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VCE English  $\frac{3}{4}$   
Station Elevation  
Summary Notes

## Section A: (ST) Struggle



### (ST1) Struggle to maintain one's place in the world

- ▶ "Arthur was primarily a film actor, and who in Hollywood longs to be older?"
- ▶ "This life was never ours," she whispers to the dog, who has been following her from room to room, and Luli wags her tail and stares at Miranda with wet brown eyes. "We were only ever borrowing it."
- ▶ Struggle to adapt
  - ❏ "These people you coach, do they ever actually change? I mean in any kind of lasting, notable way?" (Dahlia to Clark)
- ▶ Struggle to find one's place
  - ❏ "By her mid-thirties she feels competent and at last more or less at ease in the world, studying foreign languages in first-class lounges and traveling in comfortable seats across oceans"
- ▶ Struggle to not be consumed by one's place
  - ❏ "My poor corporate baby," he said. "Lost in the machine." Pablo talks about metaphorical machines a lot, also the Man."
- ▶ Struggle to adjust to a new world
  - ❏ "I have such disorientation, V., I can't tell you. At unexpected moments find myself thinking, how did I get here? How have I landed in this life? Because it seems like an improbable outcome, when I look back at the sequence of events."
- ▶ Struggle to maintain over one's path
  - ❏ "Arthur lives in a permanent state of disorientation like a low-grade fever, the question hanging over everything being How did I get from there to here?"
- ▶ Financial struggle
  - ❏ "He was poised to become the Next Big Thing, but then a show got canceled and he sold nothing else in the year that followed, absolutely nothing, so Miranda signed with a temp agency"
- ▶ Struggle to adjust to the new normal
  - ❏ "What did it mean to seem like yourself, in the course of such unspeakable days? How was anyone supposed to seem?"

## (ST2) Struggle to handle chaos

- See Survival - Danger is always imminent
- "That first year everyone was a little crazy." (Clark)

## (ST3) Struggle to communicate or be present

- "You fall asleep for short periods and then for longer periods and then forever." (Clark)

## (ST4) Struggle to fight off danger or ensure one's own security

- "I had to leave," the girl said. "I'm so sorry, I'm sorry, I'll do anything" / "I didn't have any choice," she said. "I was going to be his next wife." (Eleanor)

## (ST5) Struggles with health

- "The seventh guitar was a nervous person, because he was nearly blind."
- And neglect
  - 🔊 "A serious child, unkempt in a way that suggested neglect, her hair tangled, her T-shirt collar torn."
- And denial that one has ailments
  - 🔊 "It wasn't her imagination, she definitely had a sore throat. "It's psychosomatic," she said aloud. "You're afraid of getting sick, so you feel sick. It's nothing."

## (ST6) Sometimes there are hints that struggle/death is ahead

- "He looked up and met the eyes of an owl, watching him from a snow-laden branch." (Jeevan)
- Humanity's struggle in the years following the pandemic is foreshadowed
  - 🔊 "Clark shook the globe and held it up to the light. When he looked through it, the planes were warped and caught in whirling snow."
- Kirsten's paperweight constantly reminds her of the struggles ahead
  - 🔊 "It was a lump of glass with a storm cloud trapped inside."

## (ST7) Mental and emotional struggle

➤ Struggle with guilt or trauma

- 🗨️ "It is possible to survive this but not unaltered, and you will carry these men with you through all the nights of your life."
- 🗨️ "after that first unremembered year, her brother had been plagued by nightmares. " (Kirsten)

➤ Struggle with regret

- 🗨️ "This was actually the main difference between twenty-one and fifty-one, he decided, the sheer volume of regret."

➤ Struggle to keep doing what one needs to do

- 🗨️ "Now Hua worked long hours at Toronto General."

Space for Personal Notes

## Section B: (SU) Survival



### (SU1) Sometimes one succumbs and can't keep going on

- "Everything ends. I am not afraid." (Kirsten)
- Snow represents looming disaster and the inevitability of death or entropy
  - 🔒 "The storm had passed, and snow lay deep on the wings of airplanes."
- But snow also sometimes represents perseverance
  - 🔒 "Outside the world was ending and snow continued to fall."
- It is never certain whether one will survive
  - 🔒 "Are you fine, Hua my old friend, or will you be fine?"
- One must make difficult decisions
  - 🔒 "I think there's just survival out there, Jeevan. I think you should go out there and try to survive." "I can't just leave you." "I'll leave first," Frank said. "I've given this some thought."
  - 🔒 "Don't think of that unspeakable decision, to keep the jet sealed rather than expose a packed airport to a fatal contagion."

