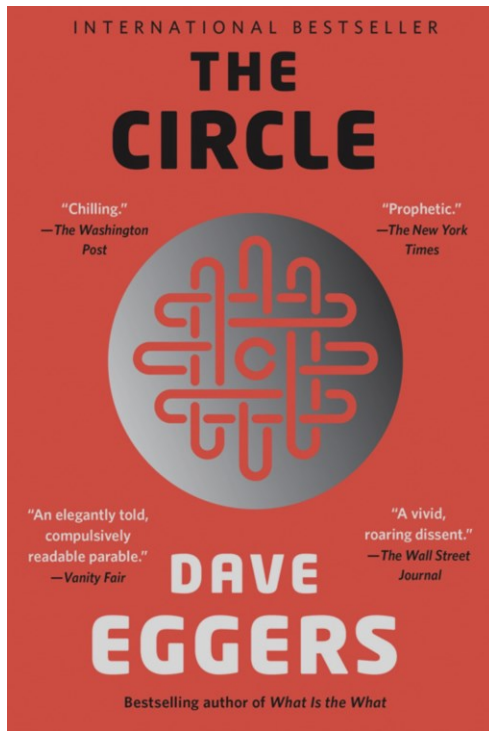


THE CIRCLE



Book Summary:

A twenty-four-year-old woman gets a job with a company involved in transparency and surveillance of its employees and others.

Summary of Concerns:

This book contains explicit sexual activities; sexual nudity; profanity; alternate sexualities; controversial religious commentary; and alcohol use.

Adult

By Dave Eggers

ISBN: 9780385351409



3 /5

Minor Restricted
BookLooks Review Rating

Page	Content
32	She found the buffet, and found it in shambles, a feast raided by animals or Vikings, and made her way to the nearest bar, which was out of Riesling and was now offering only some kind of vodka-and-energy drink concoction.
33	She took the bottle and filled her mouth with the candiesweet wine.
36	That was, she thought drunkenly, evidence of God, was it not? That she could encounter thousands of people in her life thus far, so many of them similar, so many of them forgettable, but then there is this person, new and bizarre and speaking bizarrely. ...Mae turned to look at him, thinking she might kiss him.
38	"Good. Can I have some alone time with Mae? I need to kiss her on the mouth."
39	At home, after the shuttle, after a jello shot someone gave her onboard, after listening to the shuttle driver talk wistfully about his family, his twins, his wife, who had gout, Mae couldn't sleep.
44	Mae breathed deeply, until she was calm again. "I think I have it under control now. Oh, my dad says he loves you, too. Everyone's so happy." "Okay. That's a little strange, given I've never met him. But tell him I love him too. Passionately. Is he hot? A silver fox? A swinger? Maybe we can work something out. Now can we get to work around here?"
58	"His parents were such fuckups. I think there were like four or five kids in the family, and Francis was youngest or second-youngest, and anyway the dad was in jail, and the mom was on drugs, so the kids were sent all over the place. I think one went to his aunt and uncle, and his two sisters were sent to some foster home, and then they were abducted from there. I guess there was some doubt if they were, you know, given or sold to the murderers." "The what?" Mae had gone limp. "Oh god, they were raped and kept in closets and their bodies were dropped down some kind of abandoned missile silo. I mean, it was the worst story ever. He told a bunch of us about it when he was pitching this child safety program. Shit, look at your face. I shouldn't have said all this."
116	Somewhere toward the end of her first beer, Mae decided that she would have a second, quickly, and that shortly after dinner she would kiss Francis on the street.
117	Mae kissed him again. She was in a kissing mood, and knowing that Francis wouldn't make any aggressive moves, she felt at ease, kissing him more, knowing it would be only kissing tonight. She threw herself into the kissing, making it mean lust, and friendship, and the possibility of love, and kissed him while thinking of his face, wondering if his eyes were open, if he cared about the passersby who clucked or who hooted but still passed by. ...That week, she and Francis ate lunch together often, even if briefly, and after they ate, they found a place to lean against each other and kiss. ...She loved his taste, always clean, simple like lemon water, and how he would remove his glasses, look briefly lost, then would close his eyes and look almost beautiful, his face as smooth and uncomplicated as a child's.
157	"Are you sexually active?" "Not at the moment." "But in general?" "Generally, sure."

