



The Circle

Dave Eggers

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***The Circle* is the exhilarating new novel from Dave Eggers, best-selling author of *A Hologram for the King*, a finalist for the National Book Award.**

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.

The Circle Details

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From Reader Review *The Circle* for online ebook

Julie Ehlers says

Not long ago, one of the founders of Goodreads posted this on the site's blog:

Picture it: You're curled up on the couch, lost in a fantastic story on your new Kindle Paperwhite, when you come across the most amazing passage. It sends shivers down your spine... or it makes you laugh... or it captures something important to you. And you can't wait to see if your friends feel the same way. Now there's no need to put down your new Kindle Paperwhite to jump on Goodreads and share it with your friends... Starting today, Goodreads is inside your books on the new Kindle Paperwhite. Reading and discussing books are no longer separated—your reading experience is all on one device!1!!1!!1!! [creative punctuation added]

That's right. It used to be that reading was basically a solitary experience. Sure, you could talk about it later, among friends, in a book group, on a site like this. But in order to form your opinion of a book, you needed alone time with it. You needed to be able to give it your full attention, concentrate on it, decide how you felt about it. Now you don't need to do any of those things. You can share every line with your friends (or "friends"), pretty much as soon as you read them, and you don't even have to put the book (or "book") down and pick up a device. It's all integrated for the maximum amount of sharing!

How do you feel about this? If this idea sounds awesome to you, chances are you'll hate *The Circle*, but you'd fit right in at the Circle. If this idea sounds like a nightmare, you definitely wouldn't like the Circle, but you might like *The Circle*.

If you'll permit me another digression, do you remember when Jonathan Franzen had the nerve to say he didn't like Twitter and the internet fairly exploded in its collective anger? I never understood it. Who cares if Jonathan Franzen doesn't like Twitter? He doesn't have to like it. People are allowed to not like Twitter. But we've all heard it a million times by now, in various internet-related scenarios: this is the way we're headed, this is the future, if you don't buy in wholeheartedly you're an embarrassing dinosaur, just accept it! I find this thinking alarming. Haven't we learned anything from the past? Decades ago, we decided the automobile was the future and started building neighborhoods with no sidewalks or businesses within walking distance. Decades ago, we decided processed foods were the future and started deemphasizing fresh food, not to mention local farms. We all know how these scenarios turned out. We now spend a lot of time and resources trying to coax people back onto a kind of middle ground. I'm no Luddite--I like social media (obviously). A middle ground is all I'm asking for, but these are all-or-nothing times we've been living in.

Similarly, *The Circle* is an all-or-nothing kind of book. I wouldn't call it a literary novel; it's more of a fable, a kind of *1984* for the online world. Its central character, Mae, is a frustrating empty vessel. She believes anything she's told, gloms onto any guy who shows interest in her, abandons her loved ones, passions, and principles (the few she has) with only the slightest persuasion. Is she a pure symbol, meant only to convey what happens when things go too far, or is she actually supposed to be a real human being? (In other words, is this what Dave Eggers thinks of real human beings?) On the other hand, Mae's ex-boyfriend Mercer is such an anachronism that he seems to be a symbol as well, set up purely for contrast to Mae. The rest of the characters are ciphers, impossible to really get to know. Side effect of being part of the Circle? Or did Dave Eggers consider the characters secondary to the message he was trying to get across, and therefore simply

didn't spend a lot of time on them?

Still, while the book's characters and events are certainly taken to extremes, the story nevertheless feels plausible to me. What's more, it's fast-paced and entertaining and made me feel like I was trapped in a horrible nightmare I couldn't get out of. I would suggest you read it. Decide for yourself what you think.

Benjamin says

Realistically, *The Circle* probably deserves just four out of five stars - the writing is simple and the characters don't have much depth. In any other book, shortcomings like these would definitely play a much bigger role in the rating. But despite these issues, for me *The Circle* was an extremely exciting and interesting story to read.

There's been plenty of conversation and scrutinizing of Dave Eggers and his approach to the story. Plenty has been said about how he neglected to do any research about tech companies or the people who work in the industry. Interestingly, despite all these concerns, readers are still enjoying the book. What people seem to forget is the fact that *The Circle* isn't meant to be a biographical retelling of some historic event. *The Circle* is meant to be read as a non-fiction novel - what happens at *The Circle* is irrelevant, it's what you think about while reading that counts.

While reading I ended up making quite a few annotations in my Kindle, and I realized a lot of the notes were about similarities to the world we live in today. Eggers creates interesting situations that really prompt readers to consider what kind of world we live in today and where we're going in terms of technology and how we use it. This is all facilitated by the superb settings of the company known as *The Circle*. In early speculations about the book, it was presumed that this huge tech giant that got started in web search and eventually grew to do anything you could think of from shopping to social media, etc. was in fact everyone's everyday favorite tool Google.

When you first hear about *The Circle* and what they do as a company, your initial response is to consider how ridiculous it all sounds. But over time, as you learn more about the company, its history and its projects, and even see the situations its employees are in, you think these scenarios are not too far off from what we experience today - how far are we really from this future?

Along with this extremely interesting premise are occasional twists and turns in the plot, and although there are some predictable points in the story, there were a lot of questions in my mind that kept me flipping to the next page, looking for an answer. Even though by the end of the story I don't think all of my questions were answered, I still enjoyed the overall journey quite a bit.

di says

[choosing the Circle over Ty (hide spoiler)]

Elyse says

Update: The movie opens April 28th- in my area - with Tom Hanks.

