

## Reader's Guide for *The Last Bridge* a novel by Teri Coyne

### Questions for Discussion:

1. Who is the "he" in the Mother's note, "*He isn't who you think he is...*" What do you think she meant?
2. Cat is a complex character. Discuss the ways she has dealt with her abuse through her addictions, relationships with people and understanding of her own feelings. Then, discuss the ways Cat has mistreated or abandoned the people in her own life. Was she justified for making the choices she did? If so, why? If not, why?
3. It is never fully clear how much each character knows about what happened on the bridge that night. Aside from Alex who do you think knows the most? Jared, Addison, Wendy, the Mother? If they know why don't they talk about it?
4. Discuss the ways drawing and art is used in this story. It connects Cat to her son but what other purposes does it serve?
5. When Cat wakes up in the hospital toward the end after almost drinking herself to death, her sister Anna asks her if she knows who she is, Cat runs through a list of roles, "*I am Alex Rucker. I am a drunk. I am a daughter who was raped by her father. I am a sister. I am a half sister. I am my mother's daughter. I am a woman.*" She finally lands on the one that defines her most, "*I am a mother,*" she says. Why does this role define her the most? Why does she chose that? What role defines you most in your life? Has it changed over the years and if so, why?
6. What is a parent? How do you define it? Cat realizes she has focused so much on who the father of Alex is she never thought about who his mother is. Ultimately she decides it doesn't matter. Does it? What makes a person a parent? Is it more than one thing?
7. What do you think happens between Cat, Addison and Alex after the story ends?
8. Love shows itself in many different ways in this book. Discuss the relationships between, Wendy and Willard, Andrew and Cat, Addison and Alex (son), Addison and Cat, Mother and Father, Mother and Jared and Cat and Jared? How do these characters change, or do they? What role does love play in this?
9. In reading *The Last Bridge*, what do you think some of the author's values are? What is she saying about love in this story? Do you agree?

**Take a moment to reflect (*questions for your group or just for your own reflection*):**

1. *Kat's Eye – The Amazing Adventures of Kitty Kat* is the comic Alex draws to process her feelings. What helps you process your feelings?
2. Alex carries her life around in her purse. What would you consider your “security objects?” Items you carry with you every day you can't live without or items you would take with you in a fire?
3. The sound of silence leaves Alex alone with her thoughts. She fills the lonely hours with music. Do you like to be alone? Are you comfortable with the thoughts that creep into your head in the still moments of your life?
4. Are you or someone in your family harboring a secret? What would the impact be if it ever came out?
5. If you could receive a letter from an influential person in your past who would it be and what would you like to say?
6. If you had to go back and face an incident from your past what would it be? What are your greatest fears about it?