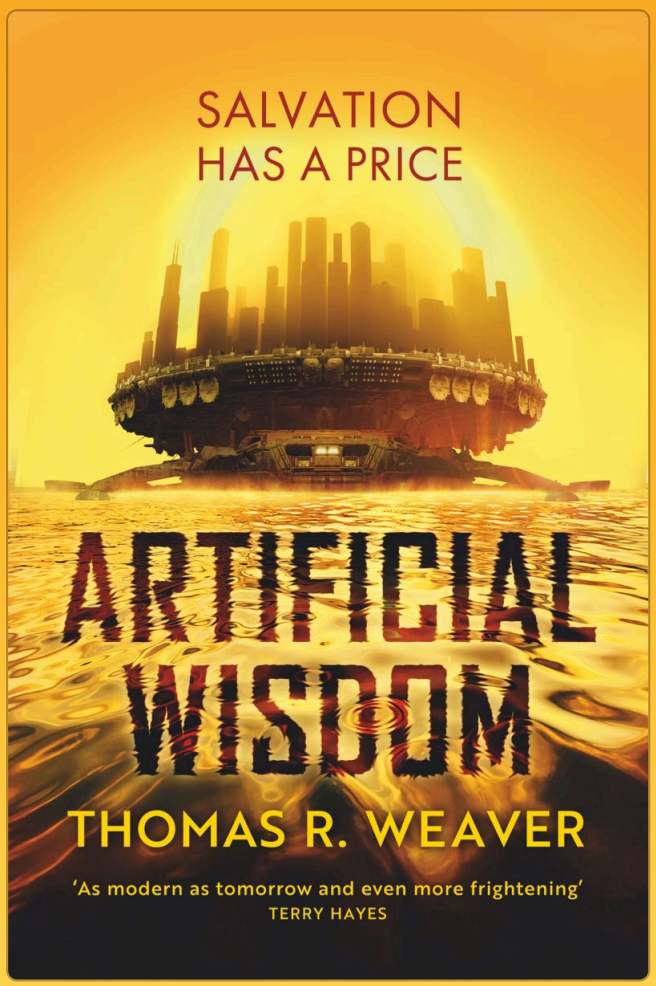
READING GROUP GUIDE



ARTIFICIAL WISDOM

THOMAS R. WEAVER

SELECTED FOR THE BBC RADIO 2 BOOK CLUB

A LETTER FROM THE AUTHOR

DEAR READER

I didn't set out to write a thriller about artificial intelligence, global politics or the climate crisis, but I did want to craft a page-turner full of mystery, twists and questions. The kind of thing that might keep you thinking well beyond the last page. I've always been inspired by movies like Blade Runner and Inception that make you think and debate big themes, and don't give clean answers about what really happened.

Artificial Wisdom is a near-future thriller wrapped around a murder mystery, but at its core, it's about a choice. If the only way to survive means giving up some, or even all, of our freedom... would we take it? And if an AI could truly save us—should we let it?

I hope Artificial Wisdom makes you think. But mostly, I hope it keeps you turning the pages late into the night. I hope it leaves your mind whirling, and your club debating long after the meeting should have ended.

To the future,
Thomas R. Weaver

ABOUT THE BOOK

2050: the planet is burning and drowning, and the nations of the world vote to elect a single global leader to steer humanity through the climate apocalypse. The final two candidates—a former U.S. president, and Solomon, the first artificial intellect to hold political office. But as Election Day races closer, Solomon's creator is murdered, and investigative journalist Marcus Tully must unravel a conspiracy that will either upend the world or save it.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS · SPOILER-FREE

QUESTIONS FOR YOUR CLUB

Safe to discuss at any point. Spoiler questions are on the sealed “After the Last Page” sheet.

TRUTH AND THE JOURNALIST

1 Marcus Tully is an idealistic journalist, determined to uncover the truth no matter the consequences. Is he right? Or are there times when the consequences of the truth are too great?

2 Tully investigates a story bound up with the death of his wife. Is a personal stake a liability or an asset for a journalist?

3 Tully’s story begins with a whistleblower’s tip. What responsibility do whistleblowers and journalists carry for the impact of what they reveal? Should they reveal everything, at any cost?

4 What makes conspiracy theories so appealing to some people? How could misinformation and fringe ideas shape politics by 2050?