Regardless - what people rated this book ---1 star or 5 star. It makes for an engaging discussion.

Yesterday Paul and I saw the movie trailer just BEFORE watching the YouTube update of the Apple Campus being built here in Silicon Valley... Steve Job's last creative design before he died. The 'Kingdom' ... haha in the ROUND off freeway 280 in Cupertino is like NOTHING I've ever seen built in the Bay Area in my lifetime.

I loved this book - it was FUN when I read it a few years ago ---it seems MORE scary to me now! I still recommend it.

I had a BLAST with this book! OUTSTANDING KNOCKED-MY-SOCKS-OFF-GREAT!!!!!!

Its a fabulous Satire with a cautionary tale!

--"Sharing is Caring"???

--"Secrets are lies"???

--"Privacy is theft"???

In the Jewish Religion -- Education is important. We are taught, "Learn in order to teach". (pass on knowledge).

In "The Circle" --their was a line which made me think about traditional religion:

Here's the line: (taken OUT of context to the 'whole' of the story)

"I understand that we're obligated, as humans, to share what we see and know. And all knowledge must be democratically accessible."

"We all have the right to know everything we can. We collectively own accumulated knowledge of the world." [I laughed to myself when I read that line --then said to myself --sounds like being Jewish]....lol

Back to This Book: (things to think about)

What are the costs for 'staying connected'? What are the costs of sharing? Letting the entire world in on your life? If you've nothing to hide--so what??? hm???

I highly recommend "The Circle"! THE BEST MODERN SATIRE!!!!!! Its company mission is: "Passion & Participation. They advocate 'Collective Knowledge', Collective Sharing' -- TRANSPARENCY. The 'Circlers' (people who work at "The Circle), are an inspiration when they Open themselves UP -- willing to share their life to further collective knowledge. They are assets to humankind! ---

In the fun of this page-turning novel:

You'll discover what a *Tru-You* account is: singular online identity anonymity account. (sound interesting?)---and what the benefits would be.

You'll learn about SUPER-DUPER CAMERAS the size of lollipops for only \$59.

AND.....

You'll get to know *Mae Holland* intimately!!!! (The 24 year old 'newbie' to "The Circle")!

To Buy the book:

Contact "The Circle" Company. Its a HOT NEW STORE! (found ---'everywhere')

DAVE EGGERS is a genius and must be WAY TOO much FUN!!!!

Stephanie Sun says

A Review of Dave Eggers' *The Circle* by Google

Transparency is...

Surveillance is...

Society is...

Kayaking is...

Cults are...

Everything in moderation, including...

Cynicism is...

Can I...

On a more serious note, yes, this is *The Fountainhead* for Big Data. If Sonny Mehta had called up Dave Eggers and offered him 100,000 shares of Facebook to write a *The Fountainhead* for Big Data it couldn't have turned out much differently from this book. **The Circle** is as manipulative, intellectually bankrupt, and cardboard character-filled as Ayn Rand's book, which means it has none of the things that I look for in a novel.

However, in keeping with one of the themes hammered home again and again and again in this book, I don't necessarily want all novels that I read to feel as if they were written for me and my tastes. Eggers' and Rand's novels are striking and extreme, and we need striking and extreme novels along with all the rest.

Any engineer who leaves this book shaking his/her head at another high-profile Luddite who JUST DOESN'T UNDERSTAND THE COMPLEXITIES AND DAY TO DAY OF REAL LIFE SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT should think of a novel like this as rapid prototyping for reality. Eggers is hacking together something purposefully bad hoping to get as many people as he can to stop, read, and admit that we really don't want this to be our future, right, right, RIGHT?

I think most of the people leaving one-star ratings and all of those leaving five-star ratings of this book

would nod, Mae-like, yes.

And creating that kind of consensus, in an age and about mechanisms that Google can't even decide whether to deem GOOD, BAD, or NECESSARY, is so valuable.

This book is not very good, but you should read it.

Navidad Thelamour says

"We all know we die. We all know the world is too big for us to be significant. So all we have is the hope of being seen, or heard, even for a moment."

Wow, what a read! It's been a little while since I've given a read 5 stars, so I'm feeling a bit giddy!

I went into this one a little tired from the mild let-downs that some of my more recent reads have been and wanting to take a quick breather from my list of upcoming pre-release 2016 reviews. (This one was released in 2013.) I am delighted to say that this novel, *The Circle* by Dave Eggers, really blew me away! I felt like it'd been a while since I read a novel that actually lived up to its blurb (and more), so I was thrilled about that, not to mention wholly enamored with this world that Eggers constructed. *The Circle* is the new-age *Animal Farm* meets "The Yellow Wallpaper," a read reminiscent of *1984* where Eggers provides a fresh mirror in which to see ourselves and our culture in a startlingly accurate light, in a kaleidoscope of scenarios that straddle the line between personal rights and rights of commerce, the greed of cultural extravagance and the effect of e-media inundation on our lives. While, at the same time, we watch Mae's slow and complete decent into some millennial version of madness. I loved it!

