

## HOW TO START YOUR OWN BOOK CLUB

Think it would be hard to start your own book club? Think again!  
All you need is a little bit of organization and some  
friends who are as excited about the books they read as you are.

### HERE ARE A FEW TIPS TO GET YOU STARTED:

#### The best way to find people to be in your reading group is to ask your friends.

Think of all the people you know who like to read, and ask them to join. If you still don't feel like you have enough people, ask each of your friends to bring someone else. You can usually get a good discussion going with 6–8 people, but any number that is comfortable for you will work. If you're having trouble finding enough cool people to form your reading group, check with your school, local library, or bookstore to see if there's a group that you can join.

#### Figure out when and where you want to meet.

Some groups meet once a month, some meet every other month. You could get together at someone's house, in a park, on the beach, or in your school's library. If it sounds too official and overwhelming to decide all the "wheres" and "whens" right now, don't worry! It's YOUR group and so YOU get to make all the decisions. All you have to do is get together once, and you can work out the rest of the details later.

#### Decide how you will choose books, and how the discussions will be run.

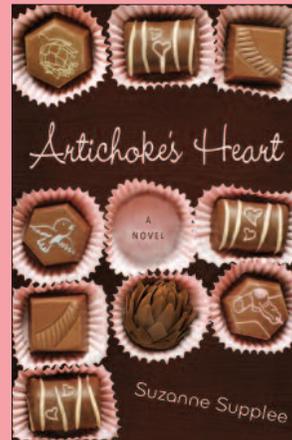
This is another one that sounds a little scary but totally isn't. Maybe you have a favorite author that you and your friends would like to focus on. Or maybe you want to take turns picking your favorite book. Maybe one person likes to talk and would like to lead the discussion, or maybe you would rather just get together and talk about the books you are reading. If you get stuck, you can often find discussion questions online (try the publisher's website) or at your local library or bookstore.

**The most important thing to remember is that there's no right or wrong way to have a reading group. Do what you're comfortable with and always have fun, and your group will be a success!**

For more discussion guides to get your reading group going, visit  
[www.penguin.com/teachersandlibrarians](http://www.penguin.com/teachersandlibrarians)

**"Artichoke's Heart is delicious!  
Suzanne Supplee has written a brave,  
sensitive story that will inspire  
girls of all sizes."**

—Carolyn Mackler, author of the Michael L. Printz Honor–winning  
*The Earth, My Butt, and Other Big Round Things*



### Artichoke's Heart

by Suzanne Supplee

ISBN: 978-0-525-47902-4 (HC)  
Ages 12 up • Grades 7 up • \$16.99



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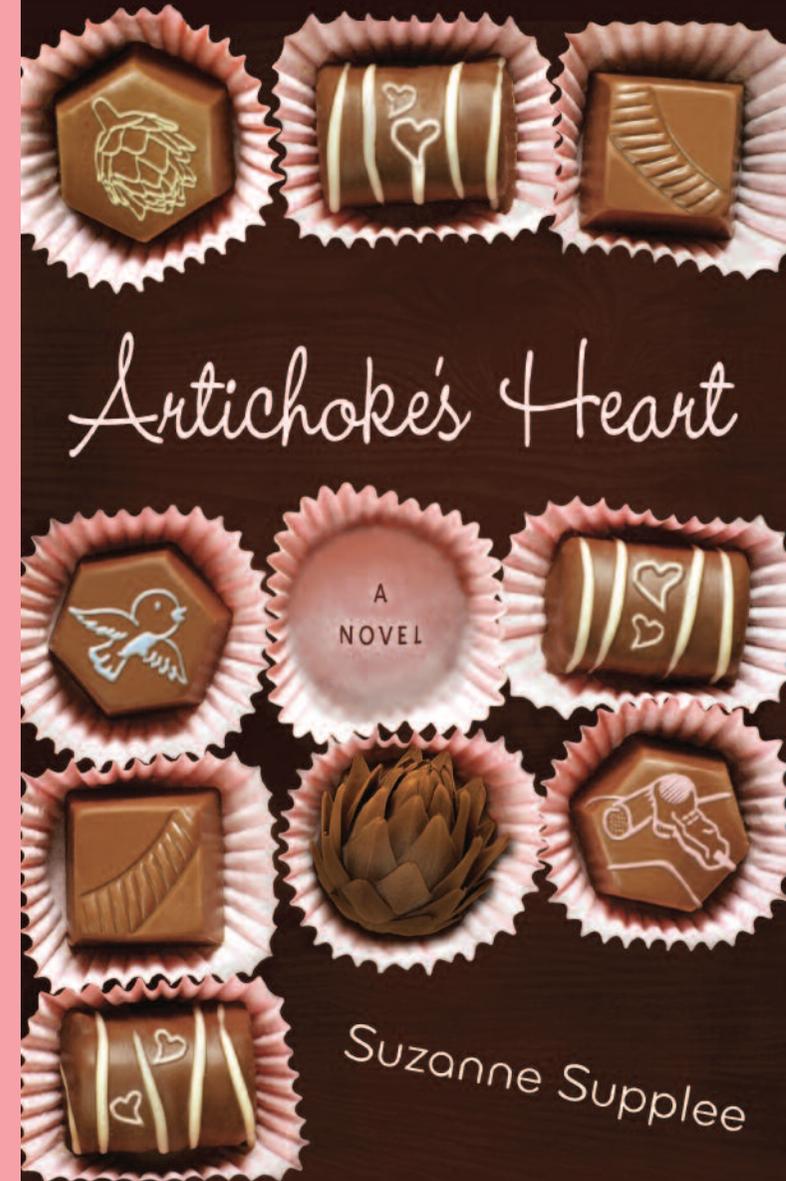
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## DISCUSSION GUIDE



## ABOUT THE BOOK

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Rosemary Goode is smart and funny and loyal and the best eyebrow waxer in Spring Hill, Tennessee. But only one thing seems to matter to anyone, including Rosemary: her weight. And when your mom runs the most successful (and gossipy) beauty shop in town, it can be hard to keep a low profile . . . especially when the scale just hit an all-time high.

