

Her story.

# PLANNA

Her choice.

**DEB CALETTI**

Printz Honor-winning author of *A Heart in a Body in the World*

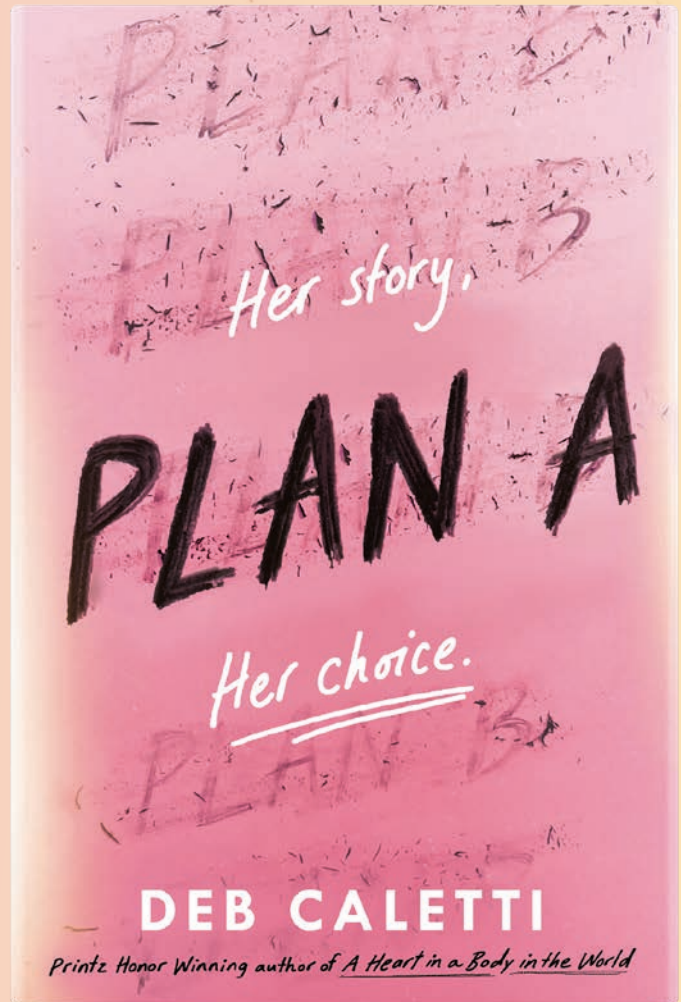
## DISCUSSION GUIDE

# About the Book

Ivy can't entirely believe it when the plus sign appears on the test. She didn't even know it was possible from . . . what happened. But it is, and now she is, and instead of spending the summer working at the local drugstore and swooning over her boyfriend, Lorenzo, suddenly she's planning a cross-country road trip to her grandmother's house on the West Coast, where she can legally obtain an abortion.

Escaping her small Texas town and the judgment of her friends and neighbors, Ivy hits the road with Lorenzo, who, determined to make the best of their "abortion road trip love story," has transformed the journey into a whirlwind tour of the world: all the way from Paris, Texas, to Rome, Oregon . . . and every rest-stop diner and corny roadside attraction along the way.

And while Ivy can't run from the incessant pressure of others' opinions about her body or from her own expectations and insecurities, she discovers a new world of healing and hope. As the women she encounters share their stories, she chips away at the stigma, silence, and shame surrounding reproductive rights as those collective experiences guide her to her own rightful destination.



Themes: Contemporary Issues,  
Emotions & Feelings, Love & Romance

# About the Author

Deb Caletti is the award-winning and critically acclaimed author of over twenty books for adults and young adults, including *Honey, Baby, Sweetheart*, a finalist for the National Book Award; *A Heart in a Body in the World*, a Michael L. Printz Honor Book; *Girl, Unframed*; and *One Great Lie*. Her books have also won the Josette Frank Award for Fiction, the Washington State Book Award, and numerous other state awards and honors, and she was a finalist for the PEN USA Award. She lives with her family in Seattle.



