



The Best Part of Us Discussion Guide

From the Author

I love my book clubs, for all the reasons you likely enjoy yours -- the friendships, insightful discussions, fresh perspectives about characters, stories and themes, and time spent together over a glass or two of wine and food. When my own groups read and discussed *The Best Part of Us*, I was thrilled to listen to their reactions to and thoughts about the Llyndee family, the island and lake, and the story's messages and themes. I got to know each person in a new way and they enriched my perspectives about the value of fiction in our lives.

I welcome the chance to meet with your group, through Zoom or in person, to discover your unique insights about the story, and create new friendships. Please consider the following questions as starting points for your conversation. I'm happy to tailor questions and topics of discussion for your group's particular area of interest.

Questions or comments? [Contact Sally.](#)

1. Each member of the Llyndee family has a different perspective towards nature, which plays a large role in the individual choices they make:
 - a. Kate focuses on safety because the natural world is fearful to her, but was she always that way? What changed her? If the discovery of the relics and the accident hadn't occurred, do you think Kate would have grown more comfortable on the island? Why or why not?
 - b. How do Dylan and Beth's experiences with Ben affect their perspectives about nature and the choices they make?
 - c. Maegan takes risks in life without much thought, whether in nature or in the "real" world. Why does she hold this perspective?

- d. Is Beth taking a huge risk or playing it safe by living in Chicago?
2. Welsh and Ojibwe customs have many similarities in terms of their reverence towards nature, but different perspectives about their gods and humans' role as a part of nature. What other similarities or differences does the story provide between the Ojibwe and Welsh families, and how does your family incorporate nature into your traditions and habits?
 3. Beth is frustrated and angry at the pecking order with her siblings, and the secrets that they seem to keep from her -- even as an adult. And yet, Maegan and Dylan know that Beth is the only one who can bring the island back into the family's lives. Why?
 4. The novel follows Beth's coming of age as a youngster into a teenager, and again as an adult. How does she evolve over the course of the last two chapters? How do other family members come of age, no matter their age?
 5. Who should have rights to the island? Can anyone really own a piece of nature?
 6. How does working in a steel mill feel to Dylan, the family member most connected to the natural world? What is the worst place you can imagine living for yourself, and where would you go to heal after the experience?
 7. Beth reconnects with the lake as she hikes to the top of Llyndee's Peak, in spite of all that she has shut away. How and why?
 8. Fourteen years is a long time for Beth and Dylan to be apart, yet their relationship falls back into place even with their conflicting reasons for their estrangement. Have you experienced similar separations with family or friends, for whatever reason, and how did you feel if you were fortunate to reconnect?
 9. Do you have a favorite character? Why?
 10. Do you think the entire family will return to the island?
 11. Do the island and lake remind you of a place or piece of nature that you treasure? How do you feel when you're there, and what would you do to protect it?
 12. Those of us fortunate to live in the Great Lakes region share a love of fresh water, a variety of flora and fauna second only to the Amazon Rainforest, and the beauty of four seasons. What do you value most about the natural world where you live?
 13. If *The Best Part of Us* becomes a movie, who would you choose to portray Beth, Taid, Dylan, Maegan, Kate, Evan, Naina, Lily and Mike?

Learn more about *The Best Part of Us* and about the author, Sally Cole-Misch, [visit her website](#).