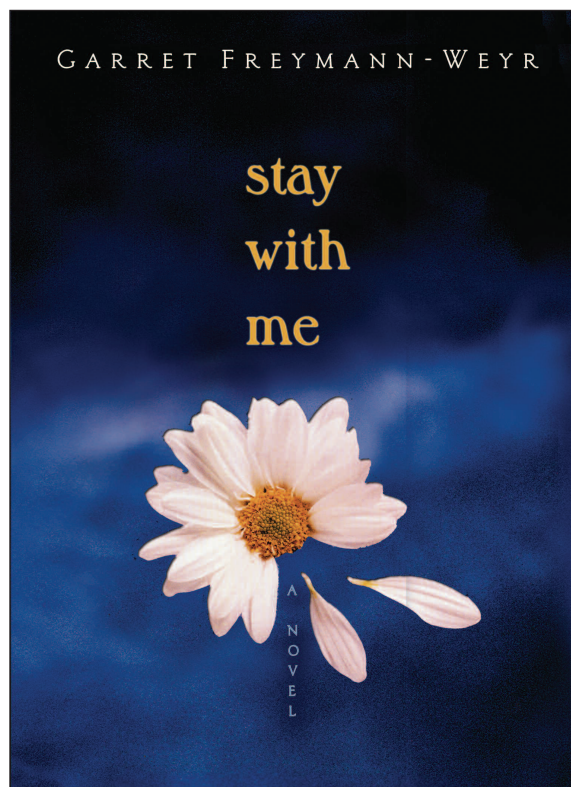


HOUGHTON MIFFLIN CHILDREN'S BOOKS

A DISCUSSION GUIDE



Stay With Me

by Garret Freymann-Weyr

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About the Book

Sixteen-year-old Leila Abranel was born some twenty years after her sisters. Her elegant sisters from her father's first marriage have lives full of work, love affairs, and travel. Leila doesn't know either of them very well, but she loves hearing about them—details of Rebecca's ruined marriage, Clare's first job, and the strings of unsuitable boyfriends.

When Rebecca kills herself, Leila wants to know why. She starts by spending time with Clare and finally comes to know her as a person instead of a story. With Clare's reluctant help, Leila tracks down Rebecca's favorite places and tries to find her sister's friends. Along the way, Leila meets Eamon. Eamon is thirty-one and writes for television. He thinks Leila is beautiful and smart, but he does not, he tells her, date teenagers. And yet, the months go by and Leila turns seventeen and learns that you can love someone you are not dating.

Maybe letting Eamon love her back is a mistake. Maybe she'll never know why Rebecca did what she did. Maybe, Leila, decides, most people have a hard time figuring out which way is left or knowing when to let go and when to stay.

Discussion Questions

1. The book opens with Leila saying, "I don't think this is where anyone else would begin, but it's the exact right place for me."

Where else could the story have started? What would change if it started somewhere else? Why does the story begin with the loss of Janie, rather than the loss of Rebecca?

2. Janie was obviously important to Leila. Is it possible that divorce expands a family? How?

Does Leila view Janie as a mother figure or as a link to understanding her father and her sisters?

How is Janie different and/or similar to Leila's mother, Elsa?

3. New York is never mentioned by name in the novel. Leila refers to it simply as the city. How are cities important in her family history? Does the city play a role in the story? If so, how?
4. Although Leila's parents are gone for most of the novel, both Clare and Raphael try to behave like her parents. In what ways are they the same as parents and in what ways are they different?
5. How do the adults in Leila's life support her? (Her mother, father, Eamon, Raphael, Clare)? How should adults support the teens in their lives?
6. How has the loss of Rebecca changed the relationship between Claire and Leila?
7. One of the themes in this novel is "great love". Is "great love" different than "the love that lasts"? Is Eamon Leila's great love? Could she be his? Would Leila have fallen in love with Eamon if Rebecca hadn't killed herself? Does their age difference have an impact on their relationship? If so, how? How do you think he feels, finding himself in a relationship with a teenage girl?
8. The adults in Leila's life find great meaning in their work. "Work is where they all go to be who they are." Rebecca, it seems, had a hard time finding happiness or safety in her careers as a nurse and a baker. How important is work to identity? To coming of age? How does work influence our families and our relationships?
9. Leila is dyslexic. Does her dyslexia affect how she sees herself? How does she think other people view her? At the end of the novel, has Leila's view of her own intelligence changed?
10. How does Rebecca's suicide affect how Leila views Rebecca and their relationship? Does she ever find out why Rebecca killed herself? What effect does suicide have on her family? Does suicide affect people differently than an accidental or natural death? Why?

About the Author

Garret Freymann-Weyr grew up in New York City and often sets her books there. She went to college at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and received an MFA in film from New York University. She has written four books for young adults, including *My Heartbeat*, which won a Printz Honor for excellence in literature for young adults. Her books have been published in numerous countries including the Netherlands, Japan, and China. She currently lives outside Washington, D.C., with her husband.

Praise for *Stay With Me*:

- ★"Freymann-Weyr's prose always has an incandescent intensity. Impossible...to put down."
—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review
 - ★"Elegant and sophisticated. This novel pushes the markers of YA fiction onward and upward."
—*Booklist*, starred review
 - ★"There are rich details throughout Freymann-Weyr's complex novel."
—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review
- "Freymann-Weyr explores complex relationships in a manner that is both sensitive and compelling. A sophisticated and interesting coming-of-age tale."
—*School Library Journal*
- "Leila's quiet, unshakable sense of self imbues her character with a straightforward maturity rarely seen in female teen protagonists."
—*The Horn Book*