



Book Club Discussion Questions

Birthday – Meredith Russo

1. Birthday opens with Morgan and Eric at the water park, playing a game to see how long they can each hold their breath. This is also the first moment Morgan decides to tell Eric about her identity. What significance might the water park and holding your breath have in Morgan's journey to coming out of the closet? Why start here?
2. We have a window into Morgan's and Eric's minds and how incredibly close their friendship is. In what ways do we feel this closeness and how their relationship has always been more than just a friendship?
3. Early on, both Morgan and Eric wrestle with the possibility they might be gay. How are gender and sexuality different? Discuss how over the course of the novel their notions of gender and sexuality evolve as two very separate parts of an individual's identity.
4. Early in the book, Peyton uses slurs and targets both Morgan and Eric for their relationship and identities. However, towards the end we see a change in his character. Discuss the underlying emotions and environment that caused him to lash out. Can a person really change and redeem themselves?
5. In Morgan's mom's first tape to Morgan, she says, "You were such a wonderful child." How do the recurring birthday notes help Morgan see herself for who she truly is? What role do the parents in the story play in the development of Morgan's identity, insecurities and final confidence?
6. Football plays a key role throughout the story, whether it concerns Morgan's relationship with her dad, her relationship with Eric, or her relationship with herself. Why is football so important in all of these instances? How does football serve as a symbol of gender and tradition when Morgan is growing and breaking out of stereotypes?
7. When Eric kisses Morgan, she thinks, "This is how a kiss is supposed to make you feel." Jasmine kisses Morgan the same night that Eric kisses Morgan. Discuss the difference between these two moments and how each one uncovers something new about Morgan and Eric and how they relate to each other.
8. After Morgan puts make-up on, she thinks, "And there she is." Talk about this statement. What about this moment is so significant to Morgan? How is finally seeing who she is reflected in the mirror both the climax of her life thus far and what spurs her to spiral into one of her darker moments?
9. When Eric cuts his hair, Susan says, "You look so much better." What role does Susan play in Eric's character development? In what ways are Susan and Morgan different? How do these differences make Morgan a better match for Eric?
10. "My body is a machine, and I'm in control." Discuss the intense turnaround we see in Morgan's personality and behaviour. How does this mirror the anger and violence we originally saw in Peyton? Why does Morgan want her body to be a machine? Can we ever really be totally in control? Discuss the difference between internal and external validation and what role these two things play in Morgan's life when she joins the football team.

