

ROCK PAPER TIGER READER'S GUIDE

1. Central to *Rock Paper Tiger* is the concept of the Surveillance State, in which one's every move is observed. In what ways does Ellie believe she is being watched? What are the different forms that surveillance takes? What effect might this have on civil rights and civil society?
2. How does Ellie's backstory illuminate what she's going through in the present? How does her past influence her decisions?
3. Part of Ellie and Trey's relationship is based on their religious faith. Trey keeps his faith; Ellie loses hers. Why did two people with similar beliefs and wartime experiences come to such different conclusions? How do you think Trey reconciled his faith with his wartime actions? How did Ellie's questioning of her old beliefs affect her decision making?
4. Online games and communities are extremely popular in both the United States and China. Why have virtual communities become so attractive to so many people? What does this say about the nature of real-life communities today? What are the limitations of virtual communities? Does Ellie find a "home" online, or is this an escape from the "real" world?
5. The chain restaurant concept was created in America to allow travelers to visit a place that would be familiar no matter where they went. Ellie likes China and its culture, yet she seeks out things that are culturally familiar, such as Starbucks, whenever she is particularly stressed. What does this suggest about Ellie's psychological state?
6. What is the role of artists and art in a society where political freedom is limited? What does art mean for "common" people like Ellie, who readily admits that she doesn't quite "get" the art that she sees?
7. Ellie's odyssey through China takes her to many tourist destinations, including the Great Wall and the fictionalized Daoist mountain, Changqing Shan. How does selling a cultural or historical experience change it?