

GOODBYE STRANGER

Parent/Child Discussion Guide: Things to Think About as a Family

★ “This novel not only sensitively explores togetherness, aloneness, betrayal and love, it also acknowledges something crucial to the business of growing up: how anyone’s personal ‘we of me’ might look different a little while from now, and later still, different again.”

—Meg Wolitzer (*The Interestings, Belzhar*) for *The New York Times Book Review*

- Describe the friendship between Bridge, Tab, and Emily. Explain how their friendship changes in seventh grade.
- Define *family*. Contrast Bridge’s, Emily’s, Tab’s, and Sherm’s families.
- Describe Bridge’s relationship with Jamie. When does their relationship reach a turning point? How does Jamie grow up by the end of the novel?
- Bridge’s real name is Bridget. Explain why she wants to be called Bridge after the accident. What is the purpose of Bridge’s cat ears?
- The seventh graders are required to join a club to give them someplace to belong. Discuss why “belonging” is especially important in middle school and where you feel you belong.
- Bridge is inexperienced in matters of the heart, and is confused about the difference between like and love. Her mother once told her “love was a kind of music. One day, you could just . . . hear it” (p. 7). Trace Bridge and Sherm’s relationship throughout the novel. Compare and contrast Bridge and Sherm’s relationship to that of Emily and Patrick.
- Sherm gets a picture texted to him. How does he do the responsible thing by telling Mr. Ramos? Explain what Sherm means when he says, “I was making it *less bad*” (p. 160). Discuss how doing the right thing is sometimes lonely. Whom would you report bullying or cyberbullying to?

(turn the page for more)



- At the end of the novel, it is revealed that Celeste is the anonymous narrator of the “Valentine’s Day” sections. Why does Celeste choose February 14 to skip school? How is she dealing with betrayal? What does she mean when she asks, “Is one part of you allowed to forgive the other?” (p. 257)
- When Bridge is dismissed from the hospital, a nurse says, “You must have been put on this earth for a reason, little girl, to have survived” (p. 3). What does she realize about her place on this earth by the end of the novel? What is your place on earth?
- Do you define yourself by your group of friends, your grades, your appearance, sports, or talents? What defines you?
- Does your identity change when you are alone, with friends, with family, at school, or online?
- Bridge, Tab, and Emily formed a set in fourth grade because Bridge decided she was allergic to clubs. The girls agreed to one rule: “No fighting” (p. 15). What are the rules, if any, in your group of friends?
- The Berperson says the most important thing is to be true to yourself. What does it mean to be true to you?
- Celeste had a friend named Vinny who played mean games like the tasting game and truth or dare. How do you stand up for yourself and others when friends are being mean?
- Emily is a girl who feels good about herself. Everyone else likes her too, until a private picture becomes public. “But the bad part wasn’t that everyone was looking at the picture. I mean, it was weird and not great. But the bad part was that it felt like they were making fun of my feeling good about the picture. Of me *liking* myself” (p. 172). Why do you think Emily’s classmates turned on her? Is it socially acceptable for a girl to feel good about herself?
- The ongoing competition between Jamie and Alex results in Jamie singing to his crush in his underwear in a public place. Alex is a great example of a frenemy. How do you protect yourself from this kind of friendship?
- You are learning how to be a friend and you may make some mistakes along the way, just as Celeste betrayed her friendship with Gina. What does it mean to be a true friend?

Discover the truth in friendship.
Read all of the *New York Times* bestselling novels by Rebecca Stead



Guide prepared by Pat Scales, a children’s literature consultant in Greenville, South Carolina, and Laura Barbour, MA.

**WENDY
L A M B
B O O K S**

Illustration © 2015 by Marcos Chin