

The *Black Tide Rising* Series Reader's Group Discussion Guide

by Rachel Mintel

Welcome to the Reader's Group Guide for John Ringo's Black Tide Rising series. The Black Tide Rising series, *Under A Graveyard Sky*, *To Sail A Darkling Sea*, *Islands of Rage and Hope*, and *Strands of Sorrow*, takes place during a man-made worldwide collapse caused by bioterrorism. The Smith family is prepared. They take to the Atlantic to avoid the chaos and discover other refugees, banding together to keep humanity alive. Some common themes among the series include honor, human durability and the importance of not just surviving, but living and thriving.

1. At the beginning of the novel, John Ringo states that *Islands of Rage and Hope* was intended to be the last novel. Do you think it could've stood as the last novel, or do you think *Strands of Sorrow* is necessary to conclude the series?
2. If you had to pick one overlying theme for the Black Tide Rising series, what would it be? Was this theme obvious from the beginning, or did it emerge throughout the four books in the series?
3. In his novels, Ringo focuses on the details and logistics of the operations. Do you like the realism this provides?
4. Decker, in the last novel, says that the dead in Arlington Cemetery are only quieted because they know the nation is protected still. A huge theme of the novel is protecting and fighting for your home. Can you identify with this theme? What other ways is this theme shown throughout the series?
5. If you had to pick one member of the Smith family to be on your side during the zombie apocalypse, which would you pick? What's your rationale behind that decision? What are the pros and cons of Stacey, Steve, Sophia, and Faith?
6. Faith is often in "scrums." Have you ever been in a scrum of any kind? How did you handle it?
7. If you had to assemble a team for the zombie apocalypse, what five people would you choose? What would be your base and your plan of attack?
8. What do you think about the knowledge Faith has gained about the infected? Do you have any theories of why they nest? How would you have used the knowledge she gained in combat in your own plans?
9. How do you think international relations would play out post-Plague? Do you think it would be wise for the U.S. to stay focused inward or become more involved in the international arena?
10. What do you think happened to Tom, Steve's brother? What do you think happened to the creator of the virus? Do you have any theories behind the motive?

Here are the links to the individual Reader's Guides for each book in this series:

- [Under a Graveyard Sky Reader's Guide](#)
- [To Sail a Darkling Sea Reader's Guide](#)
- [Islands of Rage and Hope Reader's Guide](#)
- [Strands of Sorrow Reader's Guide](#)