### (SU2) In the world of Station Eleven, danger is always imminent

- The speed and lethality of the flu in the old world
  - 🔒 "It's the fastest incubation period I've ever seen."
- The dangers of other people, and of the unknown, in the new world
  - 🔒 "The reassuring weight of knives on her belt."
  - 🔒 "Being alive is a risk." (The conductor)
  - 🔒 Nature can embody the feeling of danger sometimes
    - "The claustrophobia of the forest."
- On Station Eleven
  - 🔒 "on Station Eleven's surface it is always sunset or twilight or night."

## (SU3) A lot is needed to survive

- Conviction and good instincts are necessary for survival
  - 🗣️ "I'm a survivalist," Jeevan explained."
  - 🗣️ "Some places, you pass through once and never return, because you can tell something's very wrong." (Kirsten to Diallo)
- Prioritising self-interest is necessary to survive (even if it's survival in a career or financial sense)
  - 🗣️ "Speaking for myself, I didn't even think about charity until I was already successful."
- Efficiency is necessary for survival
  - 🗣️ "The cabs were stripped of everything that added excess weight"
- Even if one survives, they may feel guilty
  - 🗣️ "The snow was falling faster now. He felt extravagantly, guiltily alive. The unfairness of it" (Jeevan)
- Compromising one's values (and self-denial that one has compromised them)
  - 🗣️ "No one ever thinks they're awful, even people who really actually are. It's some sort of survival mechanism." (Miranda to Elizabeth at Arthur's home)
- Stability and safety
  - 🗣️ "Of course," Clark said. "That's one thing I like about birthdays, they stay in one place. Same spot on the calendar, year in, year out." (To Arthur)
- Luck
  - 🗣️ "You must be immune," Jeevan said. "Yes." Ben stared fixedly into the flames. "I'm the luckiest man alive, aren't I?"

Space for Personal Notes

## Section C: (AB) Art and Beauty



### (AB1) The passion that one has for artistic pursuits can be fulfilling

- ▶ Artistic pursuits provide happiness
  - 🔊 "It makes me happy. It's peaceful, spending hours working on it. It doesn't really matter to me if anyone else sees it." (Miranda)
- ▶ They can help one pass the time
  - 🔊 "she can often spend entire afternoons sketching" (Miranda)
- ▶ They are exhilarating
  - 🔊 "She never feels more alive than at these moments. When onstage she fears nothing." (Kirsten)
- ▶ They are comforting and illuminating
  - 🔊 "I could throw away almost everything, she thinks, and begin all over again. Station Eleven will be my constant."
- ▶ They are validating
  - 🔊 "They acted because they loved acting, but also, let's be honest here, to be noticed. All they wanted was to be seen."
- ▶ Producing art can shed light on one's truths and experiences in a way that cannot be achieved by just consuming others' creations
  - 🔊 "She'd been thinking lately about writing her own play, seeing if she could convince Gil to stage a performance with the Symphony actors. She wanted to write something modern, something that addressed this age in which they'd somehow landed." (The clarinet)

### (AB2) Art itself is useful and important

- ▶ It endures
  - 🔊 "And now in a twilight once more lit by candles, the age of electricity having come and gone, Titania turns to face her fairy king."
- ▶ Art can aid in remembering the past
  - 🔊 "People want what was best about the world," Dieter said.

➤ Art can provide joy and excitement

🔊 "In Traverse City the crowd following them down the street upon their arrival had swelled to a hundred,"

🔊 It can move people

➤ "A man in the front row had tears in his eyes."

🔊 It can help people forget the worries of the present

➤ "Let us all thank the Traveling Symphony for this beautiful respite from our daily cares."

### (AB3) Art is beautiful

➤ "There is still such beauty .... a performance of A Midsummer Night's Dream in a parking lot"

➤ It is beautiful because it is personal

🔊 "She started to explain her project to him again but the words stopped in her throat. "You don't have to understand it," she said. "It's mine."

➤ People can doubt it is beautiful

🔊 "You're always half on Station Eleven," Pablo said during a fight a week or so ago, "and I don't even understand your project. What are you actually going for here?" (Pablo)

➤ It is beautiful because it is comforting (even if one does not realise it)

🔊 "Elizabeth, who is crying a little, bites her lip and together they look at the sketches and paintings pinned to every wall. The dog stands at attention and stares at the window, where just now a moth brushed up against the glass, and for a moment everything is still. Station Eleven is all around them."

