



## About the Book

The paths of three teens, each adrift in their own struggle, intersect at the pizza parlor where they all work. Jessie is determined to be everything her parents don't want her to be; Cam is quick to laugh as he holds desperately to shards of hope in the wake of his cousin's disappearance; and Berlin grieves the end of a friendship while trying to keep her head above rising waves of a terrible numbness. Drawn close in the fight to save their beloved workplace and to speak out about the crisis that threatens their community, the trio discovers how much they need each other as the wonderful and terrible connections between their struggles come to light.

## Questions to Get the Conversation Started

1. “[Y]ou could overwork the dough too—make it stiff, without tenderness” (pg. 92). Cam is talking about pizza dough, but he also says that it is a life lesson. Describe the life lesson in your own words. How does this lesson apply to Berlin? Cam? Jessie?
2. “For being Nehiyaw, for being a woman, once more because she was Black too. Three reasons for the RCMP to look the other way” (pg. 44). Explain what Cameron is saying here in your own words. How do anti-Native bigotry, misogyny, and anti-Blackness intersect with neglect on the part of the police?
3. Discuss the positive and negative ways that possibility is invoked by all the main characters. Berlin and her surrealists, Cam and his hope, and Jessie and her rebellion—how do you see possibility connecting with each of their desires for the future?
4. “When we can let the things that bring us together fall apart, become places without souls, it's another way we learn not to care about each other. Or about the land. Capitalism eats and eats and never satiates its hunger. It eats without thought. And that's not eating anymore. That's consumption” (pg. 102). A lot is packed into this statement from Berlin—explain it in your own words. What's your reaction to it? Describe a real-life example of the uncaring consumption that Berlin is defining here.
5. Discuss the manipulation and abuse of power by men (particularly white men) in the narrative. How do Jessie's father, Mr. MacDonald, and Dustin Granville wield power and cause harm to others in similar ways? Consider why the violence they commit receives news coverage while the everyday violence endured by vulnerable community members does not.
6. Kiki's perspective is the only one we get in the form of poetry, and it's also the only one we don't get firsthand. How do the interjections of Kiki's poems impact your reading? How does Kiki's narrative and its relation to the other characters and the novel as a whole connect to the ongoing human rights crisis of Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit People?
7. In her author's note, Jen Ferguson mentions the insidiousness of anti-Blackness and the ways that even otherwise critically conscious Berlin perpetuates anti-Blackness against Joe. What connections exist between anti-Indigenous bigotry and anti-Black racism? How does push-back against anti-Indigenous bigotry and colonizer perspectives still leave room for anti-Blackness?

## About the Author

Jen Ferguson is Michif/Métis and white and has a PhD in English and creative writing. Her debut novel, *The Summer of Bitter and Sweet*, received great acclaim. She lives in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and teaches at Coe College. She always puts pineapple on her pizza. Visit her online at [jenfergusonwrites.com](http://jenfergusonwrites.com).

