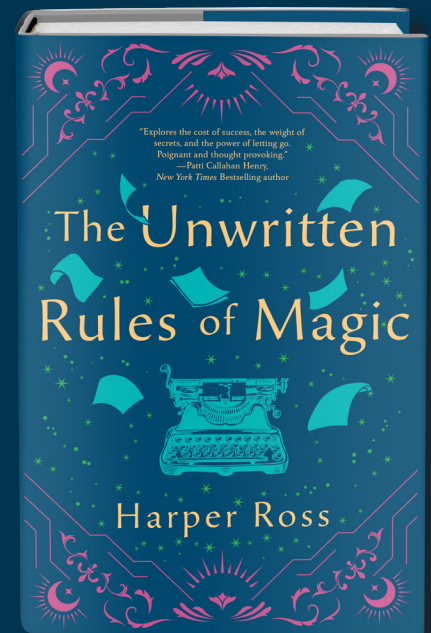


# The Unwritten Rules of Magic

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. If you had access to a typewriter that made your wishes come true—but at an irreversible hidden cost—would it be worth sacrificing?  
*(Would your answer change if it meant helping someone you love?)*
2. Emerson believes she's never been in control of her life. In what ways has she contributed to her own lack of agency? Where has she demonstrated hidden strength or autonomy?
3. Let's talk about Emerson's role as a ghostwriter. How does her professional invisibility mirror her emotional life? What does it mean for her to "write her own story" by the end?
4. As Emerson uncovers how her father used the typewriter to manipulate both her and her mother's lives, she's forced to confront her own similar behavior. How does the story explore the tension between love and control? Can trying to "fix" someone's life ever be an act of love—or is it always a form of control, no matter the outcome?
5. Was Emerson justified in using the typewriter to influence her mother's sobriety—even though the wish indirectly caused a DUI?
6. Emerson's mother ultimately claims ownership of her choices, saying, "If I've learned anything these past few weeks, it's that I'm responsible for my choices no matter the circumstances." Do you agree with this perspective?
7. Is Emerson's journey one of redemption or awakening—or both? What turning point most significantly alters her understanding of control, love, and autonomy?
8. Should Emerson have pushed her daughter for answers about her mood change and secrecy sooner—or respected her daughter's need for privacy?
9. Was Emerson's consideration of using the typewriter to erase a particularly painful memory of her daughter's an act of love, or a failure to accept reality? What are the moral implications of erasing trauma versus helping someone process it?



10. How does the story explore the illusion of “perfect” lives—particularly in affluent communities—and the personal cost of maintaining that illusion?
11. What does the story suggest about the relationship between memory, identity, and happiness?
12. The story suggests that chasing perfection often means missing the beauty of real, messy life. Do you agree? How does this theme play out in your own experience?
13. In what ways does the novel explore generational trauma, especially around secrets and emotional repression? Do you think Emerson breaks the cycle, or continues it in a new form?
14. How does the book use magical realism to deepen the emotional truths of the story? Would the same story have had the same impact without the magical typewriter?



ST. MARTIN'S PRESS