which character did you connect with the most, and why?
- Do you relate to how any of the characters cope with their circumstances?
- What character(s) did you root for as you read the book?
- What were your first impressions of A.J.? How likeable a character did you find him?
- Which supporting character was your favorite?
- How did you feel about the setting of the book on Alice Island? Why do you think the author chose to set the book on an island?
- At the start of each chapter, A.J. recommends a story. What would be your own top book or story recommendations, and why?
- What do you feel A.J.'s book preferences say about him as a reader and as a person?
- What do your book preferences say about you? Are there any genres that you don't read? If so, why?
- What genre of books drew you into reading?
- A.J. rejects popular books and television shows. How do you feel about new, popular books and shows? Are you interested in reading and watching them or do you avoid them?
- References to books appear throughout the novel. Did you enjoy these literary references? If so, which ones?
- How do you determine what types of books you will read?
- Is there a book that you love and would enjoy reading again and again?
- How have various phases of your life affected your desire and ability to read books?
- What is your preferred reading format? Physical print books? eBooks? Audiobooks? Or a combination of these formats?
- What questions would you want to ask any of the characters?
- What advice would you want to give to any of the characters?
- What is your favorite scene in the book? Why is it memorable for you?
- What passages in the book stand out to you, and why? What will stay with you after this year's One Book, One Elmhurst ends?
- How do you feel about the pace (fast, slow, exactly right) of the story?
- Are you satisfied with the story's conclusion? Why or why not?
- What are your thoughts about the author's writing style? How did it affect your reading experience?
- What do you think of the dialogue between the characters?
- What do you think are the book's greatest strengths?
- What do you think is the author's main theme or message in this novel?
- What surprised you in this book?
- Did you watch the movie adaptation? If so, what did you think of it?
- Would you recommend this book to a friend? Why or why not?

