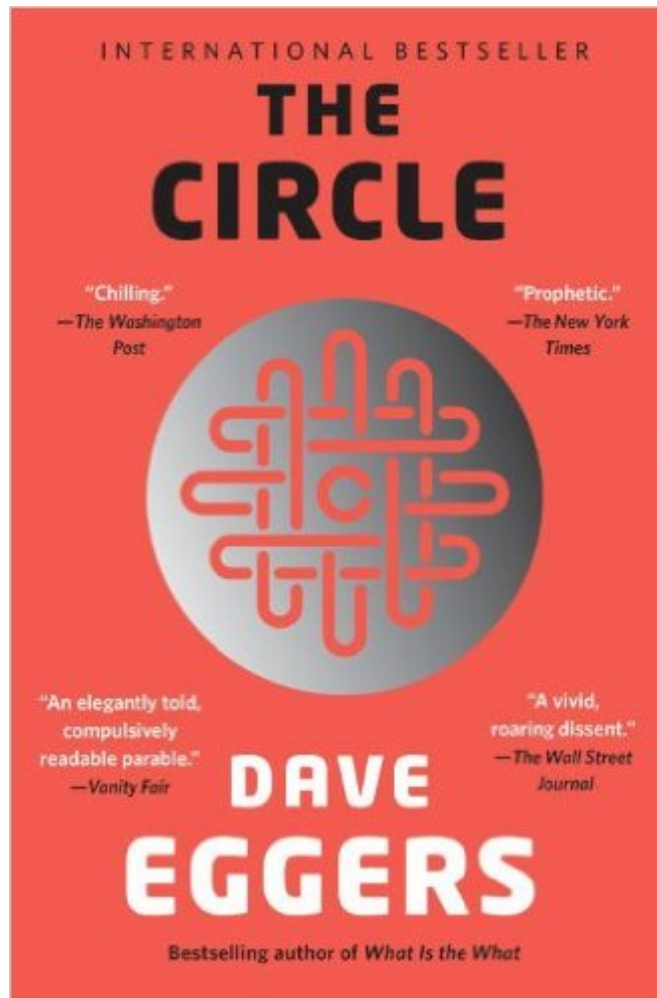


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The Circle



Synopsis

Soon to be a Major Motion Picture, *The Circle* is the exhilarating novel from Dave Eggers, best-selling author of *Heroes of the Frontier*. When Mae Holland is hired to work for the Circle, the world's most powerful internet company, she feels she's been given the opportunity of a lifetime. The Circle, run out of a sprawling California campus, links users' personal emails, social media, banking, and purchasing with their universal operating system, resulting in one online identity and a new age of civility and transparency. As Mae tours the open-plan office spaces, the towering glass dining facilities, the cozy dorms for those who spend nights at work, she is thrilled with the company's modernity and activity. There are parties that last through the night, there are famous musicians playing on the lawn, there are athletic activities and clubs and brunches, and even an aquarium of rare fish retrieved from the Marianas Trench by the CEO. Mae can't believe her luck, her great fortune to work for the most influential company in the world—even as life beyond the campus grows distant, even as a strange encounter with a colleague leaves her shaken, even as her role at the Circle becomes increasingly public. What begins as the captivating story of one woman's ambition and idealism soon becomes a heart-racing novel of suspense, raising questions about memory, history, privacy, democracy, and the limits of human knowledge. From the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Circle is Dave Eggers' response to what's happening to us all: the fundamental transformation of human society created by perpetual electronic connectedness. Surely you've

felt it. I know I have...and I'm glad that a major novelist like Eggers has taken it on. Someone needs to. Eggers wraps his criticism of this phenomenon around a company called The Circle, a thinly disguised version of Google. We experience the inner workings of The Circle through our protagonist Mae who has landed her dream job of being a "Circler," one of the most coveted and hippest jobs that a young 20-something could hope for. The Circle is, from the outset, a creepy sort of insulated company in which every possible need of the Circlers (almost all of whom are under 30) is provided for: on site parties headlined by notable performers, clothing stores stocking the latest products, residences and more. Circlers need never leave the campus (and why would they want to? Surely there could be no more exciting place in the world to be). Oh, one catch: make sure to always be participating in the company's social media at all times; a failure to participate might indicate that you're not a team player or worse....you might be antisocial. One thing the Circle cannot abide is a lack of complete participation at all times. Mae quickly adapts to the ways of the Circle, easily embracing each new layer of required transparency and tracking. As a young person with nothing to hide, she can't see any inherent difficulties in this prospect. Why wouldn't you want to share as much as possible with everyone? Sharing--in the words of one of the Circle's founders--is caring. Keeping information to yourself is actually an act of theft.

1. If a social media corporation were to achieve a complete monopoly of all public and private information, we'd be in danger of becoming a totalitarian society. 2. People often willingly give up their privacy for convenience, societal benefit, or a needy and self-centered desire for affirmation. If these premises seem facile to you, you might not enjoy Dave Egger's new novel, the Circle. The writing is straight, mainstream, third-person limited narration. You won't find any of the layered themes, complex metaphor, formal experimentalism, stylistic prose or psychological lyricism common in modern literary fiction. Whether you'll consider this a bug or a feature is mainly a matter of taste; but it's worth mentioning, given Eggers' McSweeney's pedigree (this is the first book I've read by Eggers, so I wasn't sure what to expect). The protagonist is Mae Holland, an enthusiastic, naive and downright submissive young woman (surprise) who gets a job in customer service at the Circle, a company which, having subsumed Google, Facebook and Twitter, is on the brink of achieving the complete monopoly mentioned above. Mae does not think deeply or critically about anything that happens to her, and her motivations are often inexplicable. These are qualities that serve Eggers' narrative goals more effectively than they do the reader's enjoyment. Eggers' goals seem to ride directly on the surface of the narrative. Almost every scene reads like a mini-lesson on the deceptive utopianism of the huge dot-coms, the superficiality and false emotional appeal of

online "sharing", or the creepiness of voluntary corporate surveillance.

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