HEART-WRENCHINGLY BEAUTIFUL BOOKS

PERFECT BOOK CLUB READS BY
GAYLE FORMAN
Try to host your meeting in a quiet area. The easier it is to hear one another, the better your discussion will be!

Outline basic etiquette first. Remind everyone to be respectful of others’ opinions. No one should feel uncomfortable in a book discussion.

It’s okay to disagree! It’s always more interesting to share and hear different points of view.


Play a game! We’ve suggested hosting tips for each title, but you can also play a board game or trivia to make for a fun ending to any book club discussion.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I Was Here by Gayle Forman ......................... 4-5
If I Stay by Gayle Forman ........................... 6-7
Where She Went by Gayle Forman .................. 8-9
Just One Day by Gayle Forman ........................ 10-11
Just One Year by Gayle Forman ...................... 12-13
Just One Night by Gayle Forman .................... 14
A Q & A with Gayle Forman ......................... 14
About Gayle Forman ................................. 15
ABOUT THE BOOK

“Irresistible tear-jerker”
—New York Times

When her charismatic best friend, Meg, drinks a bottle of industrial-strength cleaner alone in a motel room, a piece of Cody dies, too. Meg was everything to her. How could Cody not know? Determined to find out what really happened, Cody begins a dangerous search to the shadowy fringes of Meg’s life where she discovers some unsettling truths about friendship, secrets, forgiveness, and love.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why does the town that Meg and Cody come from insist on having so many remembrance events? What, if anything, do people gain from attending them?
- Why do Joe and Sue ask Cody to pack up Meg’s things? Why don’t they want to do it themselves?
- Due to the way that she was raised and her relationship with her mother, Cody commonly feels as if she and Tricia are “strays.” Why does she feel this way? How does this affect her relationships with the members of the Garcia family?
- Cody experiences different types of jealousy toward different people who had relationships with Meg. Why does Cody feel envious of Meg’s family? Why does Cody feel envious of All_BS? Are these feelings of envy reasonable?
- Why does Ben want to help Cody? What is at stake for him?
- After beginning to participate in the online message boards, Cody says, “As soon as I hit send on the second message, my anger, my angst, my self-pity disappears, leaving only a calm and steely resolve. I wonder if this was how Meg felt” (164). Why does Cody feel this way when sending messages out onto the boards? Is this rational?
- What does Cody hope to gain or accomplish by tracking down All_BS? Is this a reasonable desire on her part? Why or why not?
- Why does Cody feel that she has to do something for Meg after her death? Does she feel that she owes Meg something?
- Why did Cody want to detour to see her dad? Why doesn’t she choose to meet him? If you were in her shoes, what would you have done?
- Why does Cody begin to act differently toward Ben after they sleep together? What concerns does she have about possible changes in their relationship due to what happened?
- Was All_BS the person you expected him to be? Why or why not?
- Much of this book is about Cody seeking closure for what happened to Meg. Do you think that she has found this by the end of the book? Why or why not?
In the blink of an eye everything changes. Seventeen-year-old Mia has no memory of the accident; she can only recall what happened afterwards, watching her own damaged body being taken from the wreck. Little by little she struggles to put together the pieces—to figure out what she has lost, what she has left, and the very difficult choice she must make. Heartwrenchingly beautiful, this will change the way you look at life, love, and family. Now a major motion picture starring Chloe Grace Moretz, Mia’s story will stay with you for a long, long time.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- The entirety of the book is told through an out-of-body experience that allows Mia to see what happens during the time immediately following the car accident. How might this out-of-body experience make her decision-making process easier? Or harder? Do you think that, if you were in the same circumstances, you would want to have a similar experience?

- Repeatedly throughout the text, Mia points out how different in looks and musical tastes she is from her family members. How do these differences from—along with any similarities to—her family members impact Mia’s personality?

- In what ways is playing the cello a part of Mia’s identity? Or, more specifically, in what ways does her cello sometimes take the place of Mia’s voice?

