

# STOLEN

## Reading Group Guide

1. What were you like as a teenager? Did you also struggle with your mental health or did you know anyone who did? What do you think would have been a more effective methods to address Elizabeth's sadness and anger?
2. Elizabeth realizes many of her counselors had completed the wilderness program themselves. What does that say about its lasting effects, and the lies these teens might have used to protect themselves both during the experience and in its aftermath?
3. Why did Elizabeth feel she needed to lie about her experiences? How does that speak to the efficacy of the methods employed by her counsellors?
4. Somehow, Elizabeth remains hopeful through much of her time in the woods. She looks forward to reconnecting with her old friends and returning to the sports she once loved. What are some memories, coping mechanisms, etc. that you would use to keep going in these difficult circumstances?
5. Elizabeth learns a powerful lesson from Victor Frankl's book *Man's Search for Meaning*, one that she carries with her for the remainder of her time in the woods. What book has similarly bolstered you?
6. How do you think the wilderness program affected her and once at Carlbrook, how do you think it affected the female students Elizabeth called "Ponies?" What do you think this says about society's expectations of young women?
7. We see multiple examples throughout the book, especially at Carlbrook, of people like Maya that tried to buy into this system. Do you think they tried to convince themselves that this was a positive experience to survive, or do you think they truly believed it was for the best and it would lead to a positive change upon graduating? What would you do if you were put into this type of situation?
8. What do you think drove Randall to found Carlbrook? Do you think he really believed he built a better alternative to the behavioral school he attended as a child?
9. Adjusting back to the world was difficult for Elizabeth and her fellow students. In what ways did Carlbrook condition them, such as encouraging them to approach everything in such a confrontational style, in ways that left them ill-equipped to deal with conflict in the real world? Similarly, how do think the traumas she experienced at Carlbrook shaped Elizabeth's daily activities and the world she returned to in the years after she left the school?
10. Do you think these schools' prey on scared and frustrated parents? How are the parents also victims to this system? Given the prevalence of these behavioral programs, why do you think it has taken so long for the true horrors of these experiences to come to light?