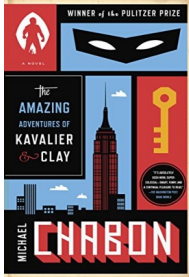




# Lambda Sci-Fi

DC Area Gaylaxians



## The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay By Michael Chabon

*Discussed November/December 2001*

### Discussion Questions

Questions 1 through 6 were selected from an online resource for discussion groups of this book at:

<http://www.bookbrowse.com/index.cfm?page=title&titleID=797&view=guide>.

Questions 7-9 were added specifically for Lambda Sci-Fi's discussion.

1. Escape, literally and figuratively, is everywhere in this novel. Why do you think Michael Chabon and the characters in the novel place so much importance on it? From what and to what are the different characters in the novels escaping? When is escape good in the novel and when is it bad? Can the character of Joe Kavalier ever quit trying to escape, whether it is from place, like Prague and New York, or from relationships, like Rosa and Sammy? When Sammy leaves for LA, is this an escape, and if so, is it good or bad? Why do characters in this novel seem to be trying to escape relationships, and what are the different types of relationships that can be binding? Does the escaping end at the conclusion of the novel?
2. Compare the theme of escape in the novel to escapist nature of art. In what ways does Chabon explore this in his novel through the art of magic, and painting, and comics? How is the novel *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay* an escape itself and the creation of a world unto itself for the reader? Although the novel is clearly fiction, why do you think Michael Chabon goes to such lengths to make it feel real, by adding real historical facts and fictitious footnotes? Why do you think Chabon chose to write about the medium of comics, as opposed to something else like television or the movies?
3. How are love and family portrayed in the novel? What constitutes a family at different points in the novel? What are the different types of love in the novel? How are the families of Joe, Sammy, and Rosa different, and how are these three people able to make a family themselves? What role does family play in Joe's life? Does it unnecessarily bind him to the past? Why or why not? Is there something special about America that allows for unorthodox types of families? Why do you think Sammy married Rosa? Why did she marry him? Are Sammy and Joe both fathers to Tommy?
4. Joe and Sammy create alter egos for themselves and others in their comic books. What is the significance of this? Do the comic book character give us any insight into the real characters in the book which they resemble. Does the character of Luna Moth help us to understand Rosa or Joe more? What does the

character of The Escapist tell us about Joe Kavalier and Sammy Clay? Why does Joe dress up as The Escapist before reuniting with Rosa and Sammy?

5. A golem, according to Webster's New World Dictionary, is "a man artificially created by cabalistic rites: a robot." Knowing this, what do you think the significance of the golem is in this novel. Why is it so important to preserve the golem, and what is the realization one comes to when the golem is only dirt? Where does the transforming power lie, in the dirt or some other, inexplicable, magic quality? Does the power of the creator die with the creation? Compare the creation of the golem to the creation of The Escapist and other characters by Sammy and Joe and the creation of *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay* by Michael Chabon.
6. Is this a happy ending? Is Sammy escaping to LA?
7. What elephant in the living room is being ignored by the questions above? (although it is hard to answer Question 3 without bringing it up)
8. What did you think of the gay content? Was Sammy's fitful journey toward self-acceptance realistic or plausible? What parts did you identify with? Did any part not ring true? What did you think of the portrayal of gay life in the 1940s?
9. How much gay subtext is there in the super-hero genre and how well does the book address it?