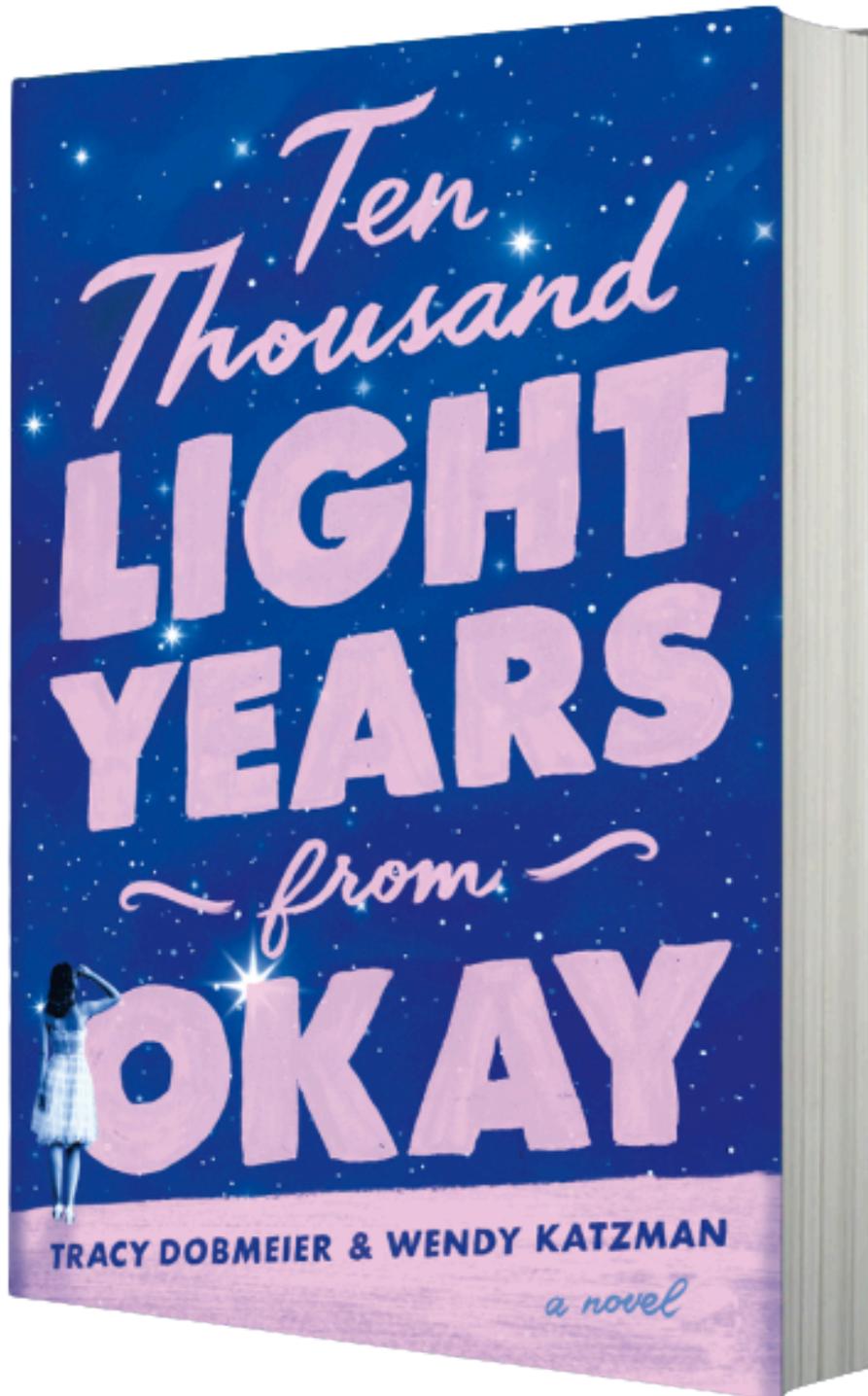


# Book Club Guide



# A Note from Tracy & Wendy

Dear Reader,

Thank you for selecting *Ten Thousand Light Years from Okay* for your book group! We're thrilled to know book groups like yours are choosing to engage with the ideas we sought to highlight in this book, and with Thea's unlikely journey through trauma and grief toward a bright new outlook on life.

