

## Reading Group Guide

1. John feels lonely while among others at his apartment, college reunion, and even sometimes at the Hive. Can a person be lonely if surrounded by friends and family? How does John ultimately overcome his feelings of being apart? Have you ever felt this kind of loneliness? If so, how do you try to overcome it?
2. John juxtaposes two different time periods throughout the book: his childhood and his summer in Montauk. How do the two collide? In what ways do they show how much John has changed, and how do they demonstrate that he hasn't? Are there any patterns or parallels that you see in John's life through the comparison of the two?
3. The book presents many different forms of intimacy, ranging from sexual to platonic. What kinds of intimacies help John with his loneliness? How does he fear his intimacy with others may change with his coming out, and is he right?
4. Even though it is his memoir, John sometimes dives into the thoughts and struggles of other people like Kirsten, Ashley, D.Lo, and Colby, among others. Why do you think he includes their stories in his book? Did this inside look change your perception of anyone, and if so, how? Whose inner thoughts do we not get to see, and why do you think they were excluded?
5. "Yesterday I was seventeen and now I was twenty-seven." John and the other characters struggle with how fast life passes them, with some wanting to reclaim a bit of their youth at "adult summer camp" and college reunions. How does John try to resist speeding through life, and how does it affect him? Do you think it is ever possible to return to the person you were? Have you ever felt this way? If so, what did you do?
6. In the beginning of the book, John speaks of his "master truth that shaped all the others" that love is instantaneous and effortless, but later he says that Matt became the "organizing principle" of his world. Does this represent a change in his understanding of love? How did this belief manifest in the first place? Do you have any organizing principles of your life like this one?
7. John describes his anxieties as "a dark hand pressing onto my chest." Other people in the Montauk house struggle with their own concerns, though for different reasons. How do some of the people in the book cope with these thoughts? What strategies are

successful? Have you experienced these sorts of thoughts before? If so, how did you deal with them?

8. The book begins with, “Our summer began in the winter.” It ends with, “Our summer begins in the winter.” How has the “our” changed? What else has changed, and what do you think this means for John?
9. Many people in the book find meaning in patterns throughout their lives, like the number 11, red birds, and Ashley’s certainty that important people circle her life. Is it possible to see these patterns before they happen? How do these patterns affect the characters’ perception of their own lives? Do these patterns indicate a sort of predestination, or do you think they only occur because people look for them?
10. By the end of the book, John has learned to embrace his new identity and come out to his loved ones. Have you ever felt like you had to hide a part of your identity from your friends and family? How did you deal with it? Did you end up telling them about it?