

A man in a blue dress shirt, dark tie, and suspenders stands against a white background with a fine dot pattern. Instead of a head, he has a large, vibrant starburst composed of multiple sharp, triangular rays in yellow, blue, magenta, and red.

# **WHAT IS WRONG WITH MEN**

BY  
**JESSA CRISPIN**

**READING  
GROUP  
GUIDE**

## OPENING ICEBREAKER

Pick one:

Which Michael Douglas role stood out to you the most and why?

What film taught you the most about what masculinity *should* or *shouldn't* look like?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



### The Big Question

Crispin argues that “masculinity is always in crisis” (p. xviii). Do you agree? How does that resonate with the men (or masculine figures) in your life?



### Movie Therapy

Choose one of the Michael Douglas films mentioned (*Fatal Attraction*, *Wall Street*, *Basic Instinct*, etc.). What does Douglas’s character reveal about society’s expectations of men in that era in that film? Could the story be told the same way today?



### The Patriarchy Betrayed Them, Too

“This was the patriarchy abandoning men” (p. xix). What does this mean to you? Do you see examples of this betrayal in contemporary pop culture, news, or your personal life?



### Gender As Performance

The book touches on gender as performance. What roles do you think men are expected to play now? Are there any roles they should play but don’t?



### Feminism’s Fallout

In what ways does the book complicate or challenge your views on feminism and its ripple effects?

## INTERACTIVE EXERCISES

### REEL TALK: “Which Douglas Did You Survive?”

Which character’s downfall do you recognize in the culture around you—and what lesson or lessons do you take from it?

(For example: Is your workplace run by a Gordon Gekko? Have you seen D-Fens energy on the internet? Do you believe in the myth of the American president?)

### TABLE TALK

Bring three film clips to the group the next time you meet (can be YouTube links). Each person explains how their chosen clip reflects the themes of *What Is Wrong with Men*.

### REWRITE THE RULES

Take a traditional male archetype (CEO, husband, soldier, etc.) and reimagine what that role could look like *post-patriarchy*. Share aloud.



## QUESTIONS FOR MEN IN THE ROOM

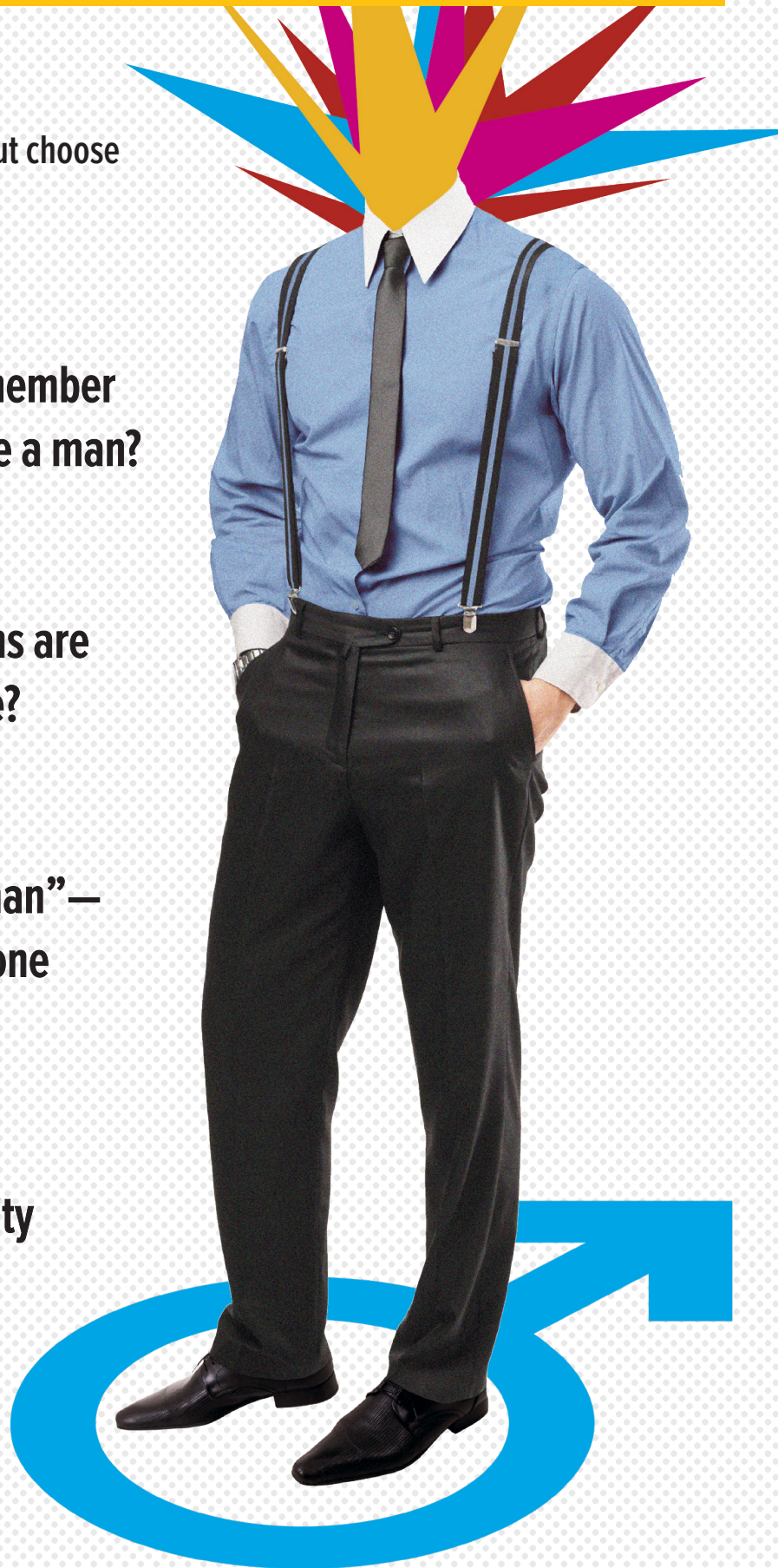
You don't need to answer all of these, but choose a few to reflect on or to ask someone.

**What was the first time you remember questioning what it means to be a man?**

**Do you feel societal expectations are a burden or a source of purpose?**

**Who taught you how to “be a man”—and what do you wish they’d done differently?**

**Has your definition of masculinity changed in the past five years?**



## IF YOU LIKED THIS BOOK, TRY...

***Men Explain Things to Me***  
by Rebecca Solnit

***The Nineties***  
by Chuck Klosterman

***The Witches Are Coming***  
by Lindy West

***Good and Mad***  
by Rebecca Traister

Any YouTube rant  
by Jordan Peterson  
(then read this book again to recover)

## DOUGLAS REQUIRED VIEWING

Want to dig deeper? Watch one (or all) of these five films explored in *What Is Wrong with Men* before your book club session.

### ***Fatal Attraction* (1987)**

A defining film of the 1980s that captures male anxieties around female independence and infidelity.

### ***Wall Street* (1987)**

Meet Gordon Gekko, the embodiment of capitalist greed and the “alpha male” business archetype.

### ***Basic Instinct* (1992)**

A thriller that pits a dangerously charismatic woman against a morally conflicted man.

### ***Falling Down* (1993)**

D-Fens becomes a symbol of male rage and entitlement in a rapidly changing society.

### ***The War of the Roses* (1989)**

A dark comedy about marriage and power struggles between genders.