



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

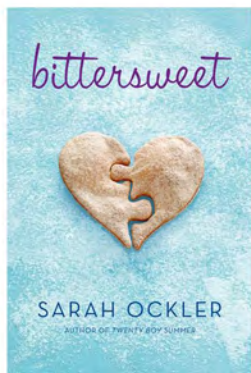
1. Bittersweet opens with a scene from Hudson's past. Why do you think Sarah Ockler started with this scene? How would you have read the story differently if you didn't learn about the betrayal in Hudson's life until later in the book?
2. Consider this passage: *I tighten my legs and propel backward, feet scissoring over the ice, mind drifting into my parallel life—the one where I didn't throw that event, killing my reputation as a top competitor and losing Kara Shipley and my other skating friends. In my parallel life, I don't live in Watonka anymore. I'm a real competitor, always on the road, sending Mom and Bug postcards from beautiful cities as I win medal after medal, title after title.* How would Hudson's life be different right now if she'd won the Empire event three years ago? Do you think she'd be living the "parallel life" she described? Why or why not?
3. Hudson has a lot of adult responsibilities—working at the diner, helping out with her little brother, paying bills. How do these responsibilities affect her ability to have fun and pursue her own goals? Do you think she handles the stress of her situation well? What could she have done differently? Have you ever felt that you had too much responsibility or stress? How did you handle it?
4. List some of Hudson's admirable qualities and some of her flaws. How do these traits help her or hold her back as the story unfolds? Can you think of a time in your life when your own strengths helped you overcome a challenge or when a flaw or inner weakness held you back?
5. Hudson tells her best friend Dani that the entire junior class looks down on her and knows her only as the Cupcake Queen of Watonka. Is Hudson's assessment accurate? Could she have done anything to change her social situation at school?
6. When Hudson is talking to Will and Josh about leaving Watonka, she wonders: *And what good are all of those bits of nostalgia when your family—the one thing that truly holds you to a place, the one thing that really makes it home over any other dot on the map—crumbles?* What do you think she means by this? Do her perspectives on family and home change by the end of the book?
7. Why does Hudson get romantically involved with Will if she has feelings for Josh? How does Will and Hudson's relationship change throughout the book? Do you think they'll be friends in the future? Why or why not?
8. Why does Hudson hide her skating activities from her family? How do you think her mom would've reacted if Hudson had been honest about her desire to compete in the Capriani Cup? Have you ever kept your dreams or plans secret from loved ones because you thought the truth might hurt them, or because they wouldn't approve or understand?
9. Hudson initially takes the gig with the Watonka Wolves so she can use the indoor ice rink for her own training. Why do you think she continues to work with the hockey team even after Will says she can use the rink on her own?
10. How do the boys on the team view Hudson when she first starts working with them? How does she view them? How and why do their first impressions of one another change as they spend more time together? Can you think of a time in your life when your first impression of someone was later proven wrong?
11. When Josh asks Hudson what she's training for, she says: *"Just my only chance at going to college and getting out of here. NBD, as my little brother says."* Do you think the Capriani scholarship is really her only option for the future? Why does Hudson feel this way?
12. Consider this passage: *Everyone says that the internet is so awesome because you can connect with people from all over the world, but I think it's the opposite. The internet doesn't make it easier to connect with anyone—it just makes it so you don't really have to.* What do you think Hudson means here?
13. Why does Hudson agree to keep Will's secret about his relationship to the hockey coach? What does she know about Will that his teammates might not realize? After Will's nefarious plans come to light, how might he earn back his teammates' trust and friendship? Do you think he deserves a second chance? Why or why not?

14. Hudson says that she's afraid to unsubscribe from her father's blog because then she might never hear from him at all, yet she's devastated when she reads that her father took his girlfriend ice-skating. Why does this post upset her more than the others? Do you think Hudson should continue reading her father's blog? Why or why not?
15. After training all winter and sacrificing almost everything else in her life, Hudson finally has her shot at the skating scholarship. Why does she walk away from it? How does Hudson's decision to leave the ice this time differ from her decision to leave three years ago? Do you think she'll regret her choice? Why or why not?
16. What does Hudson learn about teamwork this winter? How do her views on solo pursuits versus team and community activities change, both on and off the ice?
17. Is Dani a good friend to Hudson? If you were Hudson's best friend, how would you advise her about working with the hockey team, training for the competition, and keeping up with her other responsibilities? At the end of the book, what does Hudson do to try to work things out with Dani that she didn't do with Kara three years ago? Does Hudson deserve Dani's forgiveness? Why or why not?
18. Why does Hudson turn down Josh's offer to continue training the Wolves for the national championships? How does her decision show that she's changed and matured this winter? What are her new priorities?
19. Do you think Hudson will stay in Watonka after high school? Why or why not? Have you ever thought about leaving your hometown after graduation?
20. Invent a cupcake flavor that describes you or your life. What's in your cupcake, and what's it called? If you're feeling creative, make a batch for your book club meeting!

CHAT WITH AUTHOR SARAH OCKLER!

If your book club is reading *Bittersweet*, Sarah Ockler would love to join the discussion! Sarah is available for a free 25-minute Q&A session on Skype or by phone for all U.S. book clubs that read her novel. Readers can ask questions about *Bittersweet*, uncover behind-the-scenes book secrets, and get the inside scoop on the writing life. Sarah will also provide autographed bookplates or bookmarks for all participants. E-mail sarah.ockler@gmail.com for details.

ABOUT THE BOOK



Once upon a time, Hudson knew exactly what her future looked like. Then a betrayal changed her life, and knocked her dreams to the ground. Now she's a girl who doesn't believe in second chances... a girl who stays under the radar by baking cupcakes at her mom's diner and obsessing over what might have been.

So when things start looking up and she has another shot at her dreams, Hudson is equal parts hopeful and terrified. Of course, this is also the moment a cute, sweet guy walks into her life...and starts serving up some seriously mixed signals. She's got a lot on her plate, and for a girl who's been burned before, risking it all is easier said than done.

It's time for Hudson to ask herself what she really wants, and how much she's willing to sacrifice to get it. Because in a place where opportunities are fleeting, she knows this chance may very well be her last....

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Sarah Ockler is the bestselling author of *Fixing Delilah* and the critically acclaimed *Twenty Boy Summer*, a YALSA Teens' Top Ten nominee and IndieNext List pick. She is a champion cupcake eater, coffee drinker, night person, and bookworm.

When she's not writing or reading at home in Colorado, Sarah enjoys taking pictures, hugging trees, and road-tripping through the country with her husband, Alex.

Sarah loves hearing from readers! E-mail sarah.ockler@gmail.com or visit her website at sarahockler.com. You can also find her on Twitter or Facebook.



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