

## PRAISE FOR *BEFORE I FALL*

“*Before I Fall* is smart, complex, and heartbreakingly beautiful. Lauren Oliver has written an extraordinary debut novel about what it means to live—and die.”

—Carolyn Mackler,

author of the Printz Honor Book *The Earth, My Butt, and Other Big Round Things*

“This story races forward, twisting in a new direction every few pages, its characters spinning my emotions from affection to frustration, anger to compassion. You’ll have no choice but to tear through this book!”

—Jay Asher,

author of the *New York Times* bestseller *Thirteen Reasons Why*

“Oliver, in a pitch-perfect teen voice, explores the power we have to affect the people around us in this intensely believable first novel. . . . A compelling book with a powerful message and should not be missed.”

—ALA Booklist

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Lauren Oliver**, a graduate of the University of Chicago and the MFA program at New York University, is a full-time writer living in Brooklyn, New York. *Before I Fall* is her first novel. You can visit Lauren Oliver online and read her blog at: [www.laurenoliverbooks.com](http://www.laurenoliverbooks.com).



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- Discussion guide created by Kate Coxon, Academic Dean of Rocketship Si Se Puede Academy, Palo Alto, California.

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## DISCUSSION GUIDE

### Before I Fall

By Lauren Oliver

# before i fall

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—**Jay Asher**, author of the *New York Times* bestseller **THIRTEEN REASONS WHY**

**LAUREN OLIVER**

## ABOUT THE BOOK

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Friday, February 12 is a big day for Samantha Kingston: It's Cupid Day, when all the kids at school will count the roses they receive to see just how popular they are. It's the day of Kent McFreaky's party. It's the day Sam plans to lose her virginity to her boyfriend, Rob. It's also the day she dies . . . sort of. Sam is killed in a car crash on Friday, February 12, but she wakes the next morning to that same day, again and again. While living her last day on repeat, Sam discovers that she has a chance to do things over—to do things better. So what does it take to go from being a popular girl who can inflict a dozen small cruelties in a given day to being someone who will be remembered well in her own right? Samantha Kingston is about to find out.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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1. What does it mean to be popular? What makes someone popular? Sam says that "there's no point in analyzing it" because there will always be a line between the haves and the have-nots and "it's just what happens" (p. 18). Do you agree or disagree?
2. Describe Lindsay, Elody, and Ally. In what ways is Sam like them? In what ways is she different?
3. Day One Samantha says that being cruel is "just the kind of thing that kids do to each other. It's no big deal. There's always going to be a person laughing and somebody getting laughed at. . . . The whole point of growing up is learning to stay on the laughing side" (p. 5). Do you agree? Why or why not? What do you think Juliet would say about this reasoning?
4. How does Sam get to the top of the social ladder? How does Lindsay get—and keep—her position there? Why do you think Sam and her friends follow someone like Lindsay, even when it means turning on others?
5. Early in the book, Sam is willing to lash out at Juliet but unwilling to confront Rob and let him know that he's "full of it" (p. 119). How do you explain this distinction? What makes it easy to torment someone you hardly know but difficult to speak honestly with someone you care about?
6. Why does Sam at first decide that she will have sex with Rob, and why does she eventually decide not to? Do any of the characters' attitudes toward sex remind you of your own? Do you believe that having sex makes you different or makes you see things differently? What do you think a person's first time should be like?
7. Describe Sam's relationship with Kent. What does she want from him, and how does her attitude toward him change over the course of the story? Does she deserve to be with him? Is he right to tell her that she's too good for some of the poor choices she makes? Why or why not?
8. What do you think about Sam's comment, "A good friend keeps your secrets for you. A best friend helps you keep your own secrets" (p. 107)?
9. On each day of her death, Sam is startled by a sense of possibility and the notion that anything could happen. How does that feeling change over time? What do you make of the day when the "line loses meaning" (p. 194) and Sam decides to smoke in the bathroom with Anna Cartullo, kiss Mr. Daimler, and generally live without thinking of consequences?
10. Sam tries to excuse herself from some of the terrible things the other girls do to Juliet until she realizes, "It was us. It was all of us" (p. 385). Do you agree? Should you be held accountable for the actions of other people in your group? Is it as wrong to be a bystander as a perpetrator? Explain.
11. How would Sam have been different if she'd been friends with Anna Cartullo or the Pugs on Day One? Would she have been any more or less sympathetic a character?
12. Sam reminds the reader that "we're the same, you and me" (p. 132). What's your reaction to that assumption? Do you find yourself passing judgment on Sam or other characters at any point in the story? Do you think you'd do things differently if you were in Sam's situation the first time around? Does Sam deserve to die?
13. Lindsay goes out of her way to be awful to other people, but she also says, "You can't be mean to someone forever and then feel bad when she dies" (p. 176). Do you think this statement is true? Knowing that Lindsay is aware of how unkind she can be, is she any more or less likeable?
14. Would you want to know which day would be your last?
15. How do Sam's greatest hits change from the beginning of the story to the end? What moments are your greatest hits? Are you proud of who you were in those moments?