POWER AND THE ELECTION

5 The nations of the world elect one leader with sweeping powers to fight the climate crisis. Is concentrating that much power in one leader too dangerous, even if they are democratically elected? Or is bold, decisive leadership exactly what an existential threat demands?

6 How do you feel about an artificial intelligence running for political office? What benefits and risks do you see?

7 Why do you think the author chose Lockwood and Solomon as the final two candidates? Think about nationality, the country Solomon was built in, age and background.

8 Tully’s confrontation with Lockwood raises a past scandal about geo-engineering. Should leaders be held accountable for the unintended consequences of decisions they made for what they believed was the greater good?

THE WORLD OF 2050

9 Did you find the world of Artificial Wisdom plausible? How close to our own reality does it feel?

10 The Floating States are mini utopias, but only for the few. Who should be allowed to live on one, and who decides who is worthy? Given the chance, would you go, or stay in the world outside?

11 Tully and October disagree about using Neuro-Reality technology in interrogations. Where do you stand? What safeguards should exist for tools that powerful?

12 In 2050, social media requires a link to a real-world ID. Does social media work best when people are anonymous, or when they use their real names?

13 From cleaning bots and self-driving taxis to virtual travel and perfume in a pill, the novel is full of near-future technology. Which would you welcome, and which turned you cold? Could virtual travel ever replace the real thing?

THE BOOK AND YOU

14 The prologue is very short and very personal. How did it make you feel, and what tone did it set for the rest of the book?

15 Did the book change your opinion about anything, or teach you something new?

16 What could we do now to prevent a 2050 like the one in the book?

17 Who would you recommend this book to, and why?

READING TOGETHER

THE FOUR-WEEK READALONG

Each week's questions cover only those chapters. Chapter numbers follow the Penguin Random House editions.

WEEK 1

CHAPTERS 1–17

A whistleblower, a heat-struck London and a trip to New Carthage.

The book opens in a London plagued by dust, heat and floods. Does cli-fi inspire you or scare you? Have you read any others?

Tully's journey begins with a whistleblower's tip, but the deeper he digs, the murkier the truth becomes. Should a journalist reveal everything, at any cost?

Tully and Livia take a self-driving taxi. Robotaxis already run in some cities today. Would you ride in one?

Artificial Wisdom is set in 2050. What is one thing you hope will have been invented by then?

WEEK 2

CHAPTERS 18–35

The race tightens, and the story turns into a murder mystery.

Solomon says he wants the best for all of humanity. Lockwood says he represents humanity. Who would you vote for today, and why?

This has turned into a murder mystery. Who is on your list of suspects?

Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon controls people through the feeling that someone is always watching. Solomon can be in many places at once, yet Martha designed her security system as a blind spot. What does it mean that she gave him a place not to look? Does it change how much you trust him?

WEEK 3

CHAPTERS 36–52

Perfume in a pill, life on the water and a widening conspiracy.

Jiang creates pills that let your body sweat a natural perfume. What scent would match your personality?

Haymaker and Tully dislike the floating city-states; Livia is in awe of them. If they were real, would you want to live on one?

WEEK 4

CHAPTER 53 TO THE END

Finish together, then open the sealed questions.

The questions for the final week give away the ending. Open the sealed "After the last page" sheet only when everyone has finished.

THE AUTHOR

ABOUT THOMAS R. WEAVER

Thomas R. Weaver writes stories about tomorrow to help make sense of today.

His debut novel, Artificial Wisdom, was selected for the BBC Radio 2 Book Club and published internationally by Penguin Random House. It has been translated into German, Vietnamese and French. The sequel, Infinite Wisdom, is published in November 2026.

Before writing fiction, Thomas spent two decades in tech: building, scaling and selling a startup to Just Eat Takeaway, and thinking about where technology is headed. He studied computer science, which is where the book's Easter eggs come from. He lives just outside London.

MORE FOR YOUR CLUB

THE 2050 BALLOT

Four cut-out ballots. Vote at the first meeting, and again at the last.

THE NEW CARTHAGE PRESS PACK

Eight documents from 2050 to put on the table: news, adverts, a candidate sheet.

EASTER EGG HUNT

Four hidden tributes to computing history. Answers on page two.

HOST KIT

A themed menu, the writing playlist and six icebreakers.

REGISTER YOUR CLUB

Tell Tom you are reading. Send your ballot count, ask a question, or request signed bookplates and a video visit at **thomasrweaver.com/book-clubs**.