

Discussion Points for *Heidegger Stairwell*



The winner of the 34th annual 3-Day Novel Contest is an excellent addition to any book club schedule—its themes cover sexuality, identity, youth, emerging adulthood, Canadian culture, independent music and the origins of artistic expression, friendship, dependency, and emotional connections that encompass all of love’s complexity. If your book club is reading *Heidegger Stairwell*, here are a few discussion questions to get you started.

Heidegger Stairwell

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In literary terms, Evan Strocker is an “unreliable narrator”: intentionally or unconsciously, he may not always be telling the reader the truth. Meanwhile, the band members’ comments in the margins of the “manuscript” at first appear to be putting the real truth on the record—but do these characters have their own agendas? Who do you believe? Why?

2. On page 24, Evan describes his own birth:

I was born in Emmet Lake Hospital on a scorching June afternoon. It was so hot my father, who paces even when he isn't nervous, slipped on a pool of my mother's sweat, knocked himself out, and missed my birth. The tweety birds circling his head warned him I'd be a handful.

Create an Evan-style birthing story for yourself, or for another member of your book club.

3. The band names themselves after a dog, who in turn is named after a controversial philosopher. Given the personality of the dog in question and the ideas of the philosopher, which namesake do you think is more apt? For bonus points, how exactly does the philosophy of Martin Heidegger relate to the book?

4. If you had a band, what would you name it? Why?
5. The book opens with Evan asking his editor to keep the band's more scathing comments from him. Were there any points in the manuscript where you thought one of the band members might have had a reaction but his or her comments might have been deleted to save Evan's feelings? What do you think he or she would have said?
6. Evan calls Isis the band's "Little Mother." In what ways does she exemplify this role? What familial roles do the other characters play?
7. What role does Evan play in Torq and Coco's relationship? How do you think their relationship would have developed (or not developed) if Evan stayed out of it? How do you think Evan views love and romance?
8. Why do you think Torq lied about what happened to him in Duluth? Why did he keep his stalker a secret?
9. Do you think that Torq and Lugh have a close relationship as brothers? Do you think either of them are closer with Evan than with each other? Discuss the different ways the three characters relate with each other, as pairs and as a "triangle."
10. Despite his obsession with Heidegger Stairwell, bands like Weezer, Neutral Milk Hotel, and Sigur Ros have important places on the soundtrack to Evan's life. What songs or musicians call up a moment or period in your life? Is there one band that has always been present, changing along with you as you evolve?
11. Do you think Evan's attempt to force the band back together after four years apart was solely a selfish act, or do you think the band members benefitted from it in the end? Do you believe, as Evan does, that Heidegger Stairwell only exists because of his orchestrations? Discuss Evan's relationship with the band as a unit. What does it represent to him? What stake does he have in it? Why does he need so strongly for it to continue?
12. In the second-to-last chapter, Isis says to Evan: "You're a straight woman so misogynistic you'd do anything in your power not to be a woman." Do you think this provocative statement reflects views that exist in the real world? How do Evan and Isis view transgenderism? Do you think Isis's attack on Evan was more emotional or political? Why?

13. How does the way Evan describes the behaviour of Isis and Coco, and other female characters (like the competing musicians in the Battle of the Bands) reveal how he thinks about women? Do you think, as Isis claims, that Evan is misogynistic?

14. Why do you think that Lugh stays silent and does not add his comments through most of the manuscript? What do you think compels him to comment at the end? What do you think of what he says?

15. At the end of the novel, Evan makes a promise to Lugh. Do you think he should have made such a promise? Do you think he will be able to keep it? What do you think will happen to the band members, to Evan, and to their relationships with each other in the years to follow the release of this “memoir”?

Visit www.3daynovel.com to order *Heidegger Stairwell* or to see other past winners of the International 3-Day Novel Contest.