



# *The Beauty of Us*

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

A campus YA novel with a diverse cast of characters. Evoking elements of *My Dark Vanessa* (Kate Elizabeth Russell) and *The Red Word* (Sarah Henstra), this novel unravels the complexities of consent, racism, power dynamics, social anxiety, and the struggles with sexuality that so many teens face in an accessible and story-forward way. Masterfully crafted, *The Beauty of Us* is a gripping novel about surviving hardship, the power of friendship, and growing up.

1 How do the alternating perspectives in the novel affect how you feel about the story? What did you like or dislike about having the perspective change with each chapter?

2 How do you think being far from home exacerbated the characters' struggles to fit in at Thornton? How do you think it affected the issues they were experiencing at home with their families?

3 Each character had a very different relationship with sexuality. How do you think that exploration was key to what each character was personally dealing with in the book?

4 At what point did you realize that Leesa was in a dangerous situation? What kind of support and care do you think she needed from the people around her at that time?

5

The novel is set in the mid-'80s. How are some of the issues presented here (i.e., sexual abuse, eating disorders, racism, homophobia) similar or different today? What has changed and what hasn't changed in forty years?

6

Did the time period affect how you viewed the characters' decisions? If so, how?

7

Why do you think Nahla needed Mademoiselle Leblanc's guidance to discover what was happening with Leesa? Do you think she would have had the courage to notice what Leesa was going through without a push from others?

8

How do you think the fact that Leesa had bullied Zahabiya and all of her friends affected their opinion of Leesa and what she was going through? Do you think that made it difficult for them to come to her aid in the end? Do you think it made it difficult for Leesa to accept their help?