### (AB4) The world is beautiful

➤ Natural beauty of the world

🔊 "there is still such beauty ... Twilight in the altered world ... Lake Michigan shining a half mile away. "

🔊 Because the world seems exotic and mysterious

➤ "Miranda spends some time on the Asian travel itinerary. Japan, then Singapore, then South Korea. She likes looking up maps and imagining traveling to these places herself."



- 🔗 Because there aren't as many people
  - "The beauty of this world where almost everyone was gone."
- Man-made things as well
  - 🔗 "Clark had always been fond of beautiful objects, and in his present state of mind, all objects were beautiful."
- Appreciating the world can give us moments of peace
  - 🔗 "While he was waiting for the day to end he sat at Frank's desk, looking out at the lake. Trying to hold on to the tranquility of these last few moments, here in this apartment where he'd been for so long."
- Even when the Symphony is escaping danger
  - 🔗 "The only sounds were the clapping of horseshoes on cracked pavement, the creaking of the caravans, the footsteps of the Symphony as they walked, small rustlings from the night forest. A fragrance of pine and wildflowers and grass in the air, the stars so bright that the caravans cast lurching shadows on the road."
- Things in the world are beautiful even if they serve no purpose
  - 🔗 "The paperweight was a smooth lump of glass with storm clouds in it, about the size of a plum. It was of no practical use whatsoever, nothing but dead weight in the bag but she found it beautiful."
- But the world can feel suffocating even if it is beautiful
  - 🔗 "It was," he tells them, "it is," and then finds a way to change the subject because it's difficult to explain this next part. Yes, it was beautiful. It was the most beautiful place I have ever seen. It was gorgeous and claustrophobic. I loved it and I always wanted to escape." (Arthur)

**Space for Personal Notes**

## Section D: (MEM) Memory



### (MEM1) Some things have seemingly fallen out of the memory of civilisation

- "All the other components that no one under the age of twenty had ever seen in operation"
- But in a sense, they haven't
  - 🗣️ "Here's the thing, kids, the entire world is a place where artifacts from the old world are preserved."

### (MEM2) Memory fades

- "There were countless things about the pre-collapse world that Kirsten couldn't remember—her street address, her mother's face, the TV shows that August never stopped talking about—"
- Sometimes memories are repressed
  - 🗣️ "The road," he'd always said, when she shook him awake and asked what he'd been dreaming of. He'd said, "I hope you never remember it."
- But some memories have such a profound impact that they never go away
  - 🗣️ "Still, the fact is that a woman walked into a lake that wasn't large and no one found the body for two weeks despite intensive searching, and the episode sparks up against Arthur's childhood memories retrospectively and leaves a frisson of darkness that wasn't there at the time." (Arthur)
- People can have differing memories about the same thing
  - 🗣️ Paperweight:
    - "Her gaze falls on the gift that Clark brought this evening, a paperweight of clouded glass. When she holds it, it's a pleasing weight in the palm of her hand. It's like looking into a storm"
    - "Kirsten, teary-eyed and breathless, a few days shy of her eighth birthday, gazed at the object and thought it was the most beautiful, the most wonderful, the strangest thing anyone had ever given her. It was a lump of glass with a storm cloud trapped inside."

### (MEM3) Memories are often wistful, melancholic, haunting

- "Do you remember when we were young and gorgeous? Clark wanted to ask. Do you remember when everything seemed limitless?" (Clark talking to Arthur)
- But they are still meaningful

🔊 “he had an idea—too sentimental to speak aloud and he knew none of his divorced friends would ever own up to it—that something must linger, a half-life of marriage, some sense memory of love even if obviously not the thing itself. He thought these people must mean something to one another, even if they didn’t like one another anymore.”

## (MEM4) People want to remember things that are good

➤ Products and culture from the old world

🔊 “They’d performed more modern plays sometimes in the first few years, but what was startling, what no one would have anticipated, was that audiences seemed to prefer Shakespeare to their other theatrical offerings.”

➤ People want to remember themselves in their old lives

🔊 “The last time I ate an ice-cream cone in a park in the sunlight. The last time I danced in a club. The last time I saw a moving bus. The last time I boarded an airplane that hadn’t been repurposed as living quarters, an airplane that actually took off. The last time I ate an orange.”  
(Clark)

➤ People want to be remembered themselves

🔊 “First we only want to be seen, but once we’re seen, that’s not enough anymore. After that, we want to be remembered.” (Frank quoting a philanthropist)

➤ Fond memories from our past leave an impact on us

🔊 “In Arthur’s memories of the lake, his mother is reading a book under the trees on the shore while his little brother splashes around with water wings in the shallows and bugs land fleetingly on the water’s surface.”

➤ Some people also understand the importance of remembering the bad

🔊 “Kirsten also had two black knives tattooed on the back of her right wrist, but these were less troubling to Dieter, being much smaller and inked to mark specific events.”

➤ Sometimes people are compelled by memories that are little more than vague feelings

🔊 “She liked to look through the clippings sometimes, a steadying habit. These images from the shadow world, the time before the Georgia Flu, indistinct in the moonlight but she’d memorized the details of every one: Arthur Leander and his second wife, Elizabeth, on a restaurant patio with Tyler, their infant son; Arthur with his third wife, Lydia, a few months later; Arthur with Tyler at LAX.”

- People want to remember the new world as it is

🗣️ “And more than that, well, publishing the newspaper has been an invigorating project, but then I thought, Why stop with a newspaper? Why not create an oral history of this time we live in, and an oral history of the collapse?”

- It is young people especially who want to remember

🗣️ “We stand it because we were younger than you were when everything ended, Kirsten thought, but not young enough to remember nothing at all. Because there isn’t much time left, because all the roofs are collapsing now and soon none of the old buildings will be safe. Because we are always looking for the former world, before all the traces of the former world are gone.”

## (MEM5) People are preoccupied by memories of the old world

- “We long only for the world we were born into.” (Kirsten quoting Dr Eleven comics)

- Because things they loved are gone

🗣️ “August had stared at the screen with a lost expression.”

🗣️ “[Dieter] longed for the sound of an electric guitar.”

🗣️ Dr Eleven comics symbolise how people long for better worlds from their past

- “ A line of text across the bottom of the frame: I stood looking over my damaged home and tried to forget the sweetness of life on Earth.”

- Because people think such memories can help humanity

🗣️ “The more we know about the former world, the better we’ll understand what happened when it fell.” (Diallo)

## (MEM6) Children have no memory or knowledge of the old world


- This can sometimes bring the wonder and joy of discovery

🗣️ “Alexandra had been enraptured, the screen a magical thing with no memories attached.”

- Withholding knowledge is sometimes deliberate

🗣️ “Other towns, discussion of the past is discouraged.”

- Giving children knowledge, and also withholding it, is a contentious issue for some people

 "Kirsten found herself wondering, as she always did when she saw children, if it was better or worse to have never known any world except the one after the Georgia Flu."

Space for Personal Notes

## Section E: (B) Belonging



### (B1) The tendency to stay in one place

- Because it's safer
  - 🔊 "The towns... survived against unspeakable odds and then only by holding together into the calm,"
- Because there's no other option
  - 🔊 "By then most people had settled somewhere, because the gasoline had all gone stale by Year Three and you can't keep walking forever. "
- Because one can rest
  - 🔊 "These are the times when I want to stop," August whispered. "You ever think about stopping?" "You mean not traveling anymore?" "You ever think about it? There's got to be a steadier life than this."
- But staying with the same people can feel ironically lonely
  - 🔊 "But sometimes the small circle of people and firelight seemed only to accentuate the emptiness of the continent, the loneliness of it, a candle flickering in vast darkness." (Clark)
- Life felt transitory before the pandemic
  - 🔊 "Not quite a room, Jeevan thought now, looking around the stage. It was too transitory, all those doorways and dark spaces between wings, the missing ceiling. It was more like a terminal, he thought, a train station or an airport, everyone passing quickly through."

### (B2) Belonging can be fulfilling and comforting

- "But what made it bearable were the friendships, of course, the camaraderie," (Kirsten)
- "What he loved was the conversation, the moments of lightness or even just silence, the not being by himself." (Clark)
- But not if there are fundamental issues in relationships
  - 🔊 "she looked at him and thought, I prefer you with a crown, but of course she would never say this aloud." (Miranda about Arthur)
- Comforting due to sheer familiarity

- 🔊 "what surprises her is that the first place that comes to mind is Neptune Logistics. She misses the order of the place, the utter manageability of her job there," (Miranda)
- In times of need, we think of others to provide us with comfort
- 🔊 "Was Robert awake at this moment? Was he trying to leave New York?" (Clark)
- The relief of being reunited with those who we care for
- 🔊 "Sorry about the crossbows," the man said pleasantly, "necessary precaution, I'm afraid—" But he stopped then, confused, because the woman's bow had clattered to the pavement and she was running to the new arrivals, she was laughing and shouting their names and trying to embrace all of them at once." (Charlie)
- Conversely, it is lonely and frightening to not be with others
- 🔊 "Kirsten slept fitfully, aware each time she woke of the emptiness of the landscape, the lack of people and animals and caravans around her."
- Some people are more independent and/or value solace
- 🔊 "Once in the room he sits on the bed, relieved to be alone and unlooked-at" (Arthur)

### (B3) The importance of being with the right people

- Not everyone gets along all the time
- 🔊 "They weren't friends exactly, at least not in the sense of seeing one another outside of the office, but she thought of Leon as her friendliest ally." (Miranda and Leon)
- Being with compassionate people
- 🔊 "Alexandra was fifteen, the Symphony's youngest actor. They'd found her on the road as a baby."
- Being with leaders you can trust
- 🔊 "Our fearless leader" (The conductor)
- 🔊 The conductor is decisive
- "It's a risk," Dieter said. "Being alive is a risk." She folded the map. "I'm missing two Symphony members, and I still think they went south. If there's a population in Severn City, perhaps they'll know the best route back to our usual territory. We continue south along the lakeshore."

## (B4) The drawbacks of being with the wrong people

- "I can't believe you left me at the theater," he said. "You just left me at the theater performing CPR on a dead actor."
- "Why would a three-year wedding anniversary celebration involve anyone other than the two people who are actually married to one another? Who are all these extraneous people at my table?" (Miranda about Arthur et al)

## (B5) Communities are never completely harmonious

- Because being close together causes friction
  - 🔊 "The problem with the Traveling Symphony was the same problem suffered by every group of people everywhere since before the collapse, undoubtedly since well before the beginning of recorded history."
- Even though they can seem harmonious on the outside
  - 🔊 Metaphor - 'the Wendy's' being an ugly chaotic group which looks nice and beautiful from the front: "The Wendy's was a low square building with the look of having been slapped together from a kit in an architecturally careless era, but it had a beautiful front door."
- Communities can also be toxic
  - 🔊 "When the fallen slink away without permission," he said, "we hold funerals for them and erect markers in the graveyard, because to us they are dead."
  - 🔊 "It's a doomsday cult." (The conductor)

## (B6) Some people struggle to maintain positive relationships

- "As a boy he'd been quiet and a little shy, obsessed with classical music; he'd had no interest in sports and had never been especially adept at getting along with people" (August)

## (B7) Belonging has a different meaning in the new world

- The old world had shifted to online
  - 🔊 "No more social media, no more scrolling through litanies of dreams and nervous hopes and photographs of lunches, cries for help and expressions of contentment and relationship-status updates with heart icons whole or broken, plans to meet up later, pleas, complaints, desires, pictures of babies dressed as bears or peppers for Halloween. No more reading and commenting on the lives of others, and in so doing, feeling slightly less alone in the room."



- In the new world, relationships are stronger due to tight-knit communities

🔊 "His dear friend Annette had died of an unknown illness in Year Seventeen, and he wore her Lufthansa neck scarf in memory."

### (B8) Belonging takes time to establish

- "by her mid-thirties she feels competent and at last more or less at ease in the world, studying foreign languages in first-class lounges and traveling in comfortable seats across oceans"

- And may require changes to oneself

🔊 "I'm glad to get out of that field," Viola said. She'd had a different name when she was younger, but had taken on the name of her instrument after the collapse."

- And lasts longer when there is common ground between people

🔊 "But why me? We haven't spoken since the last divorce hearing." "You know where I'm from," he said, and she understood what he meant by this. Once we lived on an island in the ocean. Once we took the ferry to go to high school, and at night the sky was brilliant in the absence of all these city lights."

- Common ground may include grief or loss

🔊 "in all probability everyone here with him in the airport had lost someone too. All at once he felt an aching tenderness for his fellow refugees, these hundred or so strangers here in the airport."

Space for Personal Notes

## Section F: (P) Purpose



### (P1) Purpose can come from a variety of reasons

- From needing to rise to the occasion
  - 🔊 “He reached Allan Gardens Park, more or less the halfway point, and this was where he found himself blindsided by an unexpected joy. Arthur died, he told himself, you couldn’t save him, there’s nothing to be happy about. But there was, he was exhilarated, because he’d wondered all his life what his profession should be, and now he was certain, absolutely certain that he wanted to be a paramedic. At moments when other people could only stare, he wanted to be the one to step forward.” (Jeevan)
- From seemingly trivial pursuits
  - 🔊 “When they broke into houses now, August searched for issues of TV Guide.”
- From wanting to find remnants of one’s past
  - 🔊 “When Kirsten was in the houses, she searched for celebrity-gossip magazines, because once, when she was sixteen years old, she’d flipped through a magazine on a dust-blackened side table and found her past.”
- From subconscious thoughts that we deny
  - 🔊 “He wasn’t expecting fame, although he secretly longed for it in his twenties just like everyone else, and now that he has it he’s not sure what to do with it.”
- From not wanting to suffer anymore
  - 🔊 “Captain Lonagan: You should try to understand them. (The next panel is a close-up of his face.) All they want is to see sunlight again. Can you blame them?” (Dr Eleven comics)
- From wanting to create something
  - 🔊 “And more than that, well, publishing the newspaper has been an invigorating project, but then I thought, why stop with a newspaper? Why not create an oral history of this time we live in, and an oral history of the collapse?”
- From simply needing a purpose
  - 🔊 “Frank never stopped working. The philanthropist’s memoir was almost complete. “He’s probably dead,” Jeevan said. “Probably,” Frank agreed. “Why are you still writing about him?” “I signed a contract.” “But everyone else who signed the contract ...” “I know,” Frank said.”

➤ Purpose can take the form of frustration

- 🔊 "by this point he's twenty-eight, time speeding up in a way that disconcerts him, the parties going too late and getting too sloppy,"
- 🔊 "They are always waiting, the people of the Undersea. They spend all their lives waiting for their lives to begin."
- 🔊 "I remember when I thought I'd rather die than stay on the island" (Arthur)

## (P2) Our level of motivation is dictated by multiple factors

➤ By the actions or emotions of the people around us

- 🔊 "she'd abandoned him there, she'd left him onstage performing CPR on a dead actor and gone home, and now she wanted him to buy milk. Now that he'd stopped walking, Jeevan was cold. His toes were numb. All the magic of the storm had left him, and the happiness he'd felt a moment earlier was fading.

➤ And by the tasks or responsibilities set by these people

- 🔊 "There's rarely enough work to keep her occupied for more than an hour or two at a time, which means she can often spend entire afternoons sketching" (Miranda)

## (P3) It often takes time for us to find our purpose

- "He thought he wanted to study economics, but when he arrives in Toronto he discovers that he wants to do almost anything else. He worked hard in high school, but he's an indifferent student at the university." (Arthur)
- Some people don't have purpose
  - 🔊 "I'm talking about these people who've ended up in one life instead of another and they are just so disappointed. Do you know what I mean? They've done what's expected of them." (Dahlia)
  - 🔊 "High-functioning sleepwalkers, essentially." (Dahlia)
- Some people question their purpose
  - 🔊 "interviewing actors was better than stalking them, but what kind of a journalism career was this? What kind of life?"

## (P4) Pursuing one's purpose takes risk and sacrifice

- "the conductor had gathered a few of her friends from their military orchestra, left the air base where they'd been living, and set out into the unknown landscape.."
- "His family was in L.A. He wasn't willing to accept the possibility of not seeing them again. "Anyone wants to come with me," he said, "it's a free flight to Los Angeles." (Pilot)

### (P5) Some believe in a higher purpose

- See Meaning
- "I submit that we were saved"—his voice was rising—"not only to bring the light, to spread the light, but to be the light. We were saved because we are the light. We are the pure."
- There is danger in such purposes
  - 🗣️ "If you are the light, if your enemies are darkness, then there's nothing that you cannot justify. There's nothing you can't survive, because there's nothing that you will not do." (Kirsten about the prophet)

Space for Personal Notes

## Section G: (MEA) Meaning



### (MEA1) People assign meaning to things they deem precious

- "In the inside cover of the first issue, someone has written "Copy 2 of 10" in pencil. In the second issue, the notation is "Copy 3 of 10." Is it possible that only ten copies of each of these books exist in the world?"
- Miranda values independence
  - 🔊 "In the next version of her life, she decides, she will be entirely independent."
- Remembering the dead
  - 🔊 "The graveyard between Runways Six and Seven, each grave marked by an airplane tray table driven into the ground, details of the deceased carved into the tray's hard plastic."

### (MEA2) The Symphony, and other people in the post-pandemic world, are constantly on the hunt for meaning


- "But the lead caravan carries an additional line of text: Because survival is insufficient."