We are two close friends from Seattle who decided to write novels together almost on a whim several years ago. It's been an incredible experience, filled with lots of highs and plenty of lows. But our love for creating stories that make readers (and us!) think and feel keeps us showing up for each other daily.

Life can be strange and chaotic, and it's been interesting to us to think about the different ways people find to cope with seemingly inexplicable events. Some people lean into notions of luck or fate, others believe everything is random. Some cope through faith, others through superstition, and some make sense of the world exclusively through a scientific lens. Some people construct their own unique combination of these concepts. We don't believe there is a correct answer, although we will cop to being more than a little superstitious ourselves! Our superstitions don't stop us from writing, but they do force us to think a little harder about what stories we put out into the world.

Excuse us now while we go rub our lucky fuzzy dice in hopes that your book group discussion is lively and fun! On that note, if you do enjoy *Ten Thousand Light Years from Okay*, we'd be grateful if you tell your friends about it and consider sharing your positive review online. Thank you!

xo,  
Tracy & Wendy

# Discussion Questions

**Note: Some of the questions include spoilers**

1. Have you ever experienced a coincidence like Thea when she turned on the radio and her and Sam's song, "I Don't Want to Miss a Thing" by Aerosmith, was playing just as she was thinking about him? If so, what is the most improbable coincidence you've ever experienced? How do you explain coincidences like that? Did it change the way you think about your life or the world we inhabit?
2. Internet conspiracy theorists compounded Thea's trauma in the wake of Sam's death, and wouldn't let her forget the similarities between her debut novel and the accident that killed her husband. How much do you think this sort of public shaming contributed to Thea's fears that what she writes comes true? Have you ever been blamed for an unlucky coincidence? If so, how did it affect you?
3. Do you have a particular superstition, like picking up pennies, avoiding walking under ladders, or knocking on wood? If yes, why do you do it?
4. Thea and William ultimately forgive Rebecca for not telling them why Sam went for the run. Would you have forgiven Rebecca? Why or why not?
5. *Ten Thousand Light Years from Okay* ends with Thea and Max seeing each other again at the movie premiere. What do you think happens next between them?
6. Who would you cast in the movie version of *Ten Thousand Light Years from Okay*?
7. What children's books would you select that would tell someone about your childhood? A relationship icebreaker but with pictures and rhymes!

## Discussion Questions (cont'd.)

8. How does the interplay between grief and magical thinking shape the characters' perceptions of reality and their ability to process loss? Do you think magical thinking is a necessary or harmful part of the grieving process? Have you or a loved one ever engaged in magical thinking?

9. At the book event for *Love You to Mars and Back* toward the end of the novel, an appreciative reader tells Thea that she's not the only one who has been lied to by a man. This statement is met with thunderous applause and provides Thea with a sense of solidarity. Like many women, Thea thought she was being careful by googling Max, but ghosting, catfishing, and lying on dating apps are so prevalent. What factors influence our ability to trust someone we meet online, and how do these challenges reflect the broader societal shifts in how we build relationships?

10. In the final scene, Frannie says, "[Rebecca's] mistake was worse." Do you agree with Frannie, or do you think what Max did was worse?

# Q&A with Tracy & Wendy

## **What inspired you to write this book?**

We wanted to examine the role of superstition and coincidence in choosing book topics. When we were nearly done writing the first draft of our debut novel, *GIRLS WITH BRIGHT FUTURES*, which included what we considered to be the most outlandish scenarios for parent misbehavior in the quest to get their kids into college, the Operation Varsity Blues college admissions scandal broke in the news. That day, as news alerts incessantly pinged our phones, we literally couldn't believe that a version of what we'd imagined had actually unfolded in real life, and in an even more eye-popping manner than in our wildest dreams (although we did include an attempted murder). From time to time, as we finished the novel, we had to remind ourselves that we hadn't written the scandal into being! So when we sat down to settle on a topic for a new novel, we couldn't help thinking about this coincidence. There were even a few topics we rejected out of fear that if a similar coincidence were to occur, we might regret having written about it. So that is what led us to Thea's central problem. We imagined this young writer who took superstition to the extreme due to her grief-ridden state of mind, and it threatened to not only destroy her career, but also impede any forward momentum in her life. It seemed like fertile ground to explore this idea of the line between superstition and mental illness, and the strategies each of us use to make sense of improbable coincidences.