First off, let me say that the lack of chapter markers was a smart play. The format threw me off balance, which kept me on my toes, a useful trick in a read like this. Or as one character put it: *"I want you on your toes, off-balance, intimidated, handcuffed and willing to prostrate yourself at my command."* It also did an exhilarating job of reeling me in as a reader, making it hard for me to pull back, fully immersing me in the on-campus world through Mae's eyes. It was like I could feel my own slow inundation with *The Circle*, which, of course, made the implications as they unfolded a little horrifying, the thought of this utterly realistic and culturally possible phenomenon actually happening. The completely bizarre started to become normal, sounded like it really made sense. *Of course* everyone should know everything! *Of course* we should do everything we can to keep children safe (including planting tracker chips in their arms at birth that they can't even remove in adulthood)! Hmph, must be how cults are formed.

Here, Eggers offered a view of our world like Big Brother on steroids. Embedded in the fact that the Google-like company mostly employed millennials—and that we millennials are known for our social media voraciousness and oversharing—it comes off as a totally plausible alter-universe that Mae has stumbled upon when she arrives, both to herself and to the reader. If you're a typical millennial, read it and take pause. If you're not—especially if you'd classify yourself a Luddite—read it and weep at this completely conceivable, totally creepy, new-age possibility.

The Circle was comical in its realistic nature, life-like in the way that the interactions between characters were played out. Here you'll find competition in a survival-of-the-fittest sort of way reflected in passages that unnerve while being so relatable that they're undeniable. Here Eggers brushes up against classism, caste, struggling to belong and competition, whether healthy or not:

“Annie still held some particular status. Again Annie’s lineage, her head start, the varied and ancient advantages she enjoyed, were keeping Mae second. Always second, like she was some kind of little sister who never had a chance of succeeding an older, always older sibling.”

Eggers pushed situations to a brink that you might be tempted to label over-the-top, but he did so in a way that was contemporary social commentary at its finest. Even Mae’s interactions with the people around her—all strange in their own way—ring hilariously true, from frustrating reprimands from the boss who’s drank too much of the company Kool-Aid to clumsy sex in a dorm (and even a cave, who hasn’t done that, right)? Mae was a realistic 24-year-old character—still bright-eyed and bushy tailed, initially worried about her student loans and her parents’ health and well-being, feeling weighed down by her responsibility as an only child, and that contributed immensely to the direction that the plot took, as we see her being stripped down to conform to a new mold. I loved watching her and being a part of her world. In fact, Eggers wrote a world that I wished I was a part of, one of the reasons that we read in the first place. He constructed a world where social media reigns supreme, where privacy is the enemy, an awesome looking glass of us all being reduced to screen-scrolling sheep.

“Here...there are no oppressors. No one’s forcing you to do this. You willingly tie yourself to these leashes. And willingly become utterly socially autistic. You no longer pick up on basic human communication clues. You’re at a table with three humans, all of whom are looking at you and trying to talk to you, and you’re staring at a screen, searching for strangers in Dubai.”

Imagine a world where e-media and all-encompassing surveillance are the prime forms of communication and interaction across the globe. It’s also how you vote, how you pay your taxes, how you shop online. Your social media profile is how the world—the government, even—sees you. You’re now living in “...*the world’s first tyrannical monopoly*.” That’s a scary, chilling thought that Eggers executed fluidly, with clarity and intrigue. With mounting anxiety, both on the part of the reader and the main protagonist, Mae, until...until it all seems perfectly normal. And that’s the scary part.

I knew that this one was getting 5 stars from about the mid-way point, and hoped that it wouldn’t disappoint with some hastily done bow-tie ending or weak sort of sputtering out like it was tripping over the marathon finish line. But, it did not. It held up its end of the bargain, so I’ll hold up mine: a well-deserved 5 stars.

****By the way, the movie version of this DID NOT do this book justice! Don't judge this book from the movie!****

The Navi Review | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#)

Ron Charles says

Dave Eggers is having a Klout moment: He’s just published a dystopian satire about social media called “The Circle.” On Sunday, the New York Times Magazine touted an excerpt on its cover. The blogosphere has lit up like the aurora borealis.

At 500 pages, this relentless broadside against the corrosive effects of the connected life is as subtle as a

sponsored tweet. Make no mistake: Eggers has seen the Facebook effect, and he does not “like” it. His parable of technological madness reads like a BuzzFeed list of “Top 10 Problems With the Web.” He’s followed the links from today’s Silicon Valley to next Tuesday and discovered that we’re all craven exhibitionists, distracted into idiocy by the insatiable demands and worthless pleasures of the Internet.

Yelp, indeed!

What’s it about.com?

As the hip founder of McSweeney’s, Eggers is LinkedIn to everyone who’s anyone, but he claims that he’s never been to the Googleplex outside San Francisco. Until he posts his complete My Location history, I’m skeptical because it’s awfully easy to recognize the setting of “The Circle”: the sprawling campus of an omnivorous Silicon Valley search company where 10,000 of the brightest young people in the world glide around the glass headquarters, enjoying free gourmet food and Pilates classes. “Outside the walls of the Circle, all was noise and struggle, failure and filth,” Eggers writes. “But here, all had been perfected.”

The novel has a lot of fun with this breathless tour — imagine a Pinterest board maintained by Walt Disney and Kim Jong Il. “The Circle” is working in an old tradition of warnings about schemes to deify mortals, stories that go back to the serpent who promised to help us know everything. But like Gary Shteyngart in “Super Sad True Love Story,” Eggers strains to stay one Instagram ahead of the real-life absurdities made possible by the new fortunes of social media. After all, it was only two weeks ago that the cover of Time magazine asked, “Can Google Solve Death?” Next to that ambition, driverless cars and reliable restaurant reviews don’t seem so far-fetched.

The Circle is directed by the three Wise Men, which is just the first example of the corporation’s cutesy messianic lingo. One member of this triumvirate is Ty, a socially awkward visionary who wears an enormous hoodie. (Tell your lawyers to stand down, Mark. It says right here that “any resemblance to actual persons is entirely coincidental.”) A few years before the story opens, Ty and his two more seasoned partners devised TruYou, a transformative new way to interact with the Web and the world: “Anytime you wanted to see anything, use anything, comment on anything or buy anything, it was one button, one account, everything tied together and trackable and simple, all of it operable via mobile or laptop, tablet or retinal.” Their goal is nothing less than creating a world in which “uncertainty is eliminated.”

Our wide-eyed Candide through this technological wonderland is a new employee named Mae Holland, who starts at the bottom of the Circle in Customer Experience. “Oh my God,” she says on her first day. “It’s heaven.” (Dramatic irony +1.) As the weeks pass, Eggers buries poor Mae beneath an ever-expanding range of technological distractions: On two, three, four, finally nine different monitors, she must answer customers’ questions while monitoring their satisfaction on a 100-point scale, fill out online surveys, rate people’s photos, respond to preference choices piped into her earpiece, “zing” out newsy tidbits about her activities, swap messages with “friends,” and send “smiles” or “frowns” to help various social causes.

In this del.icio.us satire of corporate culture, everything is rated, ranked and evaluated for continuous improvement. Whenever Mae raises any questions about the Circle’s inanity, glossy folks from HR sweep in to counsel her toward enlightenment. But she keeps poking around the dark underbelly of the headquarters, not knowing what she might StumbleUpon next.

Because “The Circle” is all about its argument, the characters are Super Mario-deep, and the novel doesn’t have as much plot as it has momentum. The corporation rolls out one miraculous new service after another, from cheap little Web cameras to monitor every spot on Earth (no more crime!) to ingestible sensors to track

children's movements (no more sex abuse!). Everything the Circle does is guided by the founders' culty belief in the boundless benefits of information and the flattering notion that "the world needs to know .??. your opinions on just about everything." Pushing aside her nagging suspicions, Mae cashes in the bitcoins of her soul and helps the company develop its Orwellian principles:

SECRETS ARE LIES

SHARING IS CARING

PRIVACY IS THEFT

Like some tweeting thought-leader from Babel, one of the Wise Men announces, "We will become all-seeing, all-known." The grand promise of happier living, better health and especially easier purchases overwhelms any concern about the loss of confidentiality. Your space is MySpace. "The momentum crushed all such arguments," Eggers writes. "If you weren't operating in the light of day, what were you doing in the shadows?" Politicians who dare to object soon find their browser caches laced with incriminating pornography.

The only flicker of hope in this story comes from Mae's parents, who are struggling with bills and chronic illness. Though initially proud of their daughter, they provide a powerful counterpoint to her enthusiasm for the Circle's enervating distractions, its presumption that we're just "a matrix of preferences." Before this apotheosis of consumer culture, they stand aghast at the way privacy and intimacy have been replaced by a synthetic community of "friends."

Given how self-evident these satiric points are, though, it's a shame Eggers can't trust his readers more. We hardly need Mae's ex-boyfriend to look directly into the novel's webcam and hector us like some Luddite preacher. The clever writer who once dazzled us with mercurial emotions, ironic asides and rambling footnotes in "A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius" is now painstakingly explaining such dead-obvious symbols as an omnivorous, translucent shark that one of the Wise Men keeps in a giant aquarium. Part of respecting privacy might be leaving readers space to draw their own interpretations. (Please retweet!)

On the other hand, who can afford subtlety in these latter days of Jenna Marbles and apps for babies? "The Circle" is "Brave New World" for our brave new world — and let's be frank: Aldous Huxley's classic is no model of understatement, either. Now that we all live and move and have our being in the panopticon, Eggers's novel may be just fast enough, witty enough and troubling enough to make us glance away from our twerking Vines and consider how life has been reshaped by a handful of clever marketers.

I'm not worried about giving away the end of "The Circle" because we're already living it. There may come a day when we can look back at this novel with incredulity, but for now, the mirror it holds up is too chilling to LOL.

Brad says

A 491 page soap box. Here's what's wrong with it, in no particular order:

(1) Not offering anything new to the conversation. I imagine I will not be the only fan of dystopian literature who will be bored and feel this is retreading old territory already covered in books written long

before the age of the internet. As a human being living in a first world country, the comparisons one can draw between real-life companies and the Circle are second nature: Facebook's ever-changing privacy policies, the tender feelings of Facebook culture, Google's enormity (delving into other spheres like banking, phones, etc.) and well-publicized work environment, Steve Jobs' cool public image, WikiLeaks' total transparency, country-wide privatization of what were previously public services, etc. Likewise, it is easy to see pieces of other stories in this one, whether dystopian (1984's watchful eye eliminating privacy and its bold-faced mantras), comedic (*Office Space*'s passive aggressive pressure for more "pieces of flare," though this is treated humorlessly in *The Circle*) and best-forgotten flops (*Idiocracy*'s ruling class communicating through a hyper-dumbed-down language/culture of cool, something I'm thankful is sloppily forgotten less than halfway into *The Circle*). That amounts to a lot of boxes checked off by the book, but it doesn't take any bold steps of its own. At its simplest, it is a cautionary tale about a would-be utopia that gradually loses its shine, a hammer *Animal Farm* mercifully only pounded me with for 100 pages or so.

