

Reading Questions for *Life at the Speed of Us*
(contains spoilers!)

Sovern feels school is a prison. How are traditional schools difficult for students with dyslexia? How would they be different if all students had dyslexia? What is the role of reading in our society and how does this affect how we perceive people who struggle with it?

Sovern is enrolled in a class titled Literature and Culture, yet culture can extend beyond ethnicity. What cultures are present in the novel, and how do they affect Sovern or the story?

In Chapter 1, Sovern screams in rebellion “Against knowing that probability meant zero because fate ruled life.” What does she mean by this? Why is it important to her that fate exists?

Sovern struggles with guilt over the accident that caused her mother’s death. She also struggles with guilt over how she treats her father. In what other ways does Sovern feel guilt, and how does it propel the novel’s plot?

Hillary Rodham Clinton’s book *It Takes a Village* first presented her idea that not just parents but a whole community raises a child. In *Life at the Speed of Us*, what “villages” does Sovern encounter, and how do they help her to heal and grow?

In what ways are birds a motif in the novel? What might they symbolize?

The Utes are at war with the white world and trying to remain in their ancestral lands. This leads to violence and killing that Sovern struggles to accept. Is she right to feel this way? Is killing ever justified? Are there parallels to the Ute’s situation in today’s world?

What languages exist in this novel? What is the function of a language?

Briggs states, “Just because you *can* do a thing, doesn’t mean you *should*.” He also states, “*This* is the life we’ve been dealt,” and he encourages Sovern to accept her mother’s death. Do you agree with him on these points? If given the chance, would you go back and change aspects of your life?

Each day, we move through history—physically, verbally, emotionally—and it is present in ways that we often do not even realize. Sovern travels back in time, but in what additional ways does she move through history? How does history in its many forms affect this novel?

Much of *Life at the Speed of Us* is based in physics, especially its recent discoveries. Multiple universes, string theory, and entanglement are becoming part of our world view. How does this change daily life? If it became possible to tap into other dimensions where other versions of yourself existed, would you want to visit them?