## **This novel has one point of view. How do two people write one voice?**

Very painstakingly! But seriously, our first novel had three POVs, which made it easier to divide and conquer – and take advantage of the fact we are two people with somewhat different writing styles. However, in *TTLYFOK* we felt strongly that Thea needed to be the sole POV. This was her grief story, and she needed to be the one to lead us through her journey. We knew it would be a challenge to write one voice together. We tackled this by accepting that even though we would each individually write certain scenes, we knew we'd have to be methodical in the revision process to smooth out her voice. What we discovered is that her voice naturally took on a life of its own over the course of writing the entire novel.

## More Q&A with Tracy & Wendy

But we found that the first quarter to third of the book was where we needed to spend the most time ironing out voice issues, because when we first wrote those scenes, we'd only been beginning to dial in on her quirks, sentence structures, etc. that made her voice unique. As co-writers in general, we rely a lot on the revision process to get things right.

### **This is the second book you've published together. How has co-writing affected your friendship? Do you ever fight?**

We've been friends for over 25 years, and our friendship long predates our writing partnership. But writing forces you to be vulnerable in ways that are unlike a typical friendship, whether it's sharing half-baked ideas or messy drafts or coping with rejection, so we've established an intense level of trust and understanding that enables us to check our egos. That doesn't mean we always agree on everything, but our approach is to work on something—whether it's a name, a plot twist, or even a word—until we both feel ALL CAPS YES. Even better if it's an ALL CAPS YES WITH AN EXCLAMATION POINT AT THE END! The more significant risk with two people is that you compromise and end up settling for something that neither of you really like.

# Ideas for An Out of This World Book Club

Set the mood with the *Ten Thousand Light Years from Okay* Spotify playlist:

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0Eqa00yPmq6s3vv4IVQnZM>

Karma by Taylor Swift	Karma Chameleon by Culture Club
Rocket Man by Elton John	Fearless (Taylor's Version) by Taylor Swift
Every Little Thing She Does Is Magic by The Police	I Don't Want To Miss A Thing by Aerosmith
Behind These Hazel Eyes by Kelly Clarkson	Birds Of A Feather by Billie Eilish
Don't You (Forget About Me) by Simple Minds	Cruel Summer by Taylor Swift
Don't Go Breaking My Heart by Elton John, Kiki Dee	Defying Gravity from Wicked

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## Tablescape or Giveaway Inspirations

"I'm not superstitious, but I am a little stitious."

--Michael Scott from "The Office"

**When Tracy was being treated for breast cancer in 2018, Wendy gave her some representation of everything on this list for good luck.**

**Now we keep these lucky charms on special shelf in our office!**

Lucky bamboo

Lucky Duckies

Lucky dice - Vegas baby

Pigs - considered lucky in Germany

Lucky mojo horseshoe

Regular horseshoe - because why not have two horseshoes

The number 7 - the Greeks called it the perfect number

The number 8 - considered lucky in China

Goldfish, dragons, and horses - also considered lucky in China

Turtle - considered lucky for long life

Elephant - considered lucky in India

Rabbit's foot

Ladybug

Four leaf clover

Eyeball - to ward off evil spirits

Rainbows, Unicorns, and Puppies - just because

# A Ten Thousand Light Years from Okay- Inspired Menu

## **Thea's Favorite Cocktails - Hugo Spritz (summer) & Old Fashioned (winter)**

I personally loved filling out these types of interview questionnaires because there was no pressure to come up with clever answers on the spot and the questions were typically fun and quirky...What's your preferred cocktail? Hugo Spritzes in the summer and Old Fashioneds in the winter.

## **Rebecca & William's Celebratory Meal**

Even with only a few hours' notice, Rebecca and William managed to pull off a truly celebratory meal—rib eye steak and corn on the cob, both grilled to perfection by William, a gorgeous caprese salad with the most delicious heirloom tