

instructor guide

CHALMERS UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

This guide contains resources for using the One Book, One Chalmers (OBOC) selection in your pedagogy. Discussion questions and other activities are included for the 2020 OBOC, Maja Lunde's *Blå* (in English, *The End of the Ocean*).



Possible activities

Written reflection

Use an early chapter from the book as a reading for short written student response. You might select the first chapter from David's perspective if you want students to contemplate how a world-wide draught might impact humanity, or you might select a chapter from Signe's perspective that describes how people in her experience prioritized profit over environmental protection if you want students to reflect upon how to balance these two interests.

The resulting written reflections could be posted to a course discussion board or otherwise used as the starting point for class discussion.

Debate

Signe and Magnus have different opinions about what is happening to Blåfonna. Signe sees environmental change, while Magnus sees economic opportunity. Have students write a list of reasons to support each viewpoint. Then, have a discussion in which each student identifies what they think is the most persuasive reason that justifies each viewpoint.

Alternatively, assign students to write support for only one of these viewpoints, and then have the class discuss the different sides.

Empathy activity

Ask students which of the four main characters (Signe, Magnus, David, and Lou) has a view of the environment that differs most from their own. Then, ask them to discuss or construct a short piece of writing that explains what it would take for them to have the same environmental viewpoint as that character. Afterwards, ask students if they feel more aware of the motivations behind views that differ from their own.

The specific content of your course will dictate what type of activity will work well. Here are a few possible ideas.

discussion questions for *Blå*

1. Early in the novel, Signe says that young people don't even see her because "nobody sees old ladies." In the same paragraph, she says that "nobody mentions the ice, not a word about the ice." Why do you think Lunde connects Signe to the ice this way?
2. The novel alternates between Signe's story in 2017 and David's in 2041. Why do you think the author chose two time periods decades apart? How are their stories and worlds connected, and what do you think the author is trying to illustrate about our possible future?
3. Discuss each character's relationship with water. How does Signe view water differently than Magnus? How does it affect their relationship?
4. David is a young and inexperienced father. How does his relationship with Lou and role as a father develop, and how much of that relates to ongoing environmental catastrophe? How is Lou's childhood different from the way Signe imagines or remembers her own youth?
5. Signe remembers Magnus as having "talked about how everything was going to be different, without meaning it," and then muses about how the children of the next generation don't care about important things either. How fair do you think this is, especially considering David and Lou as part of the generations who follow Signe? How well do you think this idea of saying things without any real conviction describes the world we live in now?
7. Why do you think the author chose to tackle issues of climate change through fiction rather than non-fiction? How does character and plot influence how we relate to very real problems like man-made drought or uncontrollable wildfires?
8. Compare Signe's and David's uses of the boat *Blå*. In what ways are these uses practical/impractical, hopeful/cynical?
9. What do you think happens to Signe and Magnus after the book ends? Will they continue to have a relationship, and if so, what kind? What makes you think so?
10. What do you think happens to David, Lou, and Marguerite after the book ends? Will it rain? What makes you think so?

start your own book circle



Interested in creating your own book circle? You might want to form one with friends, co-workers, or members of an organization in which you are a member.

Book circles are wonderful ways to explore books more deeply, but start by taking a few minutes to plan out what would work best for you and your group. Use this list of questions to help you plan.

- 5-7 people is a good number. A larger group can work, but for bigger groups, don't expect everyone to get involved in the same discussion. Try breaking a larger group into 2 (or more) smaller ones, and then use the last 15 minutes for everyone to rejoin a larger group and summarize their small groups' main points.
 - It's always nice to visit each other's homes but it also puts pressure on the host. For the first meeting it would be a good choice to meet at a café or via an online video platform.
- First rule of book club? You decide - but it is important to agree to disagree. There is no discussion if you all agree on everything, but there should be no fighting in the book club.
 - Must everyone have finished the book? This is not a necessary rule, but you should talk about your expectations (see the point above). Alternatively, set a "no spoilers" rule, and check to see how far the circle members have gotten. Agree not to discuss plot points that all members have not read.
- To get the discussion going, use our *Blâ* discussion questions (see the previous page). Hopefully you also have your own questions from your reading that you would like the others' take on. There's also a wide array of general book circle questions online.
 - Whether you are the one usually doing all the talking or the one trying to get a word in edgewise, practice saying "Let's hear from some others" in front of the mirror. If you are the one who invited the others, maybe you can try to lead the discussion and help everyone get a chance to speak.
- Don't have members already selected? Use Facebook or Twitter to start a book circle, or just ask the person next to you!

what to read next

▲ *The History of Bees*, by Maja Lunde

Follow William in 1852, seeking to create a new type of beehive; George in 2007, a beekeeper; and Tao in 2098. Coping with the long-ago disappearance of bees. This is the 1st novel in Lunde's climate quartet, and *Blå* is the 2nd.

◎ *Cloud Atlas*, by David Mitchell

Like *Blå*, this novel follows different characters along multiple timelines, ultimately showing that humanity is profoundly connected.

◎ *MaddAddam Trilogy*, by Margaret Atwood

This 3-novel cycle is comprised of *Oryx & Crake*, *The Year of the Flood*, and *MaddAddam*. In a post-plague-ravaged earth, survivors deal with a "waterless flood" and try to make a future for humanity.

◎ *The Water Knife*, by Paolo Bacigalupi

In the near future, this novel depicts water as scarce. Will only the rich have sufficient water, or will a new water source bring hope to the needy? Assassins, refugees, and journalists try to survive — and further their own agendas.

▲ *When the Rivers Run Dry*, by Fred Pearce

This non-fiction book chronicles a journalist's travels through 30 countries examining water resources. In doing so, he tells a story of the world water crisis.

◎ ▲ *The Sixth Extinction*, by Elizabeth Kolbert

This non-fiction book, which won a Pulitzer Prize, explores the disappearances of natural elements all around us.

▲ *Water Ethics: A Values Approach to Solving the Water Crisis*, by David Groenfeldt

How can we rethink the management of water based on ethical principles? This non-fiction book explores these issues.

▲ *Water Technology: An Introduction for Environmental Scientists and Engineers*, by N.F. Gray

An essential text for those who need to understand European & US. water regulation and standards. Water management, treatment, and quality assessment are all here explained.

Here are some recommendations for what students might like to read next. Our list includes fiction as well as non-fiction, so there are several ways to keep discussing issues of raised by *Blå*.

Items marked with a ▲ symbol can be found through the Chalmers Libraries.

Items marked with a ◎ symbol can be found through the Göteborg City Library system.