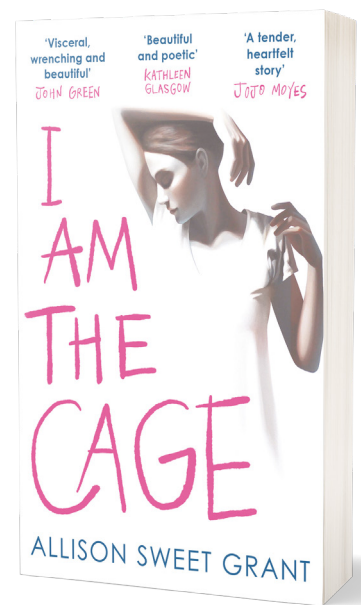


I AM THE CAGE

DISCUSSION GUIDE



THEMES

1. How are the following themes explored in the novel? Trust and guilt
 - a. Vulnerability and indifference
 - b. Shame, punishment and reward
 - c. Physical and emotional isolation
2. How is consent examined in the novel?
3. How is identity examined in the novel?
4. In what way is chronic pain discussed in the novel, and where is it most evident?

CHARACTERS

5. How do the THEN flashback chapters shape your understanding of Justine and her choices in the present story?
6. What is the importance of Justine's relationship with Kacey?
7. How is Kacey's point of view explored throughout the book?
8. How does Justine's relationship with her mother in the THEN chapters shape her relationship with her mother in the present story?
9. What purpose does Noah serve in the story?
10. What is the purpose of Justine's relationship with Ms. Conti?
11. In what ways does Elisabeth grow from the beginning of the present story to the end?
12. What do you think happens in regards to Elisabeth's relationship with Noah, Kacey, and/or her mother after the novel concludes?

SETTING

1. Consider the significance of the novel's setting. How does it relate to the main character in the present story and how does it relate to the main character in the THEN story? What might be the connection between the two?
2. How does the author use the setting to further the goals/desires of the characters?
3. How does the setting contribute to Elisabeth's character arc?

POETRY/LANGUAGE/LITERATURE

1. Do you feel the poetry added to the general atmosphere of the book and why or why not?
2. Why does Justine/Elisabeth use poetry to convey her emotions, and where is it most and least powerful?
3. What is the purpose of the 'Forgotten Girl' poem (p203) and how does it relate to Elisabeth's experience in the lighthouse (pp252-256)?
4. Discuss the significance of Marlowe's *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* as it's referenced in the novel—why is this work so meaningful to her and how does it relate to her own story?
5. What is the "forbidden knowledge" that Elisabeth is looking for?
6. Discuss the author's use of symbolism throughout the novel. For example, on p48, Elisabeth demonstrates great sympathy for a bird. Why is this significant?
7. What is the significance of the "junk drawer" metaphor used throughout the novel?
8. What is the impact of the poem 'Fixated' (p293) at the end of the novel?