(2) The tone. The only thing complicated about the book's tone is this: when it chooses to voice the possible consequences of a powerhouse entity like the Circle, does it realize these concerns are pretty much universally recognized already? I can't determine whether the book means to be trite or condescending. Which brings me to...

(3) The audience. While I don't believe an author should dumb down books for a younger generation, the themes of this book might make more of an impact on a younger audience, though it clearly wasn't written for them. Why write a book that warns against sacrificing privacy online and volunteering one's soul to large corporate entities (no matter how genial), if only to market it to a generation who spends its time warning its own children about the same issues? (Side note: In the year since I wrote this review I've noticed that, like Ayn Rand books, this book's fans appear to simply agree with the message of warning, which is very different from liking a book for its merits as a literary work.)

(4) The protagonist. The protagonist is easily influenced to the point of not being a driving force in her own life, all while being 100% bright-eyed and naive. The choice to cast a young woman (only two years out of college) as this malleable protagonist is misguided and invites criticism, especially with the national dialogues happening around women's rights AND since this is Eggers first full-length book to center around a female character. Those issues aside, the paper-thin Mae has only one driving force as the book goes on: being liked. While this could be a conscious comment on the Facebook generation, it doesn't make for a good character. There is little to make us care about the vapid protagonist or the missteps she continuously makes throughout the book. Not caring about her makes it difficult to identify with her, which (a) means Mae's naivete gives this would-be cautionary tale an abundantly obvious direction and (b) makes it unlikely people will see Mae's story as their own being lived out through (i) Facebook's ever-changing privacy policies, (ii) their own choice in how to respond to Google's growing ubiquity/power and (iii) the self-induced pressures of cultivating an active "life" online. Though she is cautious about many of her first steps into something new, feeling pressured to continue, it isn't long before she is running blindly into the next step of cult-like brainwashing.(view spoiler) It is frustrating to realize that she never stands up for herself...at least it was until I realized she doesn't seem to have anything to stand up for. Mae is so easily manipulated by the powers that be at the Circle that it is difficult to acknowledge her as a sentient being.

(5) The dialogue. So much time is spent *showing* the growing pressures and power of the Circle that it is a wonder that any time is spent *telling* what is happening, as it is so frequently through characters voicing aloud their intentions/motives/feelings. The writing in these moments are fully-articulated viewpoints one could cut and paste into an Op-Ed piece. The characters of Eamon Bailey and Mercer have all the subtlety of Ayn Rand's Howard Rourke but with none of the appeal. Plus, other characters enter the story for no reason other than to offer another somewhat obvious glimpse of the repercussions of an entity like the Circle (e.g. a

drunken zealot who stumbles in to encourage the Circle to use its powers to create uniform morality).

(6) The spineless masses. As written, it is totally unbelievable that everyone would go along with each step, much less with such evangelical enthusiasm. What is motivating them to agree and *cheer* each time their privacy is stripped away? Mercer is the first voice of reason at page 260 or so, which is (a) ridiculous and (b) poorly conceived since he and Mae are mid-argument when the usually-short-on-words Mercer waxes articulate philosophical viewpoints. (This does, however, manifest itself into the only idea I encountered that was new to me: that the biggest disconnect for people in their small, public activities online is that individually most people aren't doing anything wrong, but they are not conscious of the effect collectively.)

(7) Numerous set-ups that lead to nothing. (view spoiler)

(8) The artwork. Sorry to nitpick, but even this completely lacks subtlety: On the dust jacket is the Circle's logo, a C or a circle not yet complete. Take off the dust jacket and one sees that the circle is complete and it has become a target. Insert cutting remark here.

There are even more things I personally didn't like about the book.
(view spoiler)

brian says

as zeitgeisty as they come and just as flawed. eggers' prose is a bit too ordinary, his characters seem just smart or clueless enough to conform to plot machinations, and the masses appear as neo-marxist caricatures of 'the masses' with only a select few white-hat-wearing good guys able to catch a glimpse outside the ol' cave. the riches contained within (and they are aplenty) deserve a more thorough and complete treatment. very entertaining but gonna round down to a 3.

Jaclyn Day says

I really wanted to like this.

The idea of a dystopian novel centered around the perils of the Internet (or the company/companies that control it) is a really appealing and relevant theme. There are parts of the book—the main character's addiction to crowd-sourcing or sharing minute details about what's happening around her—that absolutely feel like 50 Shades of Creepy.

The big problem with *The Circle* is that the main character is completely flat. I didn't understand her, her connections with other characters or her motivations. In a digital, dynamic world, Mae (the main character) is static. She speaks mostly in responses to questions. Do you understand this, Mae? "I do." Does this make sense, Mae? "It does." It's a stretch, but I could excuse this as Eggers' interesting way to show how

submissive we become next to what we perceive as Immense World Power. But honestly, I hesitate to give the book that much credit. The plot is predictable in a bad way. The characters are one-dimensional in a bad way.

