

READ & DISCUSS

NEW ADULT FICTION

CAFÉ DOORS

Book Club & Discussion Guide

When does independence become isolation?

For book clubs, reading groups, classrooms, and readers who are not finished talking yet.

Before You Begin

Café Doors is a novel about the stories we build around leaving, the objects we use as proof, and the frightening possibility that staying can be an act of strength rather than surrender. These questions move from character and symbolism into the harder territory of trust, accountability, and chosen family.

Discussion Questions

1. At eighteen, Liza adopts the rule 'leave first.' How understandable is that rule given her history in foster care? At what point does a survival strategy become a limitation?

2. The six apartment doors begin as Liza's private evidence that she was real to someone. What does the wall mean to her at the beginning of the novel, and how does that meaning change as the doors come down?

3. Mateo insists that Liza did not receive his door; she took it. What does that distinction reveal about ownership inside a shared relationship? Who gets to keep the objects - and the stories - after a breakup?

4. Liza repeatedly uses facts, systems, rituals, music, and objects to regulate what she cannot easily say. Which of these habits felt protective to you, and which felt like avoidance?

5. Camila's presence is often quiet rather than dramatic. Why is her willingness to stay so difficult for Liza to receive? What does the novel suggest about the difference between rescuing someone and simply remaining present?

6. Several former partners return not merely to reclaim physical doors, but to challenge Liza's version of their shared past. Did your understanding of Liza change as those perspectives accumulated? Which return affected you most?

7. Natalya tells Liza that she hides in metaphor. Is the wall of doors a work of art, a defense mechanism, a public confession, or all three? Does turning pain into art give the artist ownership of everyone involved?

8. Liza eventually realizes that telling a story about someone else's heartbreak is not the same as owning it. Where should the ethical boundary lie when personal experience includes other people?

9. The café itself becomes a form of home, community, and chosen family. What makes a place become home: ownership, routine, memory, people, or the willingness to be known there?

10. Liza is accustomed to being the person who needs nothing. How does her relationship with Camila change when she begins to notice that Camila also needs care? Why is reciprocity important to Liza's growth?

11. When the doors are finally removed, the brick wall remains structurally sound. What does that image suggest about the stories Liza believed were holding her together?

12. By the end, Liza is asked to choose what feels honest rather than what feels safe. Where does the novel draw the distinction between safety and honesty - and do you agree with it?

Go Deeper

1. If you had to give Liza's six doors one collective title at the beginning of the novel and a different title at the end, what would the two titles be?

2. Which character most successfully challenges Liza without trying to control her? What makes that challenge effective?

3. Is 'staying' always the healthier choice? Where does the novel leave room for leaving to be necessary, ethical, or brave?

Conversation Closer

What is one belief about strength that you have had to revise as you became an adult?