



Book Club in a Bag

Discussion Questions

Space Barons by Christian Davenport

1. Initially, author Neal Stephenson was the only employee of Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin. Do you think authors (specifically science fiction authors) can provide inspiration for engineers and scientists?
2. In the chapter "Dependable or a Little Nuts," SpaceX is shown to have cut costs by replacing custom parts with easily available options, such as a \$30 cargo latch instead of a \$1500 one, or using a modified air-conditioning unit to keep the launch pad cool. Is this an indication that Musk and SpaceX are willing to take any risk to win the space race, or that government agencies are not always exploring viable options and potentially overspending tax payer dollars?
3. Should these private organizations be allowed onto a playing field that was previously government-managed? What could be the implications of a commercial organization being the first to succeed in colonization (be it for humans or processes)?
4. In less than 10 years, SpaceX and Blue Origin have seen massive successes including reaching orbit and demonstrating reusable rocket technology. Do you expect to see the same exponential increases in technology continue, or will there be a plateau? Is human colonization of space possible in the next 25 – 30 years?
5. If Space Colonization does become possible in our lifetime, or even simply travel to space as a vacation destination, would you want to do so yourself? Why or why not?
6. Compare space colonization with historical colonization. Consider the motivation for people to permanently leave their home and move to a new world. Do you think people will learn from historical lessons or repeat the same mistakes?
7. The element of the inherent danger associated with space travel would deter many from taking signing up. What consequences should there be for private industry should there be a massive failure? Is it different for private industry vs. a government agency?

These questions were created by Clarington Public Library staff to enhance your discussion of the book.

Book Club in a Bag

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