

### Questions on Black Box by Jennifer Egan:

1. In addition to unfolding in tweetable (140-character-long) segments, *Black Box* is presented as a sort of manual or rulebook-in-progress narrated (like many such books) in the second person. How might each of these two distinct aspects of narration affect the story's time and your responses both to the story and to its protagonist? How might each shape the way the story handles each of the traditional elements of plot - exposition, rising action and so on?
2. Narrated via a relatively new technology, Egan's story is arguably also about technology (among other things). What technologies, real and imagined, appear in the story? What - through them - might the story suggest about how such technologies - including Twitter - are changing or might change us?
3. How does the story define "the new heroism"? What makes it "new"? What makes it necessary? What conflicts does that version of heroism create for the narrator? How is that conflict resolved? To what extent does and/or doesn't the narrator become a "new hero"?
4. What are the predecessors in fiction and film to the beauties/ citizen agents described in "Black Box"?
5. Each of Egan's paragraphs is 140-characters or less, a structure she used so that the story could potentially be serialized on Twitter. What do you think about the structure of "Black Box"? Do you think you would have felt differently about the story if you had read it as a serialization on Twitter?
6. What do the snippets of this future female spy's life at home with her husband suggest about women's place and value in Egan's future America? Is it better than that of the foreign beauties?
7. The story offers many clues to its potential significance. Among them are the fact that the female spy is originally from New York, that she is working near the Mediterranean Sea, and that her body is a literal "black box" meant to "thwart an attack in which thousands of American lives would have been lost." How might this future imagined by Egan have been shaped by significant historical events we have already experienced?
8. Why do you think it is emphasized over and over again that her labor is unpaid? Find all the instances and consider context.