

Book Club Discussion Guide



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If I Stay: a novel

By Gayle Forman

About the author:

Award-winning author and journalist Gayle Forman has written several bestselling novels for young adults, including the Just One Series, *I Was Here*, *Where She Went* and the #1 New York Times bestseller *If I Stay*, which has been translated into more than 40 languages and in 2014 was adapted into a major motion picture. Gayle published *Leave Me*, her first novel starring adults, in 2016 and her latest novel *I Have Lost My Way* was released in March of 2018. Gayle's essays and nonfiction work has appeared in publications like *The New York Times*, *Elle*, *The Nation* and *Time*. She lives in Brooklyn, New York, with her husband and daughters.

Source: Author's website: (<https://www.gayleforman.com/>)

About this book:

On a day that started like any other...

Mia had everything: a loving family, a gorgeous, adoring boyfriend, and a bright future full of music and full of choices. Then, in an instant, almost all of that is taken from her. Caught between life and death, between a happy past and an unknowable future, Mia spends one critical day contemplating the one decision she has left—the most important decision she'll ever make.

Simultaneously tragic and hopeful, this is a romantic, riveting and ultimately uplifting story about memory, music, living, dying, loving.

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Discussion Questions:

1. What are the themes of the book? (Possibilities: choice, sacrifice, grief and loss, family, music.) Which of the themes are “major” and which are “minor”? Choose two themes and analyze them over the course of the novel. How are these themes connected? Do they apply to a single character, or to multiple characters? When do they emerge and how do they develop as the story progresses?
2. Discuss the use of point of view in the story. To continue the first person, present tense point of view that's introduced in the opening scene, the author has Mia narrate the story in an unusual way. Why might the author have chosen this technique instead of writing the entire story from the third person point of view? How different would the story have been if someone else had been telling it? Choose an important passage from the book and rewrite it from another character's point of view.
3. Discuss Adam's feelings about asking Mia to stay. Is Adam's request the reason she decides to live? Is Adam's request selfless? Find passages that describe Adam's character and his relationship to Mia.
4. What do readers learn about Mia and her relationship with her family, and with Adam, in the pages before the accident? How are these initial observations confirmed in the rest of the book? How does the author use the other characters to reinforce what we believe about Mia and her family and friends? Do you feel Mia's choice more difficult because of what you know about her family?
5. When Gran and Gramps are at the hospital, a nurse tells them that Mia is “running the show.” Is it Mia's choice to live or die? Does Mia believe this? What do other

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characters believe? Explain how the flashback scenes help us understand Mia's thoughts about living or dying.

6. Discuss the meanings of "sacrifice" and "choice." How are they different? How are they similar? Is sacrifice part of your definition of love? What is the best way to make a difficult choice? How do you feel after you've made an important choice? What decisions must Adam and Mia consider? Are these choices or sacrifices?
7. Compare and contrast a point in your life when you felt in control of your future with a time when you felt powerless. What coping skills do you have to help deal with personal tragedy? How would/has tragedy changed you?

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