- At one point, Mia recalls a conversation between her father and his friend Henry. She relates, “Dad paused, hesitating before speaking. ‘I just think that funerals are a lot like death itself. You can have your wishes, your plans, but at the end of the day, it’s out of your control.’” (p. 171). Is this true or untrue for Mia’s parents and brother? Is it true for her? How can you tell?

- Several times, Mia mentions seeing the tape that holds her eyelids closed. Why is she bothered so much by the tape? How does her concern about the tape relate to the idea that she has now “seen everything”?

- On p. 181, Mia’s grandfather says, “It’s okay... if you want to go. Everyone wants you to stay. I want you to stay more than I’ve ever wanted anything in my life... But that’s what I want and I could see why it might not be what you want. So I just wanted to tell you that I understand if you go. It’s okay if you have to leave us. It’s okay if you want to stop fighting.” Why does receiving her Gramps’s blessing make Mia feel relieved?

- **What reasons would Mia have for going? For staying?**

- Mia puts a lot of pressure on herself to be perfect, or to live up to what she believes are others’ expectations of her. Why does she do this? Where does this pressure come from?

- Why does Adam make the promise to Mia that he does at the end of the book? Why does he think that this is necessary? What purpose does this promise ultimately serve?

- Is it Adam who saves Mia’s life? Or does she decide to stay for her own reasons, separate from Adam?
Picking up several years after the dramatic conclusion of *If I Stay*, *Where She Went* continues the story of Adam and Mia, from Adam’s point of view. Ever since Mia’s decision to stay—but not with him—Adam’s career has been on a wonderful trajectory. His album, borne from the anguish and pain of their breakup, has made him a bona fide star. And Mia herself has become a top-rate cellist, playing in some of the finest venues in the world. When their respective paths put them both in New York City at the same time, the result is a single night in which the two reunite—with wholly satisfying results.

**ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS**

- Adam says that he and his band members “do control the message” (p. 15). Why is he so adamant about not wanting to discuss anything related to Mia?
- Mia has to endure a pretty grueling healing process. In what ways is the cello Mia’s voice during this time? What does her playing say that she is unable to say in words?
- Who does Adam really owe his fame to? Why is he unable to give himself any credit for it?
- Mia shares something that Professor Lemsky said to her shortly after she arrived at Juilliard: “The faculty here will coddle you because of what you went through. I, however, am of the opinion if we do that, that car crash might as well have killed you, too, because we will smother your talent” (p. 123). How would people being overly kind to Mia hurt her talent? Do you think that it is possible to be too nice to someone who has endured what Mia has?
- Is Adam narcissistic or paranoid? Is it his fame that has made him this way, or is it something else?
- Why does Mia want to show Adam all of her secret haunts? Why hasn’t she showed them to or shared them with others?
- Both Mia and Adam have behaved selfishly. In what ways are their selfish actions and choices similar? Different? Is it okay to be selfish if you are doing so as an act of self-preservation?
- Mia doesn’t remember most of the events from *If I Stay*, but they’re clearly still having an impact on her. If she could go back, do you think she would have chosen differently? Why or why not?
- What is Mia and Adam’s “new vow”?
- What do you think Mia and Adam’s future holds? Will their second chance work out? Why or why not?
Allyson Healey’s life is exactly like her suitcase—packed, planned, ordered. Then on the last day of her three-week post-graduation European tour, she meets Willem. A free-spirited, roving actor, Willem is everything she’s not, and when he invites her to abandon her plans and come to Paris with him, Allyson says yes. This uncharacteristic decision leads to a day of risk and romance, liberation and intimacy: 24 hours that will transform Allyson’s life.

