Reading Group Guide

Simple Machines by Ian Morris

About *Simple Machines*

Simple Machines *is a novel of passage – of myth and unexpected consequence – set in Wisconsin during one year in the life of Tomas Zimmermann*.

Living in an apartment above the bike shop owned by his embittered father, Tomas keeps company with Grey and Callie, his best friends since childhood. At summer's end, Tom leaves for Madison where he falls in with an unusual and ultimately destructive crowd. As Simple Machines approaches a climax, Grey and Callie reappear with trouble of their own, and Tom is forced to choose between old loyalties and a new sense of belonging?

Simple Machines by Ian Morris is published by Gibson House Press, October 2018. 288 pages. Original trade paperback, $16.99 ISBN-13: 978-1948721004. Ebook formats, $9.95

Reviews

"Bicycles are simple yet beautiful machines, and so is Ian Morris's latest novel, *Simple Machines*, which rolls on the timeless moving wheels of sunrises and sunsets, of the wilds of Lake Superior and Wisconsin country roadways; of those who stayed behind and those who break-away; of the mythic struggle between Paul Bunyan and the Big Swede, and of the equally mythic struggle between a father and son coming to terms with each other and with the grief of a mother's bewildering abandonment. Written in a graceful prose style touched at times with the lyricism of F. Scott Fitzgerald, this novel has all the ingredients of a great read, and of a classic in the making." —*JOSEPH G. PETERSON, author,* Gunmetal Blue

"What a wondrous, immersive experience this novel by Ian Morris! Lyrical and yet consuming with trouble, danger, and fire. And funny, even experimental, farcical, picaresque—how does he do it all? You will wonder and worry about Tom, Callie, and Grey for many snowy seasons to come." —*STEVE YATES, author* The Legend of the Albino Farm

"Authentic, touching with the rueful tone of someone who has spent miles in the rain riding over cobblestones."—*JOHN ALLIS, US National Road Champion and three-time Olympian*

"[Morris's] writing . . . reminds me of Richard Russo. The characters are ordinary people with complex relationships, to themselves and others. . . . The sense of place added richness to the story. The north, where some come to vacation and others live, with the land and water there, felt true. . . . I was not at all sure how it was going to end . . . and I was left with questions in my mind. About how we make choices, and what is really a choice and what is inevitable."—*Sydney Kennedy, reader and denizen of multiple book groups in Oregon*

About the author

Ian Morris is the author of the novels *Simple Machines* and *When Bad Things Happen to Rich People* and co-editor of *The Little Magazine in Contemporary America.* He lives in Chicago.

Conversation starters

1. Which characters in the book did you like best?
2. If you were making a movie of this book, who would you cast?
3. Share a favorite quote from the book. Why did this quote stand out?
4. If you got the chance to ask the author of this book one question, what would it be?
5. What do you think of the book's title? How does it relate to the book's contents?
6. What do you think the author's purpose was in writing this book? What ideas was he trying to get across?
7. What artist would you choose to illustrate this book? What kinds of illustrations would you include?
8. Did this book seem realistic?
9. How well do you think the author built the world in the book?
10. Did the characters seem believable to you? Did they remind you of anyone?