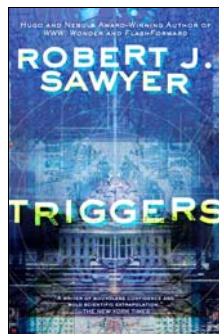


Triggers

Robert J. Sawyer

Surgeons try to save President Seth Jerrison — struck by an assassin's bullet. At the same hospital, Professor Ranjip Singh is testing a device that can erase traumatic memories. Then a terrorist bomb detonates. The president's heart stops. He has a near-death experience — but the memories that flash through Jerrison's mind are not his own.



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The following questions should stimulate an interesting group discussion. Please note that they reveal much of the novel's plot; to preserve your reading pleasure, please don't look at these questions until after you've finished the book.

1. How does the assassination attempt on President Jerrison echo the assassination of JFK? Or the attempted assassinations of Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan? How do you defend against a conspiracy? How do you defend against a psychopath? How do you defend against people who are there to protect you?
2. Do you think it's possible for a known atheist to be elected president? Would you vote for an atheist?
3. If you could access the memories of one other person, who would you want it to be? Who would you not want it to be?

4. If your thoughts were being read by another person, who would you want it to be? Who would you not want it to be?

5. When Kadeem Adams forced President Jerrison to have a flashback to Iraq, did you think that was fair?

6. Should Bessie Stilwell be judged on her private thoughts?

7. Sawyer gets you to like the hospital administrator, Dr. Mark Griffin, then reveals that Griffin deliberately defrauded Medicare. In real life, does everyone have a dark secret? Or is it just in fiction?

8. Do you think the cities that were attacked in *Triggers*: San Francisco, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Washington, are all likely targets for terrorists? Do you live in one of these cities? Are you afraid of an attack?

9. Did you think that Operation Counterpunch was a good idea? Can its comparison to the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki be justified? Is there a difference between a country declaring war on your country and a country harboring terrorists who have declared war on your country?

10. Much is made of President Jerrison being a Republican. How Republican is he, really? Is Operation Counterpunch a Republican idea? Harry S. Truman, the president who ordered the bombing of Japan, was a Democrat.

11. Dora Henessay's mother had left her father when she was a small child. If she left because he had abused Dora, should she have eventually told Dora? Or should she have kept it secret?

12. Janis Falconi's husband was able to abuse and control her because only he knew she was a drug addict. Sawyer suggests that if we are all connected in a hive mind, where everyone knows everyone

else's secrets, then all abuse will stop. Do you agree with that?

13. What did you think of Janis Falconi's gaming friends? How about the description of Professor Singh's kirpan, or Dr. Eric Redecop's Bose noise-canceling headphones, or the Beast? How do all these bits and pieces work together to create a believable story?

14. Did you watch Aaron Sorkin's series *The West Wing*? Would you watch the fictional TV show *Inside the Beltway*? Does politics make good drama?

15. Did you watch the ABC TV series *FlashForward*, based on Sawyer's novel of the same name? If so, did you notice references to the series in *Triggers*? Did they add something special to the book, or is *FlashForward* just another pop-culture reference?

16. Did *Triggers* challenge your thoughts on "eye-witness" testimony or "mind" reading? Now that you know how memory works, do you look at your own memories more critically?

17. Did Sawyer convince you, by the end, that a hive mind is a solution to terrorism? Is it a necessary step in our evolution? Do you want to take that step?

Robert J. Sawyer — "Canada's dean of Science Fiction," according to **Booklist** — is one of only eight writers ever to win all three of the science-fiction field's top awards for best novel of the year: the Hugo, which he won in 2003 for **Hominids**; the Nebula, which he won in 1996 for **The Terminal Experiment**; and the John W. Campbell Memorial Award, which he won in 2006 for **Mindscan**. He's also won the top SF awards in Canada, France, Japan, China and Spain. A popular keynote speaker as well as a bestselling author, Rob lives just west of Toronto with his wife, poet Carolyn Clink.

