Reading Companion

Questions from the book for families, book clubs, classrooms and community groups. Type or write your notes in the boxes.

1. Which systems in your daily life do you already depend on without fully understanding? What makes your trust reasonable?

2. Where would you welcome a highly capable AI assistant immediately? Where would you want more evidence first?

3. What is the difference between a plausible explanation and a tested result? How can you tell when the difference matters?

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4. If an AI produced a scientific idea no expert could readily interpret, what kinds of evidence would convince you that the idea is useful?

5. How should a family decide which tasks to delegate to an assistant and which to keep under direct human control?

6. What rights should every person have when a consequential decision is influenced by AI?

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7. How might unequal access to AI tools widen differences in education, health, and opportunity? What could narrow those differences?

8. What should a child learn to do when a machine gives a confident answer that conflicts with observation?

9. In what settings should a physical robot have an independent emergency control? What would a safe stop mean in each setting?

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10. How can scientific ambition coexist with a willingness to delay or decline an unsafe deployment?

11. Which of the three fifty-year futures feels most plausible to you, and which social choices could change the direction?

12. What would it mean for your community to welcome alien intelligence while remaining accountable for how it is used?

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Proposal, Evidence, Permission

From the prologue and Chapter 1. Keep the proposal, the evidence and the permission to act separate.

Proposal

Evidence

Permission

Questions from Chapter 1
What exactly would it be allowed to do?
Which experiments? In what quantities? Under whose authorization?
What happens if the generated procedure creates a hazardous byproduct?
What if a sensor fails?

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From a Machine Idea to a Human Benefit

From Figure 2 and Chapter 25. Every step can fail independently. Progress at one stage does not guarantee the next.

Propose - Generate hypothesis

Interpret - Expose assumptions

Validate - Independent evidence

Implement - Safe & feasible

Benefit - Equitable access

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Bounded Autonomy

From Figure 3 and Chapters 27–28. Human institutions define authority, evaluate risks, and can intervene.

AI planner - Suggests actions

Authorization - Checks permissions

Physical system - Executes within limits

Independent safety layer - Limits / monitoring / safe stop

Reading and discussion only; not a substitute for qualified engineering or safety review.

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