Page	Content
	<p>“Are you taking birth control pills?” “Yes.”</p>
169	<p>Then he’d brought her to him, so suddenly, too suddenly for her to know if he planned a kiss or grope or what.</p>
197	<p>Francis mixed drinks for them both, overfilling each glass. “I have a few shots every night,” he said. “It’s the only way to slow my head down so I can crash. You have that problem?” ...He handed her the glass. Mae looked into it, thinking it very sad at first, the sake every night, then knew she would try it herself, tomorrow.</p>
202	<p>“You’re not so calm yourself,” she said, and left her hand resting across his lap. “Leave your hand there and watch it get faster,” he said, and together, they did. It was astonishing. It quickly rose to 134. She thrilled at her power, the proof of it, right before her and measurable. He was at 136. “Want me to try something?” she said. “I do,” he whispered, his breath labored. She reached down into the folds of his pants and found his penis pressing up against his belt buckle. She rubbed its tip with her index finger, and together they watched the numbers rise to 152. “You’re so easy to excite,” she said. “Imagine if something were really happening.” His eyes were closed. “Right,” he finally said, his breath labored. “You’re enjoying this?” she asked. “Mm-hm,” he managed. Mae thrilled at her power over him. Watching Francis, his hands on the bed, his penis straining against his pants, she thought of something she could say. It was corny, and she would never say it if she thought anyone would ever know she’d said it, but it made her smile, and she knew it would send Francis, this shy boy, over the edge. “What else does that measure?” she asked, and lunged. His eyes went wild, and he struggled with his pants, trying to remove them. But just as he pulled them to his thighs, a sound came from his mouth, something like “Oh god” or “I gotta,” just before he doubled over, his head jerking left and right until he crumpled on the bed, his head to the wall. She backed away, looking at him, his shirt hiked up, his crotch exposed. She could think only of a campfire, one small log, all of it doused in milk. “Sorry,” he said. “No. I liked that,” she said. “That was about as sudden it’s ever happened with me.” He was still breathing heavily. ...He stood and retrieved his phone, which had been propped upright on the cabinet, facing them. “What, were you filming us?” she joked. “Maybe,” he said, his tone making clear that he had. “Wait. Seriously?” Mae reached for the phone. “Don’t,” he said. “It’s mine.” He shoved it into his pocket. “It’s yours? What we just did is yours?” “It’s just as much mine as yours. And I was the one having you know, a climax. And why do you care? You weren’t naked or anything.” “Francis. I can’t believe this. Delete that. Now.”</p>

Page	Content
	<p>“Did you say ‘delete’?” he said, jokingly, but the meaning was clear: We don’t delete at the Circle. “I have to have a way to see it myself.”</p> <p>“Then everyone can see it.”</p> <p>“I won’t advertise it or anything.”</p> <p>“Francis. Please.”</p> <p>“C’mon, Mae. You have to understand how much this means to me. I’m not some stud. This is a rare occasion for me, to have something like this happen. Can’t I keep a memento of the experience?”</p>
204	<p>“You know I can’t. We don’t delete here, Mae. Bailey would freak. He’d weep. It hurts him personally when anyone even considers the deleting of any information. It’s like killing babies, he says. You know that.”</p> <p>“But this baby’s giving a handjob. No one wants that baby. We need to delete that baby.”</p>
217	<p>Mae followed, almost giddy, intrigued by his extraordinary access, too tipsy to measure the wisdom of following this calligraphic man through this labyrinth.</p> <p>...Mae soon found her second glass of wine cumbersome, so she finished it.</p>
221	<p>And then, because the wine had her teetering, and because he’d just held her hand, and because something about the rush of water set her free, she took Kalden’s face in her hands and kissed his lips.</p> <p>His hands rose from his sides and held her, tentatively, around the waist, just his fingertips, as if she were a balloon he didn’t want to pop. But for a terrible moment, his mouth was inanimate, stunned. Mae thought she’d made a mistake. Then, as if a bundle of signals and directives had finally reached his cerebral cortex, his lips awakened and returned the force of her kiss.</p> <p>...She wanted to kiss Kalden again, and she took his face again, down to hers, and opened her mouth to his.</p> <p>...And then, in the shadows, away from Stewart, something in Kalden changed, and his hands became more sure of themselves. He held her closer, his hands gaining strength. His mouth moved from hers, across her cheek and onto her neck, pausing there, and climbing to her ear, his breath hot. She tried to keep up, holding his head in her hands, exploring his neck, his back, but he was leading, he had plans. His right hand was on the small of her back, bringing her into him, where she felt him hard and pressing against her stomach.</p> <p>And then she was lifted. She was in the air, and he was carrying her, and she wrapped her legs around him as he strode purposefully to some point behind her.</p> <p>...Then he was lowering her, and she braced herself to feel the stone of the cave floor, but instead she felt the soft landing of some kind of mattress. Now she opened her eyes. They were in an alcove, a cave within the cave, a few feet off the ground and carved into the wall. It was filled with blankets and pillows, and he eased her down upon them.</p> <p>“This is where you sleep?” she asked, in her fevered state thinking it almost logical.</p> <p>“Sometimes,” he said, and breathed fire into her ear.</p> <p>She remembered the condoms she’d been given at Dr. Villalobos’s office. “I have something,” she said.</p> <p>“Good,” he said, and he took one from her, tearing the wrapper as she pushed his pants down his hips.</p> <p>In two quick motions he pulled her pants and panties down and tossed them aside. He buried his face in her stomach, his hands holding the back of her thighs, his fingers</p>