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# Discussion Questions

## Stigma

1. Ivy learns through her journey that every woman has a story, and along the way many share their experience with having had or not had an abortion. Though most of the women know each other, they may not have told each other these stories. How did it help Ivy to hear these women's stories?
2. Why do you think it is so hard to talk about reproductive health care?
3. What needs to change in our society so that there can be more open and frank conversations around reproductive and sexual health?

## Autonomy

1. Esilda tells Ivy, "Agency over your own body is, like, the smallest, most basic right." (p. 156) Why is agency over one's body so important, and why do you think it is a right that is so often under attack?
2. At the start of the book, Ivy points out how hard it is for those with female anatomy to get birth control. Where she is in Texas, she has to get parental permission if she is younger than eighteen and unmarried. For those with male anatomy, contraception is easy to access. Why do you think this is? What are the implications of this?
3. Ivy draws a parallel between her pregnancy and her mother's cancer: they both had something in their bodies that they really wanted gone, but both also needed and wanted to "feel like a regular woman just busy being alive." (p. 191) Why do you think feeling normal was so important to Ivy's mom during her fight against cancer? Why is it important to Ivy?

## Consent

1. Consent is often discussed regarding physical or sexual interactions, but it plays a role in many emotional and social aspects of our lives as well. Lorenzo wants to help Ivy, but Ivy doesn't think she wants to be "rescued" by him. Why is it important that Ivy accepts his help on her terms? Discuss how consent comes in many forms.
2. Ivy hears many stories from family members and friends about their own abortions or pregnancies. Why do you think it is important to Ivy that she doesn't share other's stories?

## Power

1. Caletti chose to have Ivy read *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy, a book about a sixteen-year-old girl who gets pregnant by the son of her wealthy employer. What are the parallels in Ivy's and Tess's stories? Discuss the power dynamics at play in both situations. How do power dynamics affect consent?
2. Ivy posits: "Why does it suddenly seem like there's a sea of abortion stories? Because there's always been a sea of stories about women and sex. Stories about women and the choices they make, and *don't* make—those, too. There are the stories she's never told, but there are the stories *he* does tell, that *they* tell, *about* her." (p. 255) Why do you think some people feel entitled to tell other's stories? How do power structures within our society dictate who creates narratives and how they are received?

## Boundaries

1. Ivy discusses how, in her grandmother's shop, people would visit and feel a sense of ownership over it, wanting to take things or be in spaces that weren't theirs. She asks, "Why is it that

boundaries always make some people want to cross them? Why is it hard to understand what is yours and what isn't?" (p. 240) Why do you think people cross boundaries? Where else does this happen in the book? How do you protect your own boundaries?

2. Ivy has two friends who she has been close with since childhood, but their friendship changes once she discovers she is pregnant. This is hard for Ivy. How do boundaries play into this? How do you create and maintain boundaries with those closest to you?

### Privilege

1. Ivy acknowledges that she has certain kinds of privileges that others don't have; she has the ability to go to Oregon to get the health care she needs and she has support throughout her

journey. Consider those who don't have similar means and resources. What options do they have?

2. At one of their stops, Lorenzo states, "You kinda understand people holding tight to their beliefs, when beliefs are the things they have the most of." (p. 194) Ivy responds in her head, "Money is power, but what do you do when you don't have much of it? Beliefs are free." Discuss.

### Choice

1. Before Esilda tells Ivy her story, she gives Ivy the choice to hear it. Why is this important? What is the burden of hearing someone's story? Choice is a central theme in this novel. How else does Caletti explore choices and their consequences?
2. At the end of the book, Ivy decides to move to Oregon. Why did she resist at first? Why did she change her mind?

