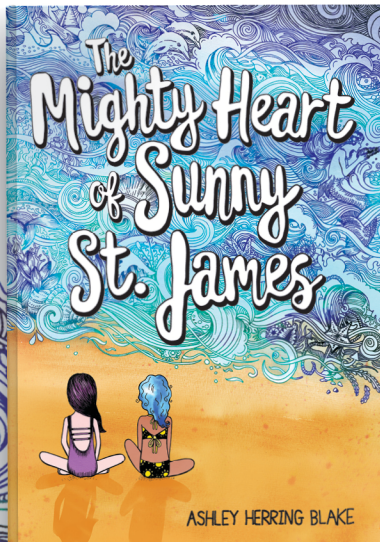


FROM THE STONEWALL HONOR AUTHOR ASHLEY HERRING BLAKE

The Mighty Heart of Sunny St. James



BOOK CLUB GUIDE

When Sunny St. James receives a new heart, she decides to set off on a “New Life plan”:

1) do awesome amazing things she could never do before, 2) find a new best friend, and 3) kiss a boy for the first time. “Her New Life plan” seems to be racing forward, but when she meets her new best friend Quinn, Sunny questions whether she really wants to kiss a boy at all. With the reemergence of her mother, Sunny begins a journey to becoming the new Sunny St. James. *The Mighty Heart of Sunny St. James* is a gorgeous novel about grief, loss, discovery, friendship, and the power in being oneself, no matter what.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. After her heart transplant, Sunny writes up a “New Life plan” to help her do everything she’s always wanted to do. If you were to pick three things to start a “New Life plan,” what would you choose and why?
2. What is the significance of the ocean in the story? Swimming in the ocean is dangerous for Sunny, and she even equates death to the feeling of being underwater (p. 5). But lots of good things happen to Sunny in the ocean as well. What does the ocean symbolize to Sunny?
3. On page 24, Sunny talks about loving Dave’s “mushy songs” about kissing. Why is Sunny excited to kiss someone? Why are crushes so important to her?
4. Sunny struggles to express to others that she wants to kiss both boys and girls. What makes this especially hard for her? Even though Sunny and Quinn both like girls (and like each other), why do they feel they can’t express it to one another?
5. Why does Sunny feel very conflicted when it comes to her heart transplant donor? What are some ways Sunny tries to understand her surgery and express her feelings about this complicated situation?
6. When talking about her guardian, Kate, Sunny says, “A Kate is better than a mom” (p. 119). Why does Sunny think this? In your opinion, what makes a person a mother?
7. Even though Sunny doesn’t completely trust her biological mom, Lena, why is Sunny still drawn to her? For example, why does Sunny want to tell Lena about her crush on Quinn before she tells Kate? What makes Lena easier to talk to?
8. Why is Margot’s betrayal at her slumber party particularly hurtful to Sunny? If Sunny was your best friend, what would you have done differently at Margot’s slumber party?
9. Why does Sunny love to write poetry and songs? What’s your favorite way to express your inner thoughts and emotions?
10. In a letter to Sunny, Quinn writes, “Maybe being scared is just part of liking someone, no matter who it is” (p. 361). What does she mean by this?