Rosemary resolves to lose the weight, but her journey turns out to be about everything but fat after frightening news changes her life forever. Rosemary's life-changing, waist-shrinking year is captured with honesty and humor-topped with an extra-large helping of Southern charm.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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SUZANNE SUPLEE is a graduate of Southern Illinois University, and she earned a masters degree in creative writing from Towson University in Maryland. For a number of years, she has worked as both a teacher and a writer. Ms. Suplee is married and has three daughters. Her favorite hobbies include exercise, reading, and, of course, writing. You can visit her at [www.suzannesuplee.com](http://www.suzannesuplee.com)

## GET TO KNOW SUZANNE SUPLEE

### What was your childhood ambition in life?

One summer, I worked at this camp. I was a counselor in charge of about ten five- and six-year olds. I remember sitting in the grass reading to them. All of a sudden, this powerful feeling came over me, and I decided I was meant to be a kindergarten teacher. It wasn't until much later that I realized what I really wanted was to write books for kids. I started out trying to write picture books, but that evolved into novels for teenagers.

### What's your worst Bluebird experience?

There are too many to count. At times, I've acted like a Bluebird (not something I'm proud of), and I've been the victim of Bluebirds (the reason I stopped acting like one). I think cliques are dangerous, especially for writers. Once you're locked in, it's hard to think for yourself.

### What's your advice for writers who are just getting started?

Read. Write. Rewrite.

### What are you working on now?

Currently, I'm working on another novel set in the South. I'm just getting started, but I already completely love the main character and her story. I hope readers will, too!

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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- Why is the book called *Artichoke's Heart*? Is this a good nickname for Rosemary? Why do you think that the nickname has stuck with her for all these years?
- Mrs. McCutchin's holiday visit to the beauty shop proves to be a turning point for Rosemary. Why do you think this particular incident serves as a catalyst? Does anything else factor into Rosemary's change?
- Discuss the relationship between Rosemary, her mother, and her aunt Mary. What contributes to the dynamics of the situation? In what ways does their relationship contribute to Rosemary's weight problem and loss?
- How do the different characters help or hinder Rosemary's weight loss? Does she find more motivation in kindness or cruelty? Do you think it would have been easier or more difficult for Rosemary to lose weight if she didn't live in a small town?
- How does Rosemary's mother deal with the news of her cancer? How does the rest of the family deal with it? Does denial play a role in any of Rosemary's other problems?
- Rosemary feels silly worrying about her weight when her mother has cancer. Is this a valid concern? In what ways does Rosemary losing weight help her mother with her battle?
- Why is it so hard for Rosemary to believe that Kyle is attracted to her? Does Kyle act in a way that justifies her insecurity?
- When a newspaper article describes Kyle as "strapping" and "delightfully enormous," Rosemary questions whether the same standards and descriptions could be applied to her. Do you think there are different standards for boys and girls when it comes to weight? What part does context play in the newspaper's description of Kyle?
- Why is Rosemary, despite her unpopularity, able to become friends with Kay-Kay? What does each girl bring to the relationship? Will their friendship last?
- What role does Mrs. Wallace play in Rosemary's weight loss? Is weight loss the only area where she is helpful? Why is she able to help Rosemary when so many other people weren't?
- Rosemary takes great comfort and inspiration from the Emily Dickinson poem that begins "Hope is the thing with feathers." Why does this resonate so strongly with her? Do you think it would have had such an impact if she'd read it at a different point in her life? Does it have meaning for her beyond her struggle with her weight?

- Why are the Bluebirds so mean to Rosemary? Is her reaction to them a good one? Is it understandable?
- How would this story have been different if Kay-Kay had been accepted by the Bluebirds? What if Rosemary had been accepted by them?
- Rosemary tries many different things to lose weight, not all of which are healthy. Why does she try them even though she knows they aren't good for her? Why does she stop using the Pounds Away?
- Rosemary talks a lot about the humiliation of being fat, how it affects her life, and how people judge her for it. Is high school a harsher environment than the "real world" for this sort of fixation on weight? Are there other things that can cause this sort of insecurity, or is weight unique? Do the other characters have things that cause them to feel different and judged?
- Does losing weight change who Rosemary is as a person? Does it solve all her problems? Is she a better person at the end of the book than she is at the beginning? If so, how much of that has to do with her being thinner, and how much of it has to do with other factors?

## RESEARCH & ACTIVITIES

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- The poetry of Emily Dickinson is important to Rosemary. Read some of this poetry, as well as a bit about her life. Discuss why you think that it is especially appropriate for Rosemary to identify with this poet. What other poets do you think Rosemary would enjoy?
- When Rosemary's mother and Mrs. McCutchin are sick, many people in the town pitch in to help the families. Find out what volunteer opportunities are available in your community to help people who are suffering from cancer, heart disease, or some other ailment. Do what you can to lend a hand.
- There are many health risks involved with obesity. Research what these are and write a short report about the risks—and how diet and exercise can help to control them.
- Rosemary and Kay-Kay improve both their health and their friendship by running together each morning. Is there a sport—perhaps even running—that you've been wanting to try out? Find a friend who is also interested and take the plunge!