“Surrender to the voyeuristic pleasure of ... how travel can transform us.”
—People Magazine

**ABOUT THE BOOK**

Allyson Healey’s life is exactly like her suitcase—packed, planned, ordered. Then on the last day of her three-week post-graduation European tour, she meets Willem. A free-spirited, roving actor, Willem is everything she’s not, and when he invites her to abandon her plans and come to Paris with him, Allyson says yes. This uncharacteristic decision leads to a day of risk and romance, liberation and intimacy: 24 hours that will transform Allyson’s life.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- Allyson is very obviously a “good girl” who does what she’s told, or does what’s expected of her. So why does she decide to go to Paris, with a virtual stranger, on a whim?
- Allyson has been raised to follow a schedule, and to always be very tightly controlled. How does it make her feel to finally “let go”?
- Both Allyson and Willem place a lot of importance on the idea of “accidents” as guiding, necessary, exciting events in a person’s life. Do you agree or disagree with this idea of random happenstance as an avenue for major life changes?
- Allyson is almost mortified by the idea that she could’ve fallen in love with Willem in just one day—she completely second-guesses everything that happened between them. Do you think it’s possible to fall in love with someone in just a day? Why or why not?
- Why does Allyson find it so hard to get over Willem? Is she depressed at any point?
- Are the changes that take place in Allyson and Melanie’s friendship due more to the drastic changes that Melanie makes in her life, or the fact that Allyson remains largely the same (at least outwardly)?
- What does Allyson ultimately hope to gain by finding Willem? Is she looking for closure, or something more?
- Does Allyson want to reclaim, or to continue to recreate, her identity as Lulu? Why do people put forth conscious efforts at reinventing themselves?
- Toward the end of the book, Allyson’s mom reveals some information about the beginnings of Allyson’s parents’ relationship that Allyson was previously unaware of. What difference does it make for Allyson to know the truth about, or at least have more information about, her parents’ past? Why is it sometimes hard for us to imagine our parents as they were when they were our own ages?
- Was it worth it for Allyson to find out about the type of person Willem really is? Why or why not?
- In what ways does seeing Willem in the second Shakespeare play give Allyson closure?
- What happens for Allyson and Willem after they meet again? What happens after she walks through the door of Willem’s apartment?
Picking up where Just One Day ended, Just One Year tells Willem’s side of the story. After spending an amazing day and night with Allyson in Paris that ends in separation, Willem and Allyson are both searching for one another. His story of their year of quiet longing and near misses is a perfect counterpoint to Allyson’s own as Willem undergoes a transformative journey, questioning his path, finding love, and ultimately, redefining himself.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Willem purchases Lulu’s train ticket to Paris. Does he really spend his money on her because he doesn’t need it, or does he have another reason for doing so?
- Willem explains that when his rucksack was stolen on his way to Warsaw, an old digital camera that contained photos of himself and his parents on his 18th birthday was stolen, too. He says, “There’s a difference between losing something you knew you had and losing something you discovered you had. One is a disappointment. The other is truly a loss” (p. 89). In what ways is the loss of Lulu like the loss of these photos? Do you agree or disagree with his statement?
- Willem says that he prefers to think of himself “as a ship. Like a sailboat” (p. 131). What is Willem constantly moving away from? What does he think might happen if he finally stops moving?
- Which is more important in a relationship: compatibility or passion? What do you think Willem would say? Why?
- In what ways might parallels between Lulu and Willem’s and Yael and Bram’s relationship be a plus for Willem? In what ways might these parallels be a negative?
- In what ways does the renovation of Daniel’s flat mimic Willem’s renovation of his own life? Is it important for people to take the time to focus on repairing themselves after a major life shift has taken place?
- After being called up from his place as understudy to play the main role of Orlando, Willem decides to take Lulu’s watch with him to the rehearsal. Why does he do this? What does the watch represent for him? Do you have any items of your own that you perceive in a similar way?
- Why does Willem ultimately decide to play Orlando as he envisions him to be, rather than as Jereon playing Orlando? In what ways does making the decision to play the role this way reinforce the understandings that Willem is beginning to develop about himself?
- Willem has always been an actor—both onstage and off. How does his acceptance of his role as an actor at the end of the novel align with his acceptance of himself and the choices that he has made thus far? How does his decision to move forward with training as an actor show that he is ready to accept a new course for his life?
- What do you think happens for Willem and Allyson after the end of the novel? Are they able to maintain their own share of double happiness?

