

Cloud atlas theme

[Literature](#), [Fiction](#)



[Find a theme and trace it through each of the six narratives of Cloud Atlas and discuss its significance particularly as it pertains to the closures of the novel.] Cloud Atlas reminds me of the story of the Emperor's New Clothes. I am amazed that apparently well-educated people feel that this novel has something worthwhile to say. The idea that there is some useful relationship between the six narratives is a big stretch. Consider this. Imagine that Mitchell had written just one of these narratives (your choice). Can we imagine that readers, critics, reviewers, or scholars would have felt the omission of the other five? I cannot. Mitchell can be compared to a broad jumper who turns in a somewhat credible performance jumping with one leg. We can be impressed by the performance without wanting to repeat it. Is there anything terribly difficult about writing in different literary styles? Writers who are good at writing dialog do this all the time. The theme that these narratives have in common is that a large number of human beings are pretty contemptible and the race is therefore going to hell in a hand basket. Perhaps this is the theme that is responsible for the book's success. Many people believe this to be true. It's an old idea. Think original sin. It's also a wrong-headed idea. If we humans were half that bad we wouldn't have gotten this far. Mitchell's apocalyptic view is nothing new, but he does it badly. Compare his view with that of Richard Matheson, for example, and Mitchell comes up wanting. He demonstrates his ignorance of Korea and his flawed project of the future quite dramatically. He supposedly did a lot of research but it doesn't show in the final product. This book could easily have been written as part of an undergraduate creative writing class. Here's how. Break the class into six groups and assign each group a historical time slot/

Each group has a free hand as long as they write about decent protagonists who live out their lives in spite of all the crappy people around them. Then after the six narratives are in draft form, hand the drafts out for reading and then have a brainstorming session to add links to tie the narratives loosely together. Of course such an exercise would not receive rave reviews and a film contract. At least, not unless Mitchell took credit for it.