Speaking of predictable—the ending! It wasn't satisfying and it provoked no emotional response from me whatsoever. I ended the book, I tossed my Kindle to the side and that was that. This is no modern 1984. I'd enjoy reading a suspenseful, realistic and engaging dystopian novel about the Internet. This book wasn't it.

Amalia Gavea says

"...what if we all behaved as if we were being watched? It would lead to a more moral way of life. Who would do something unethical or immoral or illegal if they were being watched?"

A significant majority of our planet's residents has access to the Web. This has been the way for decades now. We were provided with a great instrument in the everlasting search for knowledge. Everything is there for us to grasp. By pushing a button, a key in the keyboard, by touching a screen, knowledge that would fill millions of pages lies before our fingers and eyes. We use it for entertainment. Films, TV series, books, photos, games...you name it. We use it to establish, sustain and, perhaps, reheat relationships. That beloved friend from school is found via Facebook and a friendship of the past is rekindled. Our other half travels to the USA, to Russia, to China and we can still see him and talk to him because Skype is there for us and suddenly, the distance becomes less painful. (True personal story...) Online dating, dubious and dangerous as it is, provides a solution for a large number of lonely hearts.

The police forces worldwide can prevent crime (or so they claim...) by tracking a terrorist or a pedophile in the Net. We constantly let glimpses of ourselves be shown to people far and wide. We share our lives and others allow us to have a glimpse of their own. But we do it out of our own free will, we are responsible and ought to be aware of the traps that are spread in the vastness of the Web. So what happens when we're watched against our choice? Or eerily enough, when we are brainwashed to accept this as a virtue, a holy obligation, a twisted notion of belonging, of service to the welfare of the global community? What happens when everyone's lives become transparent and everyone can interfere to a citizen's life and choices in the four corners of the world?

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to The Circle, the Orwellian future that isn't so distant anymore....

"All That Happens Must Be Known"

Mae is an aspiring graduate who has just found the job of her dreams. She is required to reply to people's questions in an efficient but personal manner. She's constantly evaluated and watched by fellow workers and by supervisors alike. Soon, she finds out that her participation in social media is mandatory. She HAS to attend parties, activities, she HAS to have friends, followers, likes. She HAS to post photos, comments. Nothing should remain hidden, because this is a service to the global community. Mae falls victim to brainwashing and succumbs. The thought that she plays a significant role to the alteration of the world is firmly rooted in her brain. And from then on, an avalanche follows....

"To Heal We Must Know. To Know We Must Share"

In our society, few things are sacred anymore. One of those things that are truly our own is medical record.

In Mae's world though, there is no such thing. Every health issue, past and present, must be known. Every ailment of theirs and their family members' must be shared, because how is an illness going to be defeated if there is no information available? In this nightmare, pain becomes a spectacle, discrimination over health condition is tangible.

"Privacy Is Theft"

Why keep everything private if you have nothing to hide? For the Circle, privacy means lies. It signifies that you have a tendency for isolation and depression. It means that you have the potential to become a criminal. And society must persuade you to join in by every means possible. You're not allowed to keep secrets, you need to become everyone's friend whether you like it or not.

As you can see, this novel is terrifying. It offers so much to think on in relation to our present and future societies. I admit I felt uncomfortable while reading it, noticing that much of what it describes can be traced in our daily lives. First of all, Eggers knows how to create anticipation. From the very start, despite the happy, humane, welcoming atmosphere, you can feel that something's amiss. The mellow voices of Mae's supervisors cannot hide the patronizing tone, the smooth way in which they offer threats covered with honey to attract the naive victim. There are obviously traces of Orwell's *1984* in the story. The creation of new words (TruYu, SeeChange), Eamon's political references, the tiny cameras located everywhere, the workers that cheer and clap in unison as if hypnotized.

Having said that, I feel that this was the major disadvantage of the book. I think that Eggers tried too hard to create a *1984* version for the new millennium so the effort was too obvious and the result of lower quality since it cannot be compared to Orwell's masterpiece. The similarities seemed forced because after all, Eggers may be a talented author but Orwell he is not.

The writing itself is quite good, but the dialogue is a really weak point. In my opinion, the language used by the Circle members is almost soulless, cold. Perhaps in the particular environment it is to be expected, but there were conversations between Mae and her parents or her friends that were cringe worthy. The second half of the book quickly becomes redundant, repetitive. The chapters towards the end, however, are harrowing. The mob's lust for blood, Mae's naivety that turns into malice create a kind of darkness worthy of a true dystopian universe.

The characters won't be up for any awards. Mae receives a lot of hatred and at first, I was thinking that she may be naive and frustrating but perhaps we judge her too harshly. We all want to satisfy our employers, especially in a new job and whoever claims the opposite is a big liar. At least, she seems kind and caring. These were my initial thoughts. But during the second half of the story, her behavior reached a whole new level of stupidity. I just couldn't stomach how blind and dumb she was. Frankly, it seemed implausible. Her parents, Mercer, Frances and Kalden were equally flat and annoying. Anne had some potential but for me, the most fascinating character was Bailey. He almost persuaded me, you know...That is how you create an effective villain.

