

Further Reading

The Terranauts by T.C. Boyle

The Martian by Andy Weir

How to Make a Spaceship: a Band of Renegades, an Epic Race, and the Birth of Private Space Flight by Julian Guthrie

How We'll Live on Mars by Stephen L. Petranek

Packing for Mars: the Curious Science of Life in the Void by Mary Roach

The Astronaut Wives Club: a True Story by Lily Koppel

An Astronaut's Guide to Life on Earth by Chris Hadfield

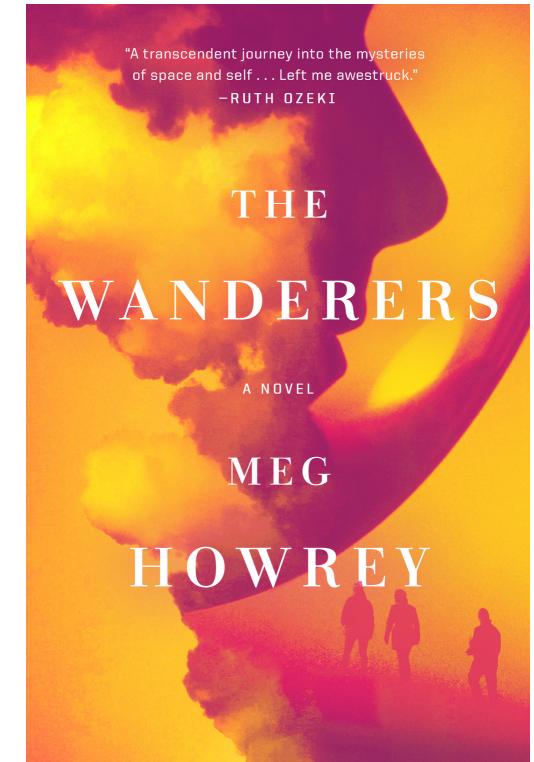
The Mercury 13: the Untold Story of Thirteen American Women and the Dream of Space Flight by Martha Ackmann

About the Author

Meg Howrey was inspired to write *The Wanderers* by the Mars-500 mission, in which an international crew of six participated in a 520-day simulation of a flight to Mars. She immersed herself in research for the book, attending a writer's crash course on space called Launchpad and spending time in a sensory deprivation tank to learn about microgravity and true darkness.

She is the author of two other novels: *The Cranes Dance* and *Blind Sight*. She is also *The New York Times* bestselling co-author of the novels *City of Dark Magic* and *City of Lost Dreams*, writing under the pen name Magnus Flyte. Her non-fiction has been published in *Vogue* and *The Los Angeles Review of Books*.

Prior to her career as a writer, Meg was a professional dancer who performed with the Joffrey Ballet and the City Ballet of Los Angeles. She appeared in James Lapine's *Twelve Dreams* at Lincoln Center, and her role in the Broadway National Tour of *Contact* earned her a 2001 Ovation Award for Best Supporting Actress in a Musical. She currently lives in Los Angeles.



Book Discussion Guide

About the book

In an age of space exploration, we search to find ourselves.

In four years, aerospace giant Prime Space will put the first humans on Mars. Helen Kane, Yoshihiro Tanaka, and Sergei Kuznetsov must prove they're the crew for the historic voyage by spending seventeen months in the most realistic simulation ever created. Constantly observed by Prime Space's team of "Obbers," Helen, Yoshi, and Sergei must appear ever in control. But as their surreal pantomime progresses, each soon realizes that the complications of inner space are no less fraught than those of outer space. The borders between what is real and unreal begin to blur, and each astronaut is forced to confront demons past and present, even as they struggle to navigate their increasingly claustrophobic quarters - and each other.

Astonishingly imaginative, tenderly comedic, and unerringly wise, *The Wanderers* explores the differences between those who go and those who stay, telling a story about the desire behind all exploration: the longing for discovery and the great search to understand the human heart.

Discussion Questions

1. Helen's daughter, Mireille, thinks, "If her mother goes to Mars, then that will be the only story of Mireille's life. It will wipe out everything." What do you think Mireille means? Discuss Mireille and Helen's relationship. Is Helen a good mother? Is Mireille's resentment justified?
2. In what ways do Helen, Sergei, and Yoshi work well together? In what ways do they frustrate one another? Discuss how their dynamics change throughout the novel.
3. How do you think Helen's experience as a female astronaut differs from Yoshi and Sergei's experiences?
4. For Eidolon, the astronauts are each allowed to bring a very small bag for personal items. Yoshi brings acorns, while Sergei has photos of his sons. What would you take to remind you of home?
5. Is Madoka an artist? Why or why not? Do you agree with her concept of art?

6. How is marriage portrayed in the novel? Do you think Yoshi and Madoka's relationship will be different when Yoshi returns? If so, how?

7. Discuss the intersection of art and science within the novel. Do these two fields approach exploration and discovery differently? In what ways is their approach the same? What, exactly, do you think the astronauts and their families hope to discover?

8. Luke notes that what is most incredible about the astronauts is their level of control. Is this control a good thing or a bad thing? How does it affect the astronauts on their mission? How does it affect their relationships with their families?

9. What did you think about the ending? What mission do you believe the astronauts were on?

10. Setting aside the realities of training, if you had the chance to go to Mars, would you? Why or why not?