

TOGETHER by Julie Cohen

Reading group questions

- The structure of this novel sets it apart from your 'traditional' love story—unlike most love stories, it starts with the end of the couple's happy-ever-after and rolls backwards to when they first meet. Did you enjoy the way the story was told? How do you think the backwards structure affected your reaction to the secret?
- How does the author foreshadow the secret that Emily and Robbie are hiding? Did you see it coming?
- 'You always used to say that you and I were free, if we were brave enough to take that freedom. I knew different. We were bound together, tangled up in exquisite complication.'

What did you think of the secret itself? How did it make you feel and in what ways did it affect your view of Robbie and Emily? In your opinion, were they right to stay together?

- How did you feel about the opening moments of the novel? Did you sympathise with Robbie's decision to die to save Emily from exposure, or did you think he was wrong?
- How does the author use the ocean throughout the novel, as a setting and almost as a character?
- Opening of chapter six:

'Emily was dreaming about a crowd. She was rushing through it, pulling a heavy, clumsy suitcase behind her, bumping into people. She had to get a train, it was about to leave and she was going to miss it and she couldn't find the platform, she'd forgotten the tickets. Heavy voices boomed from the tannoy, announcing departures and arrivals in words she couldn't understand.'

Discuss Emily's dream and where it falls in the novel – what does it signify, for you?

- One of the most difficult decisions for Emily and Robbie in the novel is whether to tell anyone about the adoption of their son, Adam. How did you feel about this choice and did you see it in a different light once you knew all their reasons for making it?
- The concept of life being cyclical and fate pulling us back towards our destinies is a key theme of the novel – discuss the different ways that the author explores this through setting, plot, character and objects.