The debate over the presence of cameras in every street all over the world after the 9/11 attacks, Security Vs Privacy is an ongoing debate, discussed again and again with the two sides having equally strong arguments. How we are brainwashed to think that a number of "frowns" and "smiles" would influence the actions of a democratically elected government, not to mention a regime...It's what I call (and it may sound too harsh and cynical) "The Keyboard Rebels".

So this would be a 4-star read, but the similarity to *1984* made it less original and influential, in my opinion.

And naturally, the writing -although mostly satisfying- lacked power and magnetism. However, I urge you to read it and think. Think where our world is heading. Think why it seems as if we're all aboard a train that moves in an incredible speed without brakes....

MJ Nicholls says

Liking this review will send a zing direct to Dave Eggers, who will enter the names of all those who liked at once into the McSweeney's Assimilation Programme (MAP), an underground writing movement devoted to the extinction of all non-clear-cut, accessible, socially conscious, lyrical and harmlessly amusing prose. Eggers will also have access to your Facebook profiles and email addresses, and will friend you as JONAS BENZINE, a plucky Mexican stripper interested in your wit and bank account. Just a warning. Eggers's latest novel is a deliberate re-imagining of IngSoc from 1984 in the form of a bland Californian Google-plex whose erosion of privacy for the Greater Good becomes the hippest thing in Corporate Evil. His constant riffing on the banalities of social networks and the inherent evil lurking below is first-rate, raising oodles of smiles and outright titters, taking excellent turns to the sinister and horror-film eerie within a sometimes obvious but zingy plot. Apart from one scene where Mae's lover asks for a rating after sex (we all do that, right?), the observational material, intelligently researched and presented concepts, character-buffing sections, are excellent and, of course, Eggers is a mainstream literary writer, so writes with effortless page-munching zeal. Remember, failure to like this review will reduce your standing in the eyes of those who (hitherto) loved and respected you.

Bonnie says

My rating: 1 of 5 stars

I received this book free from LibraryThing in exchange for an honest review. This does not affect my opinion of the book or the content of my review.

In the world introduced in 'The Circle', individuals become completely transparent and are stripped of their anonymity even when performing menial tasks. Mae Holland has just secured a position with The Circle thanks to her friend Annie, a high-ranking employee at The Circle. Mae's involvement in the company slowly begins overtaking everything and without stopping to consider, her entire life ends up being put on display for anyone willing to see.

'TruYou changed the internet, in toto, within a year. Though some sites were resistant at first, and free-internet advocates shouted about the right to be anonymous online, the TruYou wave was tidal and crushed all meaningful opposition. It started with the commerce sites. Why would any non-porn site want anonymous users when they could know exactly who had come through the door? Overnight, all comment boards became civil, all posters held accountable. The trolls, who had more or less overtaken the internet, were driven back into the darkness.'

So essentially the only people that truly care about privacy in this world are trolls and people who view porn online. Everybody else is fully willing to give up their privacy. Right. Because that's totally legit. And comment boards became civil overnight all because people's real names were disclosed thus insinuating that the only thing encouraging people to state their opinions on the Internet was their anonymity? And I loved how the creation of the Unified Operating System, also known as TruYou, which basically took all user

accounts and passwords and made them into one all encompassing login, revolutionized the Internet and prevented identity theft. You'd think if you only had one single password it'd be easier rather than more difficult to hack someones information but maybe we're not supposed to think too hard on these technological creations of Eggers, especially considering his supposed lack of research on the subject. (*"There were a handful of times when I looked something up, or asked the opinion of someone more tech-savvy than I am, but for the most part this was just a process of pure speculative fiction."* -Source) His lack of research is abundantly clear with the naming of his main invention, Unified Operating System, which isn't even an Operating System at all. Windows? OS X? Linux? Android? Those are Operating Systems. Computer software that manages the computers hardware. For someone that decided to write a 504 page book dedicated to technology I would have expected him to know that at the very least.

It's obvious that Eggers himself harbors a deep dislike of technology and the way the Internet is growing and expanding in society as that's the way it was written, in a smug and dismissive manner. Each time Mae's ex-boyfriend Mercer makes an appearance the opportunity is taken to preach his opinions about her job and what companies like 'The Circle' are doing to this world. It's clear Eggers is the embodiment of Mercer and he used that character to push his agenda which is completely fine by me, but the opinions of technological advances were written as black and white where people are either completely for or completely against those advances. Personally, I found myself in a grey area and I'm doubtfully the only like-minded individual.

Setting all that aside I really have to mention the worst thing about this book: the sex scenes. Not only was there a completely unnecessary romance, but the embarrassingly graphic sex scenes told from the point of view of a female were awful (not to mention the scene where Mae walked in on her parents? Served absolutely no purpose to the advancement of the storyline.) Maybe it would've been better if the main character was a male and Eggers could have made it sound like he has a modicum of sense in regards to what goes on in the bedroom. The bothersome descriptive words makes me hope someone will steal that man's thesaurus. Here a few cringe-worthy examples:

'Then his eyes closed, and he went into paroxysms, emitting a brief squeal before grunting his arrival.'
Squeal? Grunting? ARRIVAL? No, no, no.

"Sometimes," he said, and breathed fire into her ear.
My. That sounds painful.

