



the shoe diaries

READER'S GUIDE

*The following reading group guide for **The Shoe Diaries** includes an introduction and discussion questions for enhancing your book club. The suggested questions are intended to help your book club with prompts for discussion, however, they may contain spoilers. I recommend reading the questions only after you have read the book, but I hope they serve to enrich your conversation and increase your enjoyment of it.*

INTRODUCTION

Reagan Doucet, 29, has built her life doing all the things she believes was supposed to do and trying to live what she deems a perfect life. She went to an HBCU for college, is working in a job based on her degree, has a great set of close knit friends, an active dating life, and a phenomenal shoe closet. And all of that is wonderful except that she's not actually happy. In fact, one of her closest friends tells her that she lives too cautious of a life... one where there's no room for risks and mistakes, and therefore, no room for real joy and fulfillment either. When that same friend begins to suffer from a chronic illness, Reagan decides that she doesn't want to live an unfulfilled, picture-perfect life anymore. In true perfectionist fashion, however, she creates a risk list and determines that as she accomplishes each risk, she will reward herself with a new pair of shoes.

Right around this same time, Reagan's ex-boyfriend, Jake, starts trying to reconnect with her. Her friends are convinced that she should consider giving him another chance as part of this new outlook of hers, but Reagan isn't swayed. As far as she is concerned, Jake never fought for her, and so she needs to move on to someone who will; never mind the fact that she secretly still loves him. Readers of the book will see all the ups and downs that come with learning to trust yourself again and the ways that minds and hearts can change when you're not waiting on things to be perfect to be happy.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Prior to reading *The Shoe Diaries*, what did you think the book was going to be about? Did it live it up what you assumed or were there moments that were unexpected?

The Shoe Diaries begins with a fairly long prologue intended to introduce the reader to many of the main characters in the book and the series. In this chapter, readers meet Reagan; her ex, Jake; two of her best friends, Robin and Jennifer; and hear about their other friend, Christine; among others. This is also the first chance for readers to glimpse

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the chemistry between Reagan and Jake and learn just what makes it so difficult for her to forget him. But, prologues can be controversial. Some readers may even skip them. What were your thoughts? Did you read the prologue at first and make your way through the book from there? Or did you skip it and have to go back to see what you'd missed?

While a romance novel, *The Shoe Diaries* is also the first book in a series called The Friendship Chronicles and leans heavily on the importance of female friendships throughout the story. Did the relationships in the book remind you of any of your friendships? And were there any characters you related to the most?

What did you think of Reagan's risk list? Have you ever created something like it? And did she actually accomplish everything on her list?

Reagan's relationship with shoes is such that she finds them beautiful, but she also uses them to mark significant moments in her life. I can relate to this. In fact, when I had a shoe closet in Maryland, I used to say that I could bring someone into my closet and tell them my adult life story by recalling different moments that happened while wearing my various pairs of shoes. Do you have anything like this in your life, whether it's art that marks every place you've traveled, books that represent different stages of your life, jeans, purses, etc?

Halfway through the book, Reagan meets Luke--a charming, smooth talking guy who seems to be very interested in her...at least at first. Yet, even while she's trying to give Luke a chance, Jake's presence is still very much all around her. How did you feel about her relationship with Luke? Were you surprised by how it ended and the initial "lesson" she took from it? And do you think they really had a chance to succeed with Jake still on Reagan's mind?

Christine is another looming presence throughout *The Shoe Diaries*. While we only get small glimpses of her life before she became ill, readers can hopefully tell just how important she is to the rest of the girls in the friend group--especially to Reagan. How were you impacted by Reagan and Christine's interactions, and particularly, how Reagan reacts to her death? And do you have someone in your life who has known you long enough to be able to lovingly call you out when you need it?

Reagan and her friends travel to London and Paris together, and there she realizes the biggest risk she's been running away from is loving Jake again. How did you feel about her ah-ha moment? Was it realistic? And did you want her to give Jake another chance?

A running theme throughout the book is learning to trust yourself again--no matter the ups and downs, the twists and turns, the heartbreaks, etc. And by the end, Reagan trusts herself enough to date Jake again. What did you think about her decision? And did the book make you consider trying anything scary that you've been avoiding in your life?