

Last Days of Night by Graham Moore

1. Talk about the role of the lightbulb, that small pear-shaped device, in changing the face of civilization. Can you imagine life without it?

2. What do you think about the two great giants of American science and manufacturing: Thomas Edison and George Westinghouse? Are you surprised at the manner in which Moore portrays Edison, an American icon? How do the two men differ?

3. Can you explain the legal suit that Edison initiated against Westinghouse? In what way did Westinghouse's bulb differ from Edison's?

4. Does Graham Moore do a credible job in breaking down the science of electricity, especially the differences between AC and DC current?

5. How did Nikola Tesla revolutionize AC current? Do you think it possible/probable in real life that Edison might have made an attempt on Tesla's life? Or did Graham add that plot point to build fictional suspense?

6. How was Nikola Tesla different from the two rivals at the heart of this story? In what way was his "genius" different from that of Edison or Westinghouse? What drove Tesla, as opposed to the other two men?

7. Talk about the role of J.P. Morgan and his insistence that the two men settle their differences. Was his "coup" of Edison's General Electric fair?

8. In the end, is it possible to actually say who invented the light bulb? What role did each of the three men—Edison, Tesla, and Westinghouse—play in its development? Consider this passage from the book:

For Edison who loved the audience it was the performance. Westinghouse was different as he loved the products themselves and he made them better than anyone else. Westinghouse did not want to sell the most but wanted to make the best. Tesla, the third leg, only cared for the ideas themselves. Once he had an idea, he was done, he knew he had solved the problem and moved on.