ABOUT THE BOOK

★ “[A]n alluring story that pushes beyond the realm of star-crossed romance.”
—Publishers Weekly, starred review

Picking up where Just One Day ended, Just One Year tells Willem’s side of the story. After spending an amazing day and night with Allyson in Paris that ends in separation, Willem and Allyson are both searching for one another. His story of their year of quiet longing and near misses is a perfect counterpoint to Allyson’s own as Willem undergoes a transformative journey, questioning his path, finding love, and ultimately, redefining himself.
ABOUT
THE BOOK

“Fans will devour this enthralling epilogue to the duology.”
—School Library Journal

After spending one life-changing day in Paris with laid-back Dutch actor Willem De Ruiter, sheltered American good girl Allyson “Lulu” Healey discovered her new lover had disappeared without a trace. *Just One Day* followed Allyson’s quest to reunite with Willem; *Just One Year* chronicled the pair’s year apart from Willem’s perspective. Now, back together at last, this delectable novella reveals the couple’s final chapter.

An *If I Stay* Q&A with Gayle Forman

**The Q:** This book explores some serious themes. Why is this a book for kids and not adults?

**Gayle’s A:** It’s a book for kids precisely because it explores serious themes. Teenagers are grappling with choices about life and love as much as adults, so why shouldn’t their reading reflect that?

**The Q:** What inspired you to write this book?

**Gayle’s A:** Music. Oregon. People I have loved. And unfortunately, the book is inspired by a real-life tragedy that happened several years ago.

**The Q:** This is a book about death, but it’s not depressing. Why is that?

**Gayle’s A:** Maybe because it’s really about the power of love—of family, friends, and music—and therefore it ultimately affirms life.

ABOUT
GAYLE FORMAN

Gayle Forman is an award-winning, internationally bestselling author and journalist. She is the author of *Just One Day* and *Just One Year*, and the companion novella *Just One Night*, as well as the *New York Times* bestsellers *If I Stay*—which was made into a major motion picture of the same name—*Where She Went*, and *I Was Here*. She lives in Brooklyn, New York, with her husband and daughters.

13 THINGS YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW ABOUT ME

BY GAYLE

1. I’m a woman. There seems to be some confusion about my gender, which I find disturbing if you’ve seen my author photo.
2. I used to be a journalist. My first job was for *Seventeen* magazine.
3. When I was little I wanted to grow up to be the sun. I was devastated to learn this was not a career option.
4. Adam from *If I Stay* was inspired by my husband, Nick. No, you cannot meet him.
5. Willem from *Just One Day/Year* was inspired by some Dutch guy who dumped me. (Willem is my revenge.) No, you don’t want to meet him.
6. I bombed my SATs. I still did okay in life.
7. I was once an extra in a Bollywood movie. (And yes, that’s where I got that part of *Just One Year* from.)
8. I have been to 64 countries. I used to travel a lot. I once wrote a book about it. Favorite country visited: India. Least-favorite country: Tonga. (Sorry, Tonga.)
9. I can bake a batch of cupcakes from scratch in under 20 minutes.
10. The worst job I ever had was as a data-entry clerk. Honorable mention to hotel maid and traveling flower seller girl.
11. I have learned, and forgotten, three foreign languages. Regretfully, French is not one of them.
12. I took three years off to travel before college.
13. As a teen, I was so obsessed with Molly Ringwald that I started biting my lip like she did and now I have a permanent scar. And this is why I am a YA author.

Follow Gayle Forman on Twitter 📩@gayleforman
VISIT Penguin.com/YABookClub FOR:

More discussion guides  Excerpts
Hosting Tips  Author exclusives

And more!

Join the conversation with PENGUIN TEEN