

Discussion Guide

1. Mirroring a trend among college women, Summer Cassidy feels casual “hook-ups” will help her avoid relationships that could derail her academic dreams. Her mentor, Claire Dunham, tells Summer that “Someone’s career has to come first, and it’s always his while yours collapses faster than a sinkhole.” Are those fears justified?
2. What are Summer’s weaknesses and strengths? Has she grown by the end of the novel?
3. Summer has a complicated relationship with her mother. What do you think causes the rift?
4. How do Dayita, Mrs. Patel, and Ty enrich Summer’s life?
5. A number of characters in the novel blame themselves for Christmas (Chrissie) Cassidy’s death. How does their guilt, real or imagined, motivate their actions?
6. In what ways does Isaac Harewood represent both some admirable and despicable qualities found in American corporate culture?
7. How do government regulations help ensure our quality of life? Are they ever also harmful?
8. Discuss the role lobbyist Bailey Douglass plays in the novel. How important are lobbyists in American governance today?
9. What ethical issues does the novel raise regarding university research? Do you accept “studies” you read about or hear about on the news as truth?
10. Where does your drinking water come from? Are you aware of any threats to it? How safe is it? Do you use bottled water, and if so, what are your reasons?
11. What was the most exciting or interesting scene in the novel for you?