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About the Author

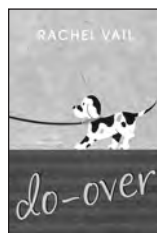
Rachel Vail is the author of The Friendship Ring series, as well as *Wonder*, *Do-Over*, *Ever After*, and *Daring to be Abigail*. She has also written the picture books *Over the Moon* and *Sometimes I'm Bombaloo*, and a series of early-reader books called Mama Rex & T. Rachel lives in New York City with her husband and two sons. To find out more about Rachel, visit her online at www.rachelvail.com.



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Reading Group Guide



If We Kiss

Rachel Vail

About the Book

As discreetly as possible I pressed my right fist against my mouth and stuck my gum to the back of it, just in case this was going to turn into a kissing-type thing. Even in my inexperience, I know you are not supposed to have gum in your mouth while you kiss.

Kevin led me quickly around the side of the building, then stopped. I managed not to crash into him. I tried to look calm, cool, unperturbed. I told myself not to laugh, especially not a snorting kind of laugh. "Wha . . . what did . . ."

And then he kissed me.

If We Kiss is the story of Charlotte (Charlie to her friends), who finds herself falling for a boy who is off-limits. Her best friend is in love with him, and her mother and his father are dating. It doesn't seem as if could get any worse, but Charlie just seems to dig herself in deeper with each ill-advised, hilarious move. There's an argument with her mother in a coat closet, much lying to her best friend, and an attempt to run away dragging a very heavy karaoke machine.

As only Rachel Vail can tell it, this is the funny, heartbreaking story of one girl's first kiss and all the chaos that ensues.

Discussion Questions

1. Charlie says, “She is my best friend. We tell each other everything” (p. 3). If this is true, why doesn’t Charlie tell Tess about her crush on Kevin and their first kiss? What motivates Charlie to lie?
2. Charlie has her first opportunity to tell Tess about kissing Kevin, but she doesn’t (p. 11). She also allows her mother to believe she kissed George. What does this say about Charlie’s character? Why does Charlie want to keep Kevin a secret?
3. Charlie and her friends label the popular girls Pop Tarts “because they are both pop(ular) and tart(y)” (p. 26). What other groups of students could they label? What do Charlie and her friends learn about the Pop Tarts that proves their label inaccurate?
4. Charlie reveals that she usually lies when people say, “Tell me the truth,” because revealing the truth can be difficult (p. 37). How does this foreshadow the change in Tess and Charlie’s relationship? Is Charlie a liar? Why or why not?
5. Kevin knows Tess and Charlie are best friends when he kisses Tess at Charlie’s party. What does this say about Kevin’s integrity? Why would he intentionally create problems between two best friends? On page 39, Charlie asks, “Why would I like someone who would do that?” Why would she?
6. When Charlie’s mom and Kevin’s dad begin to reveal their feelings for each other, both Charlie and Kevin are upset. But when Charlie finds them kissing in the coat closet, she goes ballistic. Why does Charlie overreact to her mother falling in love with Kevin’s dad?
7. When Kevin’s and Charlie’s parents inform their kids about the upcoming trip to Vermont for Christmas, Kevin and Charlie are angry and leave. Once outside, Kevin tells Charlie he admires her for her honesty. What is ironic about his comment?
8. When Charlie speaks to Kevin’s dad about his photography, he says, “Because we are all amazingly, shockingly beautiful. Aren’t we?” (p. 170). Why does Charlie disagree with him?
9. After Charlie returns to school, she and Tess discuss the ski trip, but Charlie still does not tell Tess what has happened between herself and Kevin. Tess says, “We are all messed up. Each in our own fathomable ways” (p. 209). Charlie questions herself: “Was Tess as complicated as I was? Could she betray me the way I betrayed her?” (p. 209). How would Charlie answer her own questions? How would Tess answer them?
10. Charlie is furious when Mr. McKinley refuses to print her article because the school board funds the newspaper. Everyone else agrees with Mr. McKinley except Charlie’s mother, who is supportive and offers advice on how to handle the situation. Charlie says, “School is not a free society” (p. 219). How could she have handled the situation differently to achieve her goal of getting the story out? Is Mr. McKinley’s decision right? Why or why not?
11. When Charlie finally tells Tess the truth about herself and Kevin, she loses Tess’s trust and friendship. Does Charlie get what she deserves? Why or why not?
12. Why does George tell Charlie, “It’s you. You have to ask to forgive—yourself” (p. 256)? Why does Charlie need to forgive herself?