'She could think only of a campfire, one small log, all of it doused in milk.'

Okay, maybe this is a little out of context and hard to understand but there had just been an embarrassing sexual situation where the man was a bit too... quick with it. And Eggers uses a 'small log' and 'milk' as the descriptive terms. Good grief, NO.

The Circle is at times a bit of a satiric story on the technological advances in this day and age but does manage to bring up some points that would be worth discussing. If it was a non-biased written interpretation on the future possibilities of technology it could have been well received (by me) but as it stands it was written too much like The Circle was 'Big Brother' and everything associated with technology is inherently bad. The laughable ending which involves robot drones directed by social media hordes that essentially cause a murder only solidified my displeasure.

Amantha says

Imagine a character named Mark Holland. He's easily manipulated, does anything anyone tells him, is constantly worried how others see him, constantly thinks he's going to be fired even though he meets the company's expectations, and when he gets 97% approval rating he becomes convinced that the 3% expressing disapproval obviously want him dead and are plotting to murder him. He listens to people spout off distorted, uncomfortable bullshit, takes it all in, and says with wide-eyed wonder "You are a genius."

Sounds like a bit of a tool, doesn't he?

Well now imagine that character's name is Mae Holland. What's your thoughts on the above characteristics when they're attributed a woman? Do they suddenly seem....natural? Expected, even?

Excuse me while I vomit.

I'm not saying all female characters should be ballbusting HBIC "strong female character" stereotypes. I'm all for well-rounded women. The problem is Mae isn't well-rounded at all. So here we have Dave Eggers looking at a genre (the digital world) that is mostly dominated by male protagonists (occasionally you get that tech-savvy female sidekick like in Mr. Penumbra's 24-Hour Bookstore or the GwtDT trilogy but even then it feels like the author is asking for a pat on the back for being so very groundbreaking and open-minded) and going "Hm I need a protagonist who is easily manipulated and brainwashed. Obviously it can't be a guy because that's not the story I want to tell. It must be a girl."

Gross.

Okay so you've got Mae. You've got her ballbusting HBIC "strong female character" stereotype best friend, Annie. You've got her automaton coworkers and bosses. You've got the Zuckerbergesque founder who stays in the shadows. You've got his "face of the company" partners. You've got the ex-boyfriend who starts out as the only voice of reason in the whole damn book. You've got the sickly parents whose souls Mae sells to her company. And then, because she is a Leading Female Protagonist, you've got not one but two guys who are polar opposites who basically spend the whole length of the novel trying to get into her pants. Both succeed. Both are utter tools. One of them has a "secret identity" that I figured out about 100 pages before it was revealed and I thought to myself "if this guy is who I think he is I'm going to throw this book across the room."

If it had been my own personal copy, I totally would have. My literal reaction was:

I was so angry I really almost did throw the book in spite of the fact that it belongs to a coworker.

So yeah, you've also got not one but two White Male Saviour characters (the ex-boyfriend and one of Mae's beaus), one of whom (view spoiler) and the other of whom (view spoiler). Admittedly that second spoiler is one of the reasons I gave this book two stars instead of one. Mae finally FINALLY stops being manipulated by everyone around her and makes her own decision and reveals what her personality is (so far all we know of her is what other people foist upon her): her personality is the sort that wants everyone else to tell her what her personality is.

W O W.

Okay so the other reason this book got two stars from is that in spite of everything it's an intriguing plot and

the action was intense (and infuriating) enough that I kept going through all 500 pages. And the ending, like I said, was slightly satisfying inspite of the "surprise" not being a surprise at all. And there is a repeating theme of Mae getting panic attacks that feel like a black tear opening inside her that can only be quenched by the devouring monotony of consumerism. The imagery was so vivid that I felt like a panic attack was imminent myself.

But let's get back to the bad stuff. Leaving aside the anti-feminist vibes I was getting the entire time, there were so many things about this world that had me questioning the validity of it all. Because everyone has one account with one password and their real identity for all of the internet, identity theft no longer exists. Um, what? Wouldn't that make identity theft EASIER? Also because anonymity no longer exists, people are nice (oh except when they're not but Mae doesn't acknowledge that) and no one ever says anything nasty about anyone ever again. W H A T? And then there's the bit at the end with the all-devouring shark that is such a heavyhanded metaphor for The Circle that I would like Mr. Eggers to know that hey guess what your readers really aren't that stupid that you needed whatshisface to explain it at the end. Oh gosh my real name is attached to this review and I just said something negative about someone. Guess that whole "anonymity makes people assholes but being watched makes everyone magically nice" idea doesn't actually work, does it?

Now if you excuse me I'm moving to the middle of nowhere where there is no internet or people or anything and I'm gonna earn my living by making chandeliers out of deer antlers.

Melissa ♥ Dog/Wolf Lover ♥ Martin says

Nooooooooooooo! No! No!

This book is creepy as hell! People in the world watching your every move! They can suck it. The only social media I do is Goodreads and google. This book makes you want to run away from even that! I still have a Facebook account but don't go there because I despise it. I don't do stupid twitter or Snapchat. Haven't done Instagram and not sure if I ever will. I should just go off the grid like the lovely Charlie Hunnam ??

Anyway, whatever. I wouldn't doubt they are already putting something like this book into place. Maybe? It's a VERY scary thought!

Mel ♥?