## Extension Activities

### Legacy Stories

After her retirement, Ivy's aunt starts a genealogy project and is working on creating a family tree and researching their family members' stories. Ivy learns that there are generations of women who have made a choice to have or not have children. Create your own legacy tree. It can be about your family or anyone close to you. What can you learn about the people that came before and how they shaped your loved ones' lives? See if there is a chance to interview some of these people to learn more about them and the people who shaped their lives.

### Music

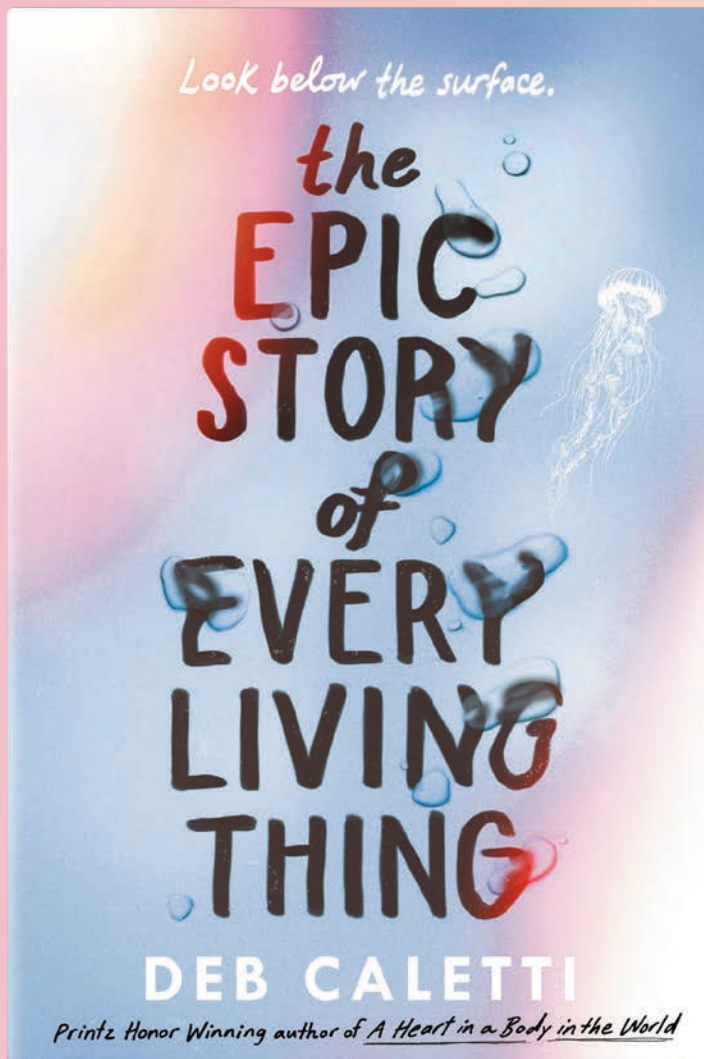
Both Ivy's mother and grandmother create a playlist of songs for Ivy to get her from one place to another. Create your own playlist to encourage yourself in times of hardship, or create a playlist for a friend or loved one who has something challenging to get through.

### Nature and Art

Ivy and Lorenzo visit a lot of natural wonders, like the Dinosaur National Monument in Utah, the Craters of the Moon National Monument in Idaho, and the Pillars of Rome in Oregon—all reflections of Earth's long history. Ivy says, "So many stories in the layers, even if the rock is silent." (p. 260) Take time to find natural wonders that resonate with your story. Create a collage, vision board, or art piece inspired by these places.



# Praise for THE EPIC STORY OF EVERY LIVING THING



★ "AN EPIC TALE of life, love, and identity."

—Kirkus Reviews, starred review

★ "BIGHEARTED."

—Publishers Weekly, starred review

★ "Caletti examines WHAT MAKES A PERSON."

—SLJ, starred review

★ "A HEARTWARMING and AUTHENTIC STORY."

—Booklist, starred review

★ "SOPHISTICATED."

—BookPage, starred review

Danielle Jones is a library youth services manager in Portland.