Page	Content
	<p>crawling upward, inward. “Come back up here,” she said. He did, and he hissed into her ear. “Mae.” She couldn’t form words. “Mae,” he said again, as she fell apart all over him.</p>
224	<p>She had kissed this person Kalden, who she knew very little about, and he had led her not only through a series of high-security chambers, but into some dark anteroom, where they’d lost themselves for hours and passed out.</p>
225	<p>“So you consummated where? In your dorm?” “Yup,” Mae said.</p>
226	<p>He walked her to the dorms, and kissed her again, there, under the doorway. Or maybe not. Mae thought again, and remembered he’d done what he did before: he’d pulled her aside, out of the light of the doorway, and he’d kissed her four times, on her forehead, her chin, each cheek, the sign of the cross. Then he spun away from her, disappearing into the shadows near the waterfall, the one where Francis found the wine.</p>
240	<p>And there was a wonderful thing that tended to happen, something that felt like poetic justice: every time someone started shouting about the supposed monopoly of the Circle, or the Circle’s unfair monetization of the personal data of its users, or some other paranoid and demonstrably false claim, soon enough it was revealed that that person was a criminal or deviant of the highest order. One was connected to a terror network in Iran. One was a buyer of child porn.</p>
244	<p>Mae checked her purse. She had a condom. And she stayed. ...Annie would approve of most carnal activity but not here, at work, in a bathroom. This would demonstrate poor judgment, and reflect poorly on Annie. Mae watched the time. Two minutes had passed and still she was in a bathroom stall, waiting for a man she knew only vaguely, and who, she guessed, wanted only to ravish her, repeatedly, in ever-stranger places. So why was she there? Because she wanted this to happen. She wanted him to take her, in the stall, and she wanted to know that she had been taken in the stall, at work, and that only the two of them would ever know. Why was this some glittering thing she needed? She heard the door open, and then the clicking of the lock on the door. A lock she didn’t know existed. Then she heard the sound of Kalden’s long strides. The footsteps stopped near the stalls, giving way to a dark squeaking, the strain of bolts and steel. She felt a shadow above her and craned her neck to see a figure descending to it. Kalden had climbed the high stall wall, and had crawled across the grid to get to hers. She felt him slip in behind her. The heat of his body warmed her back, his breath hot on the nape of her neck. “What are you doing?” she asked. His mouth opened on her ear, his tongue diving. She gasped and leaned into him. Kalden’s hands came around her stomach, traced her waist, traveled quickly to her thighs, holding them firmly. She pushed his hands inward and up, her mind battling, and finally asserting her right to do this. She was twenty-four, and if she did not do this kind of thing now—did not do exactly this, exactly now—she never would. It was the imperative of youth. “Mae,” he whispered, “stop thinking.” “Okay.” “And close your eyes. Picture what I’m doing to you.” His mouth was on her neck, kissing it, licking it, while his hands were busy with her skirt and panties. He eased both off her</p>