### (MEA3) Some people search for higher meaning

- "No, it's just, if everything happens for a reason," Elizabeth persists, "as personally, I believe that it does, then when I hear a story of how two people came together, it's like a piece of the plan is being revealed."
- "I submit," the prophet said, "that everything that has ever happened on this earth has happened for a reason."
- Tyler creates a framework of meaning to make sense of all that has happened; he views the pandemic as punishment
  - 🔊 "I submit, my beloved people, that such a perfect agent of death could only be divine. For we have read of such a cleansing of the earth, have we not?"
  - 🔊 "The flu," the prophet said, "the great cleansing that we suffered twenty years ago, that flu was our flood."

### (MEA4) Failing to live an authentic life


- The parallels between King Lear (who dismissed those who lived him in favour of those who flattered him) and Arthur

 Arthur's ego

- ▶ "He likes the idea of returning to Canada in triumph, which he's aware is egotistical but what can you do."

 Arthur's lack of authenticity

- ▶ "I don't know," he said. "I never really understood the point of it, to be honest." There was relief in admitting this to someone, after all these years. "The Undersea, especially. All those people in limbo, waiting around, plotting, for what?"

 Similarly, to King Lear, Arthur regrets these aspects of his life right before his death, but he cannot make amends

- ▶ "He found he was a man who repented almost everything, regrets crowding in around him like moths to a light."

Space for Personal Notes

## Section H: (H) Hope and the perseverance of civilisation

### (H1) It can be difficult for the people in Station Eleven to maintain hope

- Because disaster or death is looming
  - 🔊 "Jeevan was crushed by a sudden certainty that this was it, that this illness Hua was describing was going to be the divide between a before and an after, a line drawn through his life."
  - 🔊 "Moving quickly through this bread-and-flower-scented world, this almost-gone place"
- Because hope fades over time
  - 🔊 "the first unspeakable years when everyone was traveling, before everyone caught on that there was no place they could walk to where life continued as it had before"
- Because everything they once loved is gone
  - 🔊 "[Dieter] himself found it difficult to live in the present. He'd played in a punk band in college and longed for the sound of an electric guitar."
- Dr Eleven is the ideal of a person who remains consistently optimistic
  - 🔊 " He is a person from the future who never whines."
- Because it's easier to accept that there's no more reason to maintain hope
  - 🔊 "The sensation of being in a dream that will end at any moment, only she isn't sure if she's fighting to wake up or to stay asleep." (Miranda on pending relationship breakdown with Arthur)

### (H2) Some people still remain hopeful that civilisation can recover

- Mandel herself, shown through her word choice - 'interrupted' (i.e. civilisation will prevail in the end)
  - 🔊 " a universe in which civilization hadn't been so brutally interrupted."
- Mandel, through her numerous shifts in perspective in Chapter 52, makes it feel like the new world is alive
  - 🔊 "Kirsten stares through the telescope at the town with electric light."
- The post-pandemic people are like the people in the Undersea, hoping their world can come back
  - 🔊 "These people living out their lives in underwater fallout shelters, clinging to the hope that the world they remembered could be restored." (Miranda)

- Even if it is just manifests in the form of dreams
  - 🗣️ "In the dream I was so happy," he whispered. "I looked up and there it was, the plane had finally come. There was still a civilization somewhere. I fell to my knees. I started weeping and laughing, and then I woke up."
  - 🗣️ Or in the form of awe
    - "He stood by the case and found himself moved by every object he saw there, by the human enterprise each object had required."
- Even if it's from just a morsel of inspiration
  - 🗣️ "The mention of Arthur aside, he realized, this was an extraordinary development. If there were newspapers now, what else might be possible?" (Clark)
  - 🗣️ "In the distance, pinpricks of light arranged into a grid. There, plainly visible on the side of a hill some miles distant: a town, or a village, whose streets were lit up with electricity."
- There are examples of humanity's inability to lie idle (i.e. they will naturally persevere)
  - 🗣️ "It's the waiting," Clark had heard a woman say, "I can't take the waiting, I have to do something, even if it's just walking to the nearest town to see what's going on..."
- There are examples of humanity's natural tendency to believe everything will be OK
  - 🗣️ "all these moments when everyone must have thought the world was ending, but all those moments, they were all temporary. It always passes." (Elizabeth)
- Humans channel their hope into the possibility that technology can re-emerge
  - 🗣️ "In Traverse City, the town they'd recently left, an inventor had rigged an electrical system in an attic. It was modest in scope, a stationary bicycle that when pedaled vigorously could power a laptop, but the inventor had grander aspirations: the point wasn't actually the electrical system, the point was that he was looking for the Internet."
  - 🗣️ Electrical light, especially, seems a symbol of hope
    - "She was beside herself with impatience to see the far southern town with the electrical grid." (Kirsten)
- People maintain hope because the world has gradually improved in some ways
  - 🗣️ "It's much less dangerous than it used to be." (Kirsten to Diallo)



- 🇬🇧 “Alexandra knew how to shoot, but the world was softening. There was a fair chance, Kirsten thought, that Alexandra would live out her life without killing anyone.”

