

"Magical and very timely . . . a delight."
—MEG SHAFFER, USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

A Novel

IDEAL LIFE

New York Times Bestselling Author
EVELYN SKYE

READING GROUP GUIDE

TOPICS AND QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. If given the opportunity, would you choose to rewind time? Are there circumstances in which you would feel confident doing so? Or do you feel the potential consequences would be too great?
2. There are many moral dilemmas in Evelyn Skye's novel, all of which demonstrate the considerations we have to make when deciding how we want our lives to look and what "ideal" really means. Which dilemma sparked your interest the most? How would you have handled it? Do you agree with how the characters behaved?
3. Talia and Sam hold opposing views not only on the watch itself, but optimization culture in general. Discuss "life hacks" as a group and how you do or do not engage in optimization culture. What does an ideal life look like to you?
4. Toward the end of the novel, Talia reflects on rewinding time to win the poker tournament, which she comes to realize goes against her own moral compass, despite the fact that nobody else will know. She thinks to herself, "She would have to live with the truth of the kind of person she'd become. Who are you anymore, Talia?" (pg. 246). In what ways does Talia change because of the watch? How do you see her deviate from the person we meet in the opening chapters? What aspects of her decisions throughout the novel go against her moral code?
5. If you could have an *Ideal Life* "Friend" like Queen Elizabeth, what would yours look like and why?
6. Talia and Sam are opposites in many ways, but their deep understanding of and respect for one another have made them excellent friends (and maybe more) for years. Which of their qualities complement each other? Why do you think they work well as a couple?
7. Talia's mentee, Erin, develops a lot as a person and professional throughout the novel. What do you imagine her future looks like? What do you think she's like in her thirties, forties, and beyond?
8. Talia and her sister Libby have a close relationship despite leading very different lives. Compare and contrast the sisters; in what ways are they alike, and how do they differ?
9. If you had a device like Talia's, would you be more inclined to see its positives, like she does, or its drawbacks, like Sam? Did your opinions shift throughout the course of the novel?
10. While the device in *Ideal Life* is fantastical, it certainly has some parallels to current technological advances. As a group, discuss some of the pros and cons of current technology and the larger questions it poses on both a personal and societal level.
11. Sam's lighthouse bookshop is a charming, ideal spot for book lovers. If you could open a bookstore, what would yours look like and what kinds of books would you sell?
12. While Talia ultimately goes too far in her use of the watch, she does learn some valuable lessons from her many rewinds. In what ways do you think the watch helped Talia grow? How did she come to understand herself and her relationships better through "perfecting" certain moments?

ENHANCE YOUR BOOK CLUB

1. When your book club gathers to discuss *Ideal Life*, bring ingredients to recreate Talia's and Sam's Taco Bell orders. Make sure you have all the taco fixings, great salsa, and a fun signature drink (bonus points if it's blue)!
2. As a group, read Evelyn's article on PEOPLE.com about optimization culture to accompany your discussion of *Ideal Life* and the big life decisions the characters face.
3. *Ideal Life* has a cameo from the main character of Evelyn's novel *The Incredible Kindness of Paper*. Read Evelyn's earlier novel and compare and contrast its themes with those in *Ideal Life*. In what ways are these two books in conversation with each other?
4. Visit Evelyn Skye's website, evelynskye.com, for more information on the author and *Ideal Life*.