BEFORE I FORGET

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do the flashbacks into Cricket's past contribute to your understanding of her character in the present, and how do they shape your reading experience?

2. Discuss the evolution of Cricket and Nina's relationship over the course of the novel. How does Cricket's perspective of Nina correlate with her self-image for most of the story, and what are the effects of this? Compare and contrast their respective caregiving approach.

3. How does *Before I Forget* critique our culture's obsession with monetization and profit versus intrinsic value and service? "[Cricket] was exhausted by the compulsion to monetize everything; to convert every glimmer of authenticity into a product; to scale small joys until they are so bloated that they wither and droop." (page 218) Discuss the ethical implications of using advanced technology to immortalize Arthur for financial gain, and why you think Cricket did not want to profit from the oracle project.

4. Considering Gemma's promotional content, how does social media contribute to generating a heightened interest in "wellness" products and instilling a sense of urgency and necessity around them? To what extent do you think it can be taken too far, if at all? How does society's view on aging and beauty standards feed into this "wellness" obsession? What do you think people are truly seeking when they indulge in Extreme Wellness?

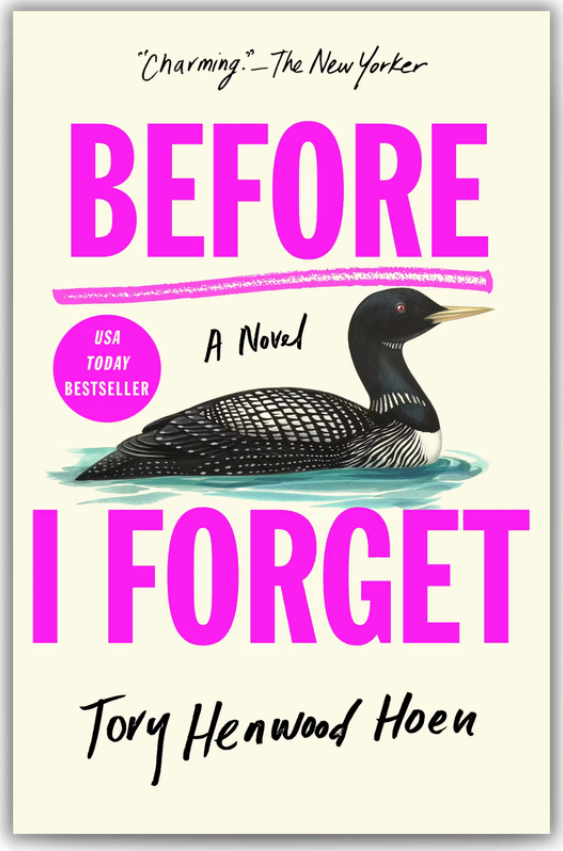
5. How does Gemma's idea of self-care differ from Carl's idea of it? What is something you turn to as a form of self-care?

6. Compare and contrast Locust and New York City. How does Cricket's setting influence her character development? How do the pace and community dynamic differ in each location?

7. How is the Adirondacks house a main character within the novel, and how does it reflect broader themes of identity and change? How does the house reflect Arthur's and Tish's contrasting outlooks?

8. What do you make of the loons? Why do you think Cricket is so intrigued by the loonlet toward the end of the novel?

9. What does Cricket's recurring dream, and its evolution, reveal to you about her internal state? Have you ever had a recurring dream?



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10. Cricket and Arthur are both at pivotal yet opposite stages in their lives when they reunite. How do you think they each impacted the other's sense of self during this crucial time, if at all? In what ways do you think Cricket might have been holding herself back, and how does Seth's tragic accident shape Cricket's sense of herself, and her relationships, for a decade? Have you ever felt defined by the stories you tell yourself?

11. "Since his diagnosis, my father's social network has atrophied. People aren't sure how to interact with him, so they just stop interacting at all." (page 23) How does the fear of not knowing how to engage with a person who is ill lead them to social isolation? What are some steps an individual could take to ensure continued support and connection with an ailing friend or loved one?

12. Though *Before I Forget* addresses the challenges of caretaking and memory loss, it also considers the opportunity to shift perspectives—in this case, Cricket appreciates Arthur's newfound ability to connect with his intuition without the weight of the past. How does it feel to focus more on what is gained in old age, rather than what is lost?

13. This story explores how grief and life's most difficult situations, while painful, can simultaneously encourage growth and lead us back to ourselves. "Not our final selves, or even our improved selves, but just our next selves. After all, we are always between selves. It doesn't mean we are lost—it means we are growing." (page 270) What does *Before I Forget* suggest about the importance of tapping into your intuition? What are some ways you could go about doing this?

14. How did this novel impact you, and what emotions did it leave you with? Did it perhaps "show you what you already know" (page 175)? As Nina tells Cricket, "The best things are still ahead of us." (page 18) How do you imagine Cricket's life beyond the page?