Page	Content
	<p>hips and to the floor and brought her to him, filling her at once. “Mae,” he said, as she pushed herself into him, his hands holding her hips, bringing him so deep she could feel his swollen crown somewhere near her heart. “Mae,” he said, as she held the walls on either side of them, as if holding back the rest of the world.</p> <p>She came, gasping, and he finished, too, shuddering but silent. And immediately they both laughed, quietly, knowing they’d done something reckless and career-threatening and that they needed to leave. He turned her toward him and kissed her mouth, his eyes open, looking astounded and full of mischief. “Bye,” he said, and she only waved, feeling his shape rise again behind her, climb the walls and make his way out.</p>
247	<p>While she decided just how much to tell Annie, Mae teased out details. In a bathroom. Annie replied immediately.</p> <p>The old man? In a bathroom? Did you use the diaper-changing station?</p> <p>No. In a stall. And he was VIGOROUS.</p>
249	<p>Another message appeared from Annie. While turning the screen away, Mae glanced at it. Did you hear the fracturing of any bones while sitting on him? Older men have bird bones, and pressure like you’re talking about could be fatal.</p>
271	<p>Mae, seeing Marion walk unsteadily to the police car, realized she had been drinking, and possibly the bearded man had, too.</p>
283	<p>“I don’t know if you do. I was from the generation that struggled greatly with coming out. My brother is gay, and he was twenty-four before he admitted it to my family. And until then, it nearly killed him. It was a tumor festering inside him, and it was growing every day. But why did he think it would be better kept inside? When he told our parents, they barely blinked. He had created all this drama in his mind—all this mystery and weight around his big secret. And part of the problem, historically, was with other people keeping similar things secret. Coming out was so difficult until millions of other men and women came out. Then it got a lot easier, don’t you agree? When millions of men and women came out of the closet, it made homosexuality not some mysterious so-called deviance but a mainstream life path. You follow?”</p> <p>...“And I would argue that any place in the world where gays are still persecuted, you could instantly achieve great progress if all the gays and lesbians came out publicly at once. Then whoever is persecuting them, and all those who tacitly support this persecution, would realize that to persecute them would mean persecuting at least ten percent of the population—including their sons, daughters, neighbors and friends—even their own parents. It would be instantly untenable. But the persecution of gays or any minority group is made uniquely possible through secrecy.”</p>
332	<p>The improv comedy battle was appropriately terrible and funny despite its wall-to-wall incompetence, the Pakistan fundraiser was thoroughly inspiring—the event was able to amass 2.3 million smiles for the school—and finally there was the barbecue, where Mae allowed herself a second glass of wine before settling into her dorm.</p>
344	<p>But crowding out thoughts of Annie and the doctor was Francis, who was suddenly, bizarrely, attractive to her again.</p> <p>Mae knew the easy trick that had been played upon her. He was thin, and without any muscle tone, his eyes were weak, and he had a pronounced problem with premature ejaculation, yet simply because she’d seen the lust in Jackie’s eyes, Mae found herself wanting to be alone with him again. She wanted to bring him into her room that night.</p>

Page	Content
374	<p>Where was that man who made love to her on the edge of the Grand Canyon? They had both been so comfortably lost then, when he picked her up from college and they drove through the Southeast with no schedule, no itinerary, never with any idea of where they'd stay that night. They passed through New Mexico in a blizzard and then to Arizona where they parked, and found a cliff overlooking the canyon, with no fences, and there under a noonday sun he undressed her, a four-thousand-foot drop behind her.</p>
379	<p>"Well, I don't know. A couple are dead, so ... I don't know. I might just drive by some of these houses. Just to fill in some gaps. I don't know. Oh," he said, turning over, brightening, "I did have a couple revelations. I mean, most of the stuff was standard memories of these people. But there was one family who had an older girl, she was about fifteen when I was twelve. I didn't remember much, but I know she was my first serious sexual fantasy."</p> <p>Those words, sexual fantasy, had an immediate effect on Mae. In the past, whenever they'd been uttered, with or by any man, it led to the discussion of fantasies, and some degree of enacting one or another fantasy. Which she and Francis did, even if briefly. His fantasy was to leave the room and knock on the door, pretending to be a lost teenager knocking on the door of a beautiful suburban house. Her job was to be a lonely housewife and invite him in, scantily clad and desperate for company.</p> <p>And so he knocked, and she greeted him at the door, and he told her he was lost, and she told him he should get out of those old clothes, that he could put on some of her husband's. Francis liked that so much that things accelerated quickly, and in seconds he was undressed and she was on top of him. He lay beneath her for a minute or two, letting Mae rise and fall, looking up at her with the wonderment of a boy at the zoo. Then his eyes closed, and he went into paroxysms, emitting a brief squeal before grunting his arrival.</p> <p>..."I have a second fantasy," he said, pulling the blanket over him and bringing his face close to Mae's neck.</p> <p>"I'm inches from sleep," she muttered.</p> <p>"No, nothing strenuous. No activity required. This is just a verbal thing." "Okay."</p> <p>"I want you to rate me," he said.</p> <p>"What?"</p> <p>"Just a rating. Like you do at CE."</p> <p>"Like from 1 to 100?"</p> <p>"Exactly." "Rate what? Your performance?"</p> <p>"Yes."</p> <p>"C'mon. I don't want to do that."</p> <p>"It's just for fun."</p> <p>"Francis. Please. I don't want to. It takes the enjoyment out of it for me."</p> <p>Francis sat up with a loud sigh. "Well, not knowing takes the enjoyment out of it for me."</p> <p>"Not knowing what?"</p> <p>"How I did."</p> <p>"How you did? You did fine."</p>
381	<p>He kissed her shoulder.</p> <p>"Okay. I get it," she said, and closed her eyes.</p> <p>"Well?" he said.</p> <p>She opened her eyes to Francis's pleading mouth.</p>

