

LP² STUDY GROUP PROPOSAL FOR SPRING 2023

BY GEORGE! SAUNDERS

Coordinators: Linda Anstendig and Linda Gottlieb

A critical look at selected short stories by the man *Time* called “the best short story writer in English.” Selections will be from *Tenth of December*, finalist for the National Book Award, and from his new collection, *Liberation Day*. In pitch-perfect prose—wickedly funny, unsentimental, often bizarre—he expands the arena of the short story with tales that may unsettle but will stick in the mind. Through discussion of the stories and other relevant materials, we will explore what has been called the truly “original, inventive, yet deeply humane” world of George Saunders and perhaps come away with a deeper appreciation of the short story form.

Linda Anstendig has happily pursued her passion for literature in her career as an English professor and at LP², co-coordinating study groups on Elena Ferrante, Great Migration writers, and with “the other Linda”, Unforgettable Pieces from The New Yorker, and From Short Story to Big Screen.

Linda Gottlieb has been a film and TV producer and a professor of screenwriting at NYU. Along with “the other Linda,” Linda G. has coordinated study groups on Unforgettable Pieces from The New Yorker, and From Short Story to Big Screen.

Type of Study Group: Discussion, with some video.

Readings and other Materials/Online Services:

Tenth of December, George Saunders, Random House paperback, approx. \$10;

Other short stories available online will be emailed to participants.

***** SYLLABUS - A WORK IN PROGRESS *****

WEEK 1

TOPIC: The world of George Saunders

READING/VIEWING:

Syracuse Commencement Address Video:

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https://youtu.be/ruJWd_m-LgY

Read:

“The Story of an Hour,” (copy to be emailed)

“Puppy” in *Tenth of December*.

QUESTIONS:

What makes a good short story? What do you think George Saunders’ worldview is? How do you understand Callie? Marie? Who would you say is the protagonist of the story?

WEEK 2

TOPIC: Good versus evil

READING:

“Victory Lap” and “My Chivalric Fiasco” in *Tenth of December*.

QUESTIONS:

What techniques does Saunders use to shake up the reader? What does Saunders think about Alison Pope’s upbringing? What do you make of the endings of both stories?

WEEK 3

TOPIC: A story of escape

READING/VIEWING:

"Escape from Spiderhead" in *Tenth of December*;

See film **Spiderhead** on Netflix.

QUESTIONS:

Discussion of short story and how film differs from it.

What is Saunders saying about crime and punishment? How would you describe Jeff and his choices? What do you make of the ending of the story?

WEEK 4

TOPIC: Saunders and family

READING:

“Mother’s Day” available online—to be emailed to you; also in *Liberation Day* (in case you own a copy of his latest book);

“Home” in *Tenth of December*.

WEEK 5

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TOPIC: Saunders and rebellion

READING:

“Ghoul” to be emailed and in *Liberation Day*;
“Semplica Girl Diaries” in *Tenth of December*

WEEK 6

TOPIC: Saunders and empathy

READING:

"Tenth of December" in *Tenth of December*;
“Conversations between George Saunders and David Sedaris” in *Tenth of December*.
Wrap up: Final thoughts on the many selves of George Saunders.

Revised 11/27/2022