

## BOOK CLUB KIT

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) Does this novel's depiction of high school resonate with you? If so, how? If not, why not?
- 2) This novel delves into serious subject matter, but Nina's voice is often light and funny, with references to pop culture. Why do you think the author made this choice?
- 3) How similar are your internet experiences to those Nina describes? Do you think she would engage with Ronald if she had met him in person rather than online?
- 4) Do you think the cultural and social mores of the '90s backdrop affected Nina's trajectory? How might the story look different had the high school portions taken place today?
- 5) How do you see Nina's gender playing a role in the novel? Her race? How do the intersections of her identities shape her experience in the novel?
- 6) How would you describe Nina's high school friendship with Amy? Are they good friends to each other? Why do you think Amy says Nina isn't? Considering your own high school relationships, can you see yourself reflected in Nina or Amy? How does this difficult age shape friendships?
- 7) Consider Nina's experiences as a teacher, especially with Caleb, Jessica, and Nur. Is it possible for someone underage to harass an adult? What would you do in her situation? Why?

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 8) What echoes of Nina-the-child do we see in Nina-the-adult? Are there any aspects of her story that you still have questions about? How do those uncertainties shape your sense of Nina as a character, and the novel as a whole? Why do you think Bhat left some questions unanswered?
- 9) How does Nina's relationship with her parents evolve over the course of the novel? In what ways does it shape the choices she makes and how she carries herself? How did your own relationship with your parents growing up affect your choices?
- 10) We learn that Nina has told very few people about Mr. Mackenzie's abuse and that the therapist she does tell is dismissive. Where do we see the fallout of this abuse and the corresponding dismissals in Nina's later life?
- 11) What role does silence play in the novel and in Nina's life? At what points do we see Nina unable to speak up for herself or others? What are the reasons for Nina's silence, and what are the consequences?
- 12) The phrase "the most precious substance on earth" is used to describe platinum when Mr. Rees renames their school band the Platinum Band. Why do you think this is the title of the book?

## Mina's Mix CD

"Ahead by a Century" - Tragically Hip "Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness" - Smashing Pumpkins "Barrett's Privateers" - Stan Rogers "Naveed" - Our Lady Peace "The Rest of My Life" - Sloan "First Suite in E-flat" - Gustav Holst "Visions of Sunset" - Shawn Stockman "Dangerous Type" - Letters to Cleo "Landslide" - Smashing Pumpkins "Karma Police" - Radiohead "Baltimore" - Nina Simone "Ek Ladki Ko Dekha Toh" - Kumar Sanu "I Don't Want to Wait" - Paula Cole "Everyone's Tired" - Kuri "It" - Rich Aucoin

Click here to listen to the playlist!

# Nina's Guide to Halifax

#### THE WAVE

"The Wave is a large sculpture on the Halifax Waterfront in the shape of an ocean wave. You're not supposed to climb it, but everybody does. On summer Saturdays, children crawl across its surface, their parents anxiously watching to make sure they don't fall and crack their heads. Amy and I like to perch on the crest of the wave and joke about pushing kids off."

"We could climb to the top of Citadel Hill and take the historic guided tour-something I have always wanted to do, but Amy refuses to go with me. 'Would you visit Citadel Hill with me?' I type, and Ronald replies, 'Yes,' followed by an indecipherable emoticon. So I type my phone number in one swoop of momentum, without any spaces or dashes."

#### CITADEL HILL

#### <u>OBLADEE</u>

"Date #3 is with a doctor. We go for a glass of wine at Obladee, a local wine bar, since coffee dates might as well be job interviews—except if you get the job, you must marry the interviewer and have sex with him for the rest of your life. The doctor has red hair and sunburned arms. Shouldn't doctors know about sunscreen?"

# Nina's Guide to Halifax

# POINT PLEASANT PARK

That week, I add a long scene to a story I'm writing about a girl who gets dumped by her boyfriend and then buys ice cream at a convenience store near Point Pleasant Park. As she sits on a bench by the ocean, she becomes so engrossed in the rare sight of a crested caracara alighting on a white birch that she lets the ice cream melt.

"But have you been to the Maritime Museum? You definitely must visit the Maritime Museum," Nishant tells her. This is a bizarre recommendation coming from a teenager. The best thing about the Maritime Museum is the talking parrot that for some reason lives in the lobby. It's otherwise mostly boats

MARITIME MUSEUM

### Other Landmarks:

**COWS ICE CREAM** 

HALIFAX SEAPORT FARMERS MARKET

PIZZA CORNER

THE COMMONS

THE HYDROSTONE