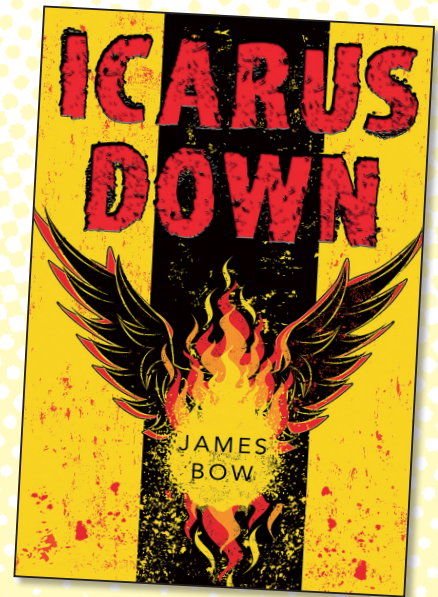


ICARUS DOWN

BY JAMES BOW



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Simon and, later, Eliza, both tell the story of “Icarus Down” in the first person. How does this approach affect how the story unfolds for the reader? Who do you think they are talking to?
2. The planet, Icarus Down, rotates once every 14 Earth months. Iapix has an extremely long day and short night because of how close it is to the planet’s pole, like a midsummer day in Anchorage or Iqaluit. What can we learn about the planet given the length of its days, and the fact that this hasn’t changed much in 62 years?
3. Simon notes that, “the only people with military training among us had been the officers of the *Icarus*, killed in the crash, and the advance colonization team, whom we never heard from again.” What do you think happened to the advanced colonization team, left behind on the planet Simon’s people were originally supposed to colonize?
4. Simon states, “our society had hit the steam and clockwork age from the wrong direction, moving fast.” What does he mean? How would such a change affect your community if it happened to you?
5. Gabriel states, “Throughout history, the human race has been at its best when it’s asked questions and pushed beyond itself. But asking questions isn’t in fashion right now.” Do you agree or disagree with Gabriel? Are there ever times when it’s good to not ask questions?

6. In response to the fall of Icarus, many Grounders are arrested, and go to jail even though they're not guilty. Why do you think the people of Icarus Down reacted this way?
7. Compare and contrast Eliza's "Grief Song" to Simon's funeral prayer in chapter twenty-two. How are they similar? How are they different? What do these similarities and differences tell us about Simon and Eliza's worlds?
8. Compare and contrast Rachel and Eliza. What would they think of each other, if they met?
9. Simon states that he and his people feel shame for losing the Earth, saying "The shame of what our ancestors had done on Old Mother Earth, the crimes that had driven us into the darkness. When people heard of what the *Icarus* had done to the Elder's people — the same crime, as if genocide were bred in our bones — I did not know what would happen." It has been over sixty years since the fall of the *Icarus*, however. Does Simon's generation have a responsibility to atone for the actions of their ancestors? What obligations do we have as people when we teach and learn our history?
10. The Elder tells Eliza, "After living this long, I have found that rage only takes us out to deep water. It does not help us swim. And so, in many ways, it takes us too far. I am glad you have learned this before you drowned." How is rage like swimming out into deep water? Are there benefits? How is it dangerous?
11. Simon is strongly against using violence to bring about the change he wants. Do you agree or disagree? Even though he is fighting Nathaniel, why is it important that he not use Nathaniel's methods?
12. Do you feel pride when you suffer through something? Why? Why not?
13. What if Rachel and not Simon had survived the fall into the fog forest; how would the story have been different? What characteristics, if any, does Simon have that helps solve the mystery that either Rachel or Eliza don't?
14. Three chapters in the novel have "Fall" in their title: "The Fall of Simon Daud", "The Fall of the *Icarus*" and "The Fall of Nathaniel Tal". While each features the named character falling to the ground, what else could "Fall" represent in these chapters? How does it relate to the title "Icarus Rising"?
15. If you had to live and work with someone who didn't share your language, how would you communicate?