



# [Cloud cuckoo land]

By Anthony Doerr

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## Genre and Subject

*Children -- Fiction*

*Books and reading -- Fiction*

*Space and time -- Fiction*

*Istanbul (Turkey) -- History -- Siege, 1453 -- Fiction*

*Idaho -- Fiction*

## Synopsis

From the Pulitzer Prize--winning author of *All the Light We Cannot See*, perhaps the most bestselling and beloved literary fiction of our time, comes a triumph of imagination and compassion, a soaring novel about children on the cusp of adulthood in a broken world, who find resilience, hope, and story. The heroes of *Cloud Cuckoo Land* are trying to figure out the world around them: Anna and Omeir, on opposite sides of the formidable city walls during the 1453 siege of Constantinople; teenage idealist Seymour in an attack on a public library in present day Idaho; and Konstance, on an interstellar ship bound for an exoplanet, decades from now. Like Marie-Laure and Werner in *All the Light We Cannot See*, Anna, Omeir, Seymour, and Konstance are dreamers and outsiders who find resourcefulness and hope in the midst of peril. An ancient text--the story of Aethon, who longs to be turned into a bird so that he can fly to a utopian paradise in the sky--provides solace and mystery to these unforgettable characters. Doerr has created a tapestry of times and places that reflects our vast interconnectedness--with other species, with each other, with those who lived before us and those who will be here after we're gone. Dedicated to "the librarians then, now, and in the years to come," *Cloud Cuckoo Land* is a hauntingly beautiful and redemptive novel about stewardship--of the book, of the Earth, of the human heart.

## Author Biography

Anthony Doerr is the author of six books, *The Shell Collector*, *About Grace*, *Memory Wall*, *Four Seasons in Rome*, *All the Light We Cannot See*, and *Cloud Cuckoo Land*. Doerr is a two-time National Book Award finalist, and his fiction has won five O. Henry Prizes and won a number of prizes including the Pulitzer Prize and the Carnegie Medal. Become a fan on Facebook and stay up-to-date on his latest publications.

## Discussion Starters

1. What does 'cloud cuckoo land' mean for each of the main characters? What does it mean for you?
2. Why were these characters all so engaged with the story of Aethon?
3. The story takes us from the fifteenth century to the present day—why do you think the author chose those time periods to tell this story?
4. How were each of these characters loosely connected? Did you feel this thread of connection paid off in the end?
5. Which storyline were you most engaged with? Which one the least?
6. The author Anthony Doerr talked about how he wanted to explore the concept of people hoping for a perfect utopia. He wrote, 'what is it about seemingly every human generation in seemingly every culture that we tell stories about traveling to better, prettier, more equitable places in far-off lands?' Why do you think that is? Is it human nature to think another land/country/world would be better than our own?
7. Let's examine each character more closely. Zeno is homosexual in a time period where he didn't feel he could be free. How did his love for Rex impact his life moving forward? How would have things been different if Zeno told Rex how he truly felt? How did all his life experience lead him to saving the children's lives?
8. How did Anna's quest for curiosity and learning change the course of her life for good? What did you think about the relationship between Anna and Omeir?
9. Konstance is led to believe that she's on a ship far away from the dying Earth. But she's also curious and eventually learns that the ship never left Earth. What are your thoughts about this reveal?
10. Seymour was complicated and appears to have an undiagnosed mental illness. Could things have been different if he had more help and support growing up?
11. What are some of the key takeaways of the story for you?
12. What are the type of stories that endure throughout generations?

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