### **(H3) People learn to adapt to the new world**

- “DIALLO: It’s my own private shorthand. I made it up.”
- “I’ve got something I thought you might like,” he said, “for that museum of yours,” and he handed over three sheets of rough paper. “What is this?” “It’s a newspaper,” the trader said. Three consecutive issues, a few months out of date. It was published irregularly out of New Petoskey, the trader said. There were announcements of births and deaths and weddings. A column for bartering: a local man was seeking new shoes in exchange for milk and eggs; someone else had a pair of reading glasses that she was hoping to trade for a pair of jeans, size 6.”

### **(H4) Maybe it is better if civilisation does not persevere, or at least not in the same form that it existed in before**

- “Perhaps soon humanity would simply flicker out, but Kirsten found this thought more peaceful than sad.”
- “So many species had appeared and later vanished from this earth; what was one more?”

Space for Personal Notes

## Section I: (L) Loss



### (L1) Loss has a profound impact

- It is shocking
  - 🗣️ "It's hard to take in." He cleared his throat again. "It's a shock, it's ... I've known him since I was eighteen. It seems impossible to me too."
  - 🗣️ Even though Jeevan did not know Arthur well, he is still haunted by his death
    - "He shook his head to dispel the image of Arthur's blank stare"
- Kirsten's loss of innocence is a pivotal moment in her life
  - 🗣️ "He's going to die, isn't he?" She was breathing in little sobs." (Kirsten)
- Loss is numbing
  - 🗣️ "So this is how it ends, she thought, when the call was over, and she was soothed by the banality of it. You get a phone call in a foreign country, and just like that the man with whom you once thought you'd grow old has departed from this earth."
- Even if it is forewarned
  - 🗣️ "I can't just leave you." "I'll leave first," Frank said. "I've given this some thought." "What do you mean?" he asked, but he knew what Frank meant."

### (L2) Loss of the former world

- "No more diving into pools of chlorinated water lit green from below. No more ball games played out under floodlights. No more porch lights with moths fluttering on summer nights. No more trains running under the surface of cities on the dazzling power of the electric third rail. No more cities. No more films, except rarely, except with a generator drowning out half the dialogue, and only then for the first little while until the fuel for the generators ran out, because automobile gas goes stale after two or three years."
- Loss of the names of people in it
  - 🗣️ "DIALLO: The mystery audience member who knew CPR. He's in the New York Times obituary. RAYMONDE: He was kind to me. Do you know his name? DIALLO: I'm not sure anyone does."

### (L3) Loss can bring people together

- ▶ "in all probability everyone here with him in the airport had lost someone too. All at once he felt an aching tenderness for his fellow refugees, these hundred or so strangers here in the airport."

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## Section J: (V) Maintaining (or failing to maintain) one's values



### (V1) The value of respecting the dead

- "He likes to say a prayer over the dead." (August)
- "When he murmured over the dead, he seemed to be talking only to them. "I hope it was peaceful at the end," she'd heard him say. Or, "You have a really nice house. I'm sorry for taking your boots." Or, "Wherever you are, I hope your family's there too." (August)

### (V2) The value of doing what is morally right

- "There's the death of the body, and there's the death of the soul."
- "What to do with Eleanor? They knew they risked accusations of kidnapping and they had long adhered to a strict policy of non-intervention in the politics of the towns through which they passed, but no one could imagine delivering a child bride back to the prophet. Had a grave marker with her name on it already been driven into the earth? Would a grave be dug if she returned? Nothing for it but to take the girl and press on into the unknown south, farther down the eastern shore of Lake Michigan than they'd ever been."
- "What choice do I have? You know how this ... this time we live in, you know how it forces a person to do things." (Boy who works for the prophet)

### (V3) The value of being authentic to oneself

- "Dinner party last night (very awkward and ill-advised in retrospect, long story, seemed like good idea at time) and I looked up at one point and he was giving me this look, like I'd disappointed him personally, and I realized he's right to be disappointed. I disappoint myself too." (Arthur in Dear V)
- "I'm a man of my word," Jeevan said. At that point in his directionless life he wasn't sure if this was true or not, but it was nice to think that it might be."

Space for Personal Notes