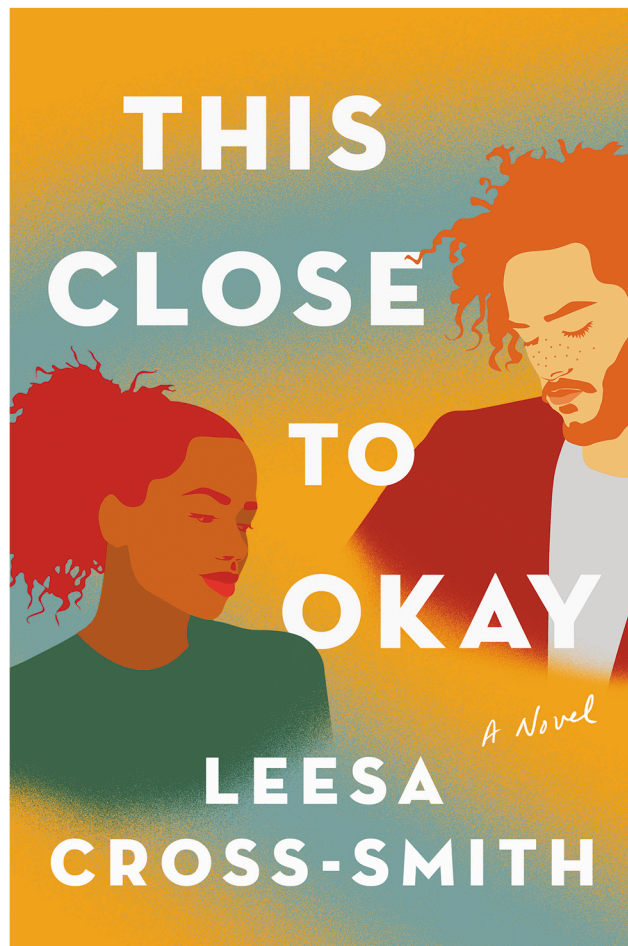


# The Perfect Pick for Your Book Club!



THIS CLOSE TO OKAY by Leesa Cross-Smith  
Fiction • 320 pages • Hardcover 9781538715376 • \$27.00/\$34.00 CAN  
Ebook 9781538715352 • \$13.99/\$17.99 CAN



From the award-winning writer Roxane Gay calls "a consummate storyteller" comes a cathartic novel about the life-changing weekend shared between two strangers.

On a rainy October night in Kentucky, recently divorced therapist Tallie Clark is on her way home when she spots a man precariously standing on the edge of a bridge. Without a second thought, Tallie pulls over and jumps out of the car into the pouring rain. She convinces the man to join her for a cup of coffee, and he eventually agrees to come back to her house, where he finally, reluctantly, shares his first name: Emmett.

Over the course of the emotionally-charged weekend that follows, Tallie makes it her mission to provide a safe and comfortable space for Emmett, although she doesn't confess that she works as a therapist. However, Emmett is not the only one who needs help—and he has secrets of his own.

Alternating between Tallie and Emmett's perspectives as they inch closer to the truth of what brought Emmett to the bridge, *This Close To Okay* is an uplifting, powerful story of two strangers brought together by wild chance at the moment they need it the most.

"[*This Close to Okay*] hits the ground running. Cross-Smith writes tenderly about the trial and error of intimacy and draws you in with enormous warmth and control."

—RAVEN LEILANI,  
*New York Times* bestselling author of *Luster*

"Leesa Cross-Smith is such a beguiling writer and her skills are on full display in *So We Can Glow*...Unapologetically for women, about women, a love letter to who we are, so we can glow as brightly as we dare."

—ROXANE GAY,  
*New York Times* bestselling author

"The woman throughout this collection are constantly being revealed by a powerful inner light"

—*New York Times Book Review*

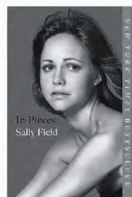
#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Leesa Cross-Smith is a homemaker and the author of *Every Kiss A War*, *Whiskey & Ribbons*, *So We Can Glow* and *This Close To Okay*. She lives in Kentucky with her husband and their two teenagers. Find more at [LeesaCrossSmith.com](http://LeesaCrossSmith.com)

# Discussion Questions

1. *This Close to Okay* alternates between Tallie and Emmett's points of view. How does this narrative choice affect your reading of the story and your understanding of the characters?
2. "She knew healing—if and when it happened—happened in increments, the same sneaky way the days got longer and shorter. Barely noticeable at times, slow" (page 137). What are some of the pivotal moments in this gradual healing process, for both Tallie and Emmett?
3. What are Tallie and Emmett's coping mechanisms for stress, anxiety, and grief? What kind of support systems do they each have in their lives, both before and after the events of the novel? Where do these support systems fall short of their needs?
4. When Tallie says Emmett seems like a kitten, Emmett reflects that, "Remarks like that felt like criticisms coming from women" (29). How do gender norms in our society intersect with mental health? In what ways might this story be different if Emmett were a cisgender woman?
5. One of Tallie's potential new therapy clients is "a black woman who was struggling with the stress of living in America and the long-lasting damaging effects of racism" (111). How does systemic racism play a part in both Emmett and Tallie's lives? What moments can you think of where the threat of racism causes or compounds their stress or anxiety?
6. In his email to Tallie/Emmett, Joel says about his affair: "You may feel like there are parts of me you don't know, yes, but you do know the heart of me. I separated myself...in order to deceive you" (77). In what ways do different characters compartmentalize themselves, and why?
7. Art plays an important role in both Tallie and Emmett's lives, and there are references to specific works in the novel. For instance, Tallie has hung pictures of Courbet's *L'Origine du monde* and Klimt's *Frau bei der Selbstbefriedigung* by her bed, and Emmett references Francisco Goya's *Saturn Devouring His Son*, Hieronymus Bosch's *Last Judgement*, and Francis Bacon's *Three Studies for a Crucifixion*. What do you think is the significance of including these pieces?
8. Although Emmett is innocent of his wife and daughter's deaths, he is convicted and sent to a maximum-security prison. What factors lead to his wrongful conviction? Why does Emmett have a harder time emotionally after his release?
9. What role does religion play in Tallie and Emmett's lives?
10. In what ways do Emmett and Tallie each find closure over the course of the novel?

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