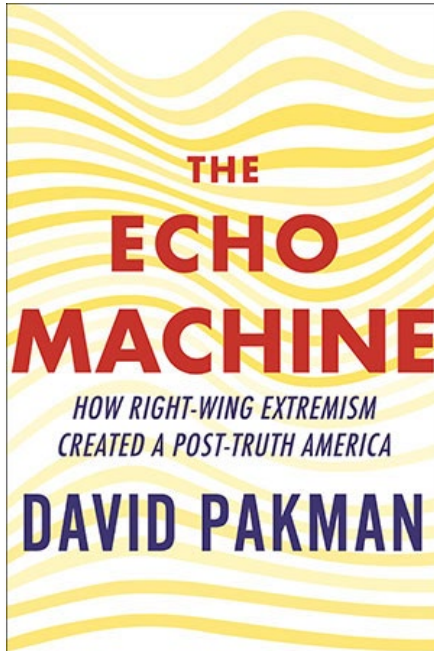


The Echo Machine: How Right-Wing Extremism Created a Post-Truth America
By David Pakman

Book Club Discussion Questions



1. In the book, Pakman outlines how misinformation campaigns that blur fact and opinion can have devastating real-world consequences. Which tools and skills do you find most useful in discerning a fact from an opinion?
2. In what ways have online echo chambers contributed to the erosion of social cohesion and the polarization of public discourse?
3. In chapter 2, Pakman argues that deepening our understanding and practice of philosophy encourages a more thoughtful exploration of our values and beliefs. What are some ways you can incorporate philosophical thinking into your daily life?
4. Pakman argues that humans are intrinsically driven by bias and personal experiences, which makes opinions that draw on emotion highly influential. How have you seen these kinds of bias surface in the media and in your own thought processes?
5. In chapter 4, Pakman details how, historically, Republicans have leaned into a “principles-first” approach to create ambiguity around clear-cut issues and shift the discourse away from evidence-based policy discussions. What examples does he give, and how do the effects of leaning into principles over policy continue to ripple out today?
6. Pakman insists that in the face of attempts by right-wing political circles to turn the American political scene toward cultural issues, informed citizens have a collective responsibility to steer the conversation back to policy and substance. In what ways can we go about doing this?

7. In chapter 5, Pakman highlights several successful left-wing movements that the United States can look to for implementing improvements to our current systems. Which example(s) stood out the most to you, and why?
8. Social democracy, Pakman argues, provides a stable path forward that combines the innovative potential of the market with a strong commitment to social welfare. What are some actionable ways we can incorporate these practices into US society?
9. What are some ways we can fight back against right-wing movements that have no policy to back them?
10. What factors have contributed to the Republican Party continuing to win elections, despite public opinion continuing to shift in the direction of progressive values on countless issues? How can Democrats and leftists fight to succeed in a system loaded with traps and pitfalls?
11. What are some guidelines Pakman lays out for how we can responsibly consume media? Which of these do you think have the greatest impact on strengthening our media literacy?
12. When it comes to trying to effect change, Pakman argues that people should adopt an incrementalist approach, rather than an accelerationist approach. Do you agree? What are the benefits and drawbacks to each ideology?