

“PURE JOY FROM START TO FINISH!”

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DISCUSSION GUIDE

NEVER TRUST A GEMINI

BY FREJA NICOLE WOOLF

ABOUT THE BOOK

Endearingly funny, full of charm and a beautifully accurate depiction of teenage romance, *Never Trust a Gemini* is a delightful debut from Freja Nicole Woolf. Cat, fourteen, is beholden to the stars and her *Bible to the Stars*, but only her best friend Zanna knows that she's gay, and madly in love with their friend Alison. As the seasons of the zodiac dictate the fortunes of Cat and her friends, can she engineer the perfect moment to come out, and win her friend's heart? To avoid the horrors of another lonely year, she *has* to try, at the same time as navigating the advances of the sweet but hopeless Jamie, and dealing with her militant little sister, Luna – all the while keeping the school's queen bee, Siobhan, onside. When mysterious new girl Morgan also arrives, things start to get even more complicated in this wonderfully sweet romance that never veers into the twee and mawkish, but comes alive with an engaging cast of characters and a brilliant new voice in the hapless, hilarious Cat.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Freja Nicole Woolf's writing is absolutely not autobiographical. (Except for the bits that are.) She's been writing since school and, at the über-ancient age of twenty-four, she finally wrote her debut, *Never Trust a Gemini*, as a joyful, romantic alternative to the issue-led LGBTQ+ stories she grew up with. She lives in London and aspires to be a Capricorn. Unfortunately, she's a Pisces.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION:

This book deliberately strives not to present queer experience as issue-laden or problematic, but simply to portray an LGBTQ+ romance. Hugely successful in this aim, *Never Trust a Gemini* also depicts with accuracy a teenage experience that can be recognized by any reader, and this novel is a great way to engage in wider conversations about school politics, social issues and the things that matter most to young people. That said, it does contain themes of bullying and loneliness, and focuses on a young girl who has not yet come out as a lesbian, so it may be worth revisiting ground rules before beginning the discussion. It is important that these issues can be discussed openly and without fear within any reading group.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Getting started:

What did anyone like about *Never Trust a Gemini*? Why? How did it compare to other romance stories group members might have seen, or read, or heard? How does it compare to other LGBTQ+ stories?

1. Cat

"My morning routine is simple: get up, get dressed, pray to Almighty Aphrodite..." – p.8

How would anyone describe Cat's character? What did group members most like about her? Is she a good friend? Why, or why not? Is she honest with the reader? What about everyone else?

2. Gooseberries galore

"I'm as elated as a thousand elevating elephants, very honeysuckle-happy indeed." – p.298

How does the author use language to convey a sense of Cat's personality? What effect does this have? Does the language Cat uses to narrate the story match the way she speaks to her friends and family? If not, what impact does this have?



3. Zanna

"Zanna clears her throat. 'Good morning, my useless blonde friend.'" – p.18

As Cat's best friend, how is Zanna different from Cat? Do they make a good pair? What is Zanna's place within their friendship group? How might Cat's story come across differently if the narrator was Zanna? (NB: this would make a useful creative writing task, exploring how to convey personality in first person narrative.)

4. Horoscopes

"That's when I remember the horoscope. Because what if this is the romance around the corner?!" – p.244

Are the actions of the book guided by the characters' horoscopes? How reliable is Cat's *Bible to the Stars*? What effect does believing so strongly in horoscopes have on Cat? Check understanding of the term "self-fulfilling prophecy" – does this apply to Cat and her horoscope?

5. Burning down the house

"This is possibly the most dramatic moment of my life! So I take out my phone and switch to Instagram Live." – p.209

How does Cat respond to the house fire? Is her reaction what you'd expect? How important an event is it in the novel? Why does the author not focus more on the fire and its impact on the family?

6. Jamie

"Perhaps my life wouldn't have slithered down such an unfortunate Jamie-shaped hole if I'd had that." – p.165

What did readers think of the character Jamie? How does the author create that effect? Does Cat like Jamie? Did group members like him? What about his actions towards Cat – are they acceptable? Why, or why not?

7. Siobhan

"It's just that I always feel so lucky when I'm reminded that I could have Siobhan as a daughter instead of you." – p.260

How does the novel deal with Siobhan's bullying? Is her character a redeemable one? What about her apologies towards the end of the book? What does the author suggest about the social hierarchies of high school?

8. Morgan

"Basically, she's über-cool as can be. She's the überest." – p.50

How is Morgan presented to the reader? Why do we only read glimpses of her, at first? Does Morgan change Cat in any way? How, if so? What does Morgan like about Cat? As with Zanna, how would the novel be different if told from Morgan's perspective?

9. Luna

"...perhaps I won't call her Lauren or Luna. I'll just call her ridiculous instead." – p.11

Cat's sister Luna is presented as constantly battling injustice and inequality. How does Cat respond to this? Does she agree with what Luna is doing? Does Cat care about these issues? Does Cat's view of Luna change across the novel? What about the reader – did anyone's view of Luna change as they read on?

10. A first kiss

"I'm still trembling like an anxious trapeze artist. Did I really just have my first kiss?!" – p.168

Revisit the two "first" kisses: with Jamie (p.44) and with Morgan (p.167). How are they presented differently? What does the author do to give you a different sense of each scene? Why, to Cat, does kissing Jamie not count as a first kiss?

11. Geminis

"I didn't realize my entire moral compass was written in the stars. That's actually quite handy." – p.166

Why, in the book, should you never trust a Gemini? By the end of the novel is Cat proved wrong about Geminis? How does she feel about her *Bible to the Stars*? Who in the group believes in horoscopes? Who doesn't? Why?

