WHAT YOU WISH FOR Discussion Questions

1. On page 59, Sam recalls Max telling her to, “Pay attention to the things that connect you with joy.” Did reading this also remind you to pay attention to whatmakes you happy? What are some things in your life that make you feelconnected with joy?

2. What did you make of how affected Sam was by the news of Duncan coming to her school? Why do you think the idea of Duncan and Sam’s feelings for him have so much control over her and her thoughts?

3. What was your initial reaction when Duncan doesn’t recognize Sam? Did you suspect that he did and was keeping it a secret? Why do you think he did?

4. Sam knew that Duncan coming back into her life would be hard and stressful for her, but it turned out to be in a way entirely different from what she expected. Have you had any situations in your life where you similarly thought something would be challenging but it turned out to be so in a completely different way? How did you handle it?

5. On page 144, Duncan talks about painting over the butterfly mural and says, “When the world is a safer place, we’ll bring it back.” What did you make of that comment? Did you believe Duncan and his motives? Did you begin to wonder why he was so concerned about safety?

6. At one point in the novel Sam says that she doesn’t have anyone in her life with whom she feels like she truly belongs. Did you see this come across as you were reading? How does this change over the course of the novel?

7. Sam makes it clear that her epilepsy has held her back from doing things like driving and dating. Do you think some of Sam’s past trauma with her epilepsy and her father walking out on her and her mother has affected her in other ways?

8. Duncan confesses his true feelings to Sam after his surgery, but he doesn’t remember doing so. Why do you think Sam doesn’t tell him what he told her? Why do you think she never has the nerve to when she has such strong feelings for him?

9. The library is a safe place for Sam that brings her joy. She also works very hard to make sure her students feel the same. Is there a place like this for you in your life? Was there one when you were a child?

10. As cruel as Tina Buckley is to Sam, we know that she has faced a lot of challenges in her life. What do you make of her evolution over the course of the novel, and the evolution of her relationship with Sam?

11. This story has a lot of lessons about how to live a more joyful life, even in the face of hardship. What insights from the book stood out for you? Are there ways you might approach your own life differently after reading this novel?