

2011 COMMON READING

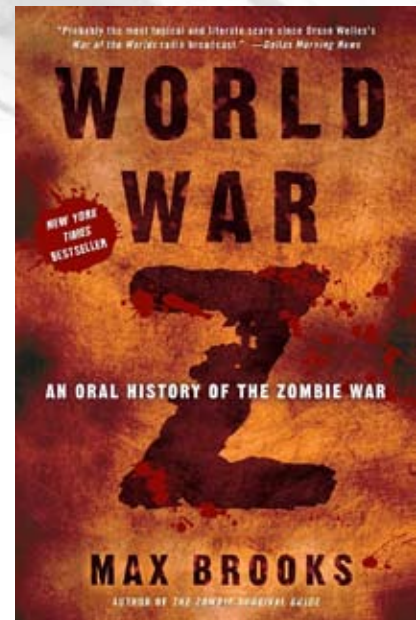
An Introduction to *World War Z*: *An Oral History of the Zombie War* by Max Brooks

How do civilizations end? What happens after they fall? Is it possible to restore them? These fundamental questions of human history and existence form the core of Max Brooks' account of the cataclysmic war fought between humanity and the undead in the not so distant future.

Told through the genre of oral history, *World War Z* is both an exciting work of fiction and thoughtful reflection on the fragility of our twenty-first century world. The book's plot is straightforward. As the result of an infection of unknown origin, the dead rise up and attack the living, quickly overwhelming human communities throughout the world. Decimated, disorganized, and demoralized, the ragtag remnants of humanity fight back against the zombie hordes that threaten to overwhelm them and, sometimes, against their fellow survivors as well. Does humanity win? In one sense, yes: enough survivors remain for the writing of an "oral history" of the war. In the book's closing pages, however, the survivors interviewed are not so sure. Says one, "I can imagine my own comrade... laughing down at me when I say, with all honesty, that everything's going to be all right."

Brooks' gripping account of the titanic struggle between the living and undead is fictional, but it is worth remembering that the issues he explores are not. Present throughout *World War Z* is insightful commentary on critical issues that confront us today: the peril of ecological degradation, the global economy's vulnerability, the potential consequences of technological overdependence, the looming danger of global pandemics, and humanity's capacity for shocking callousness and brutality in moments of extreme personal and social crisis. While it is questionable whether we will fight a literal war of survival against the undead in the near future, the possibility of worldwide catastrophe is not. In the past two decades, we have witnessed global economic crisis, widespread political instability, impotence in the face of natural disaster, the emergence of global terrorism, barely-contained pandemics, and the partial meltdown of nuclear reactors. As one survivor notes in the book, "Yes, we stopped the zombie menace, but we're the ones who let it become a menace in the first place." As you read *World War Z*, ask yourself this: will you, in your lifetime, express the same sentiment about another equally disastrous event?

For questions about the first year common reading program contact LuAnn Mims at 863.680.4994.
For general questions about FSC contact the Student Solutions Center at 863.680.4900.



Max Brooks, Emmy winner and author of two *N.Y. Times* bestsellers, will kick-off this year's Faith and Life Convocation series on September 14.