



Rachel's Butterflies

BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

A thoughtful guide for discussing friendship, grief, identity, family, privilege, and the courage to begin again.

These questions contain spoilers and include discussion of suicide, depression, and grief. Groups may wish to approach these subjects with sensitivity.

- 1 Rachel's death is the catalyst for everything that follows. How did opening the novel with her final moments shape the way you read the rest of the story?

- 2 Liz, Emily, and Chrissy were once inseparable, yet they allowed decades to pass without seeing one another. Why do you think close friendships sometimes fade? What makes their renewed connection feel genuine?

- 3 At Rachel's memorial, each woman is affected by a different photograph: Mischief, Resilience, and Promises. What does each woman's reaction reveal about her own fears, regrets, and unmet needs?

-
- 4 Rachel photographed people whom society often overlooks. What do her photographs suggest about dignity, beauty, and the difference between truly seeing someone and merely looking at them?
-
- 5 The friends make a pact to change something in their lives in Rachel's honor. Which woman remains truest to the spirit of that pact - and whose transformation surprised you most?
-
- 6 Liz prides herself on being ambitious, independent, and invulnerable. When are those qualities genuine strengths, and when do they become armor that prevents her from forming meaningful relationships?
-
- 7 Liz's discovery of Naomi begins with Xander's betrayal but develops into something entirely unexpected. Why do you think Liz forms such a powerful bond with Lauren and Naomi?
-
- 8 Through Liz, Lauren, Bibi, and Cynthia, the novel explores how class and upbringing shape opportunity. How does Liz's understanding of privilege change, and what prompts that change?
-

-
- 9 What makes someone family in this novel? Consider the differences between biological relatives, romantic partners, old friends, and the family Liz builds with Lauren and Naomi.
-
- 10 Emily loves her husband and children, but she has also lost part of her identity within motherhood and marriage. Is her desire for a career selfish, necessary, or both?
-
- 11 What does Brody represent to Emily: romantic temptation, professional validation, a lost version of herself, or the possibility of a different future? How well does she handle their attraction?
-
- 12 Ed's redundancy changes the balance within his marriage to Emily. How do Emily and Ed redefine partnership, ambition, and traditional family roles as their circumstances change?
-
- 13 Josh's arrest shatters Chrissy's image of her family and her place within the Pasadena community. What does the school's reaction reveal about reputation, loyalty, forgiveness, and social status?
-

-
- 14 Chrissy becomes convinced that moving to Ferndale will solve her family's problems. Was she courageously pursuing a fresh start, attempting to escape, or doing a little of both?
-
- 15 Rachel titles the photograph of the solitary schoolgirl Resilience. How does Chrissy's interpretation of that image change over the course of the novel? Does the story suggest that adults sometimes underestimate - or romanticize - children's resilience?
-
- 16 After Rachel's memorial, the friends disagree over whether her parents and those around her failed to acknowledge the severity of her depression. What responsibilities, if any, do families, friends, and communities have when someone is struggling with mental illness?
-
- 17 Chrissy eventually understands Rachel's 'butterflies' as people transformed by struggle, their fragility and strength existing together. Do you agree that struggle gives us our wings, or can that idea risk romanticizing suffering?
-
- 18 By the end of the novel, which character has undergone the most meaningful transformation? What do you imagine the future holds for Liz, Emily, Chrissy, and the family they have rediscovered in one another?
-

Thank you for reading - and for keeping Rachel's butterflies in flight.