Page	Content
	<p>“Well what?” “You’re still not going to give me a number?” “You really want a number?” “Mae! Of course I do.” “Okay, a hundred.” She turned to the wall again. “That’s the number?” “It is. You get a perfect 100.” Mae felt like she could hear him grinning. “Thank you,” he said, and kissed the back of her head.</p>
393	<p>“I can’t believe how poised you were,” Francis said, and he kissed her—a dry, professional kiss on the lips. ...“Let’s get a libation,” Francis said, and they decided on a glittering brewery on the water fronted by a wide outdoor patio. Even as they approached, Mae saw recognition in the eyes of the array of pretty young people drinking outdoors.</p>
395	<p>“Now all humans will have the eyes of God. You know this passage? ‘All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of God.’ Something like that. You know your Bible?” Seeing the blank looks on the faces of Mae and Francis, he scoffed and took a long pull from his drink. “Now we’re all God. Every one of us will soon be able to see, and cast judgment upon, every other. We’ll see what He sees. We’ll articulate His judgment. We’ll channel His wrath and deliver His forgiveness. On a constant and global level. All religion has been waiting for this, when every human is a direct and immediate messenger of God’s will. Do you see what I’m saying?”</p>
413	<p>“It’ll be fun. Sometimes the ideas are even good. And speaking of good ideas ...” And then Francis pulled her down to him, and kissed her, and pulled her hips into him, and for a moment she thought they were about to have something like a real sexual experience, but just when she was taking off her shirt, she saw Francis clench his eyes and jerk forward, and she knew he was already done. After changing and brushing his teeth, he asked Mae to rate him, and she gave him a 100.</p>
428	<p>“They are. But even then, it’s like both sides of my family are these blackhearted people. I mean, I didn’t even know the British had Irish slaves, did you?” “No. I don’t think so. You mean, white Irish slaves?” “Thousands of them. My ancestors were the ringleaders or something. They raided Ireland, brought back slaves, sold them all over the world. It’s so fucked up.”</p>
434	<p>“Annie, you know how crazy this all sounds? I mean, besides, are you sure your ancestors here had black slaves? The slaves weren’t Irish here, too?” Annie sighed loudly. “No. No. My people went from owning Irish people to owning African people. How’s that? Couldn’t keep my people from owning people. You also saw that they fought for the Confederate side in the Civil War?” “I saw that, but there’s millions of people whose ancestors fought for the South. The country was at war, half and half.” “Not my half. I mean, do you know the chaos this is wreaking on my family?” “But they never took all this family heritage stuff seriously, did they?”</p>
436	<p>“It’s not fine, Mae. It’s anything but fine. The first thing is that I found out my dad and mom had some kind of open marriage or something. I haven’t even asked them about it.</p>

Page	Content
	<p>But there are photos and video of them with all kinds of other people. I mean, like, serial adultery on both sides. Is that fine?”</p> <p>“How do you know it was an affair? I mean, if they were just walking next to someone? And it was the eighties, right?”</p> <p>“More like the nineties. And trust me. It’s definitive.”</p> <p>“Like sex photos?”</p> <p>“No. But kissy photos. I mean, there’s one with my dad with his hand around some woman’s waist, his other hand on her tit. I mean, sick shit. Other pictures with Mom and some bearded guy, a series of naked photos. Apparently the guy died, had this stash of photos, they were bought at some garage sale and scanned and put in the cloud. Then when they did the global facial-rec, ta-da, Mom’s naked with some biker guy. I mean, the two of them just standing there sometimes, naked, like posing for prom.”</p> <p>...“And who took the pictures? There’s some third guy in the room? Who was that? A helpful neighbor?”</p> <p>“Have you asked them about it?”</p> <p>“No. But that’s the better part of it. I was about to confront them when this other thing popped up. It’s so much worse that I don’t even care about the affairs. I mean, the pictures were nothing compared to the video they found.”</p>

Profanity	Count
Ass	12
Bitch	2
Fuck	41
Goddamn	2
Piss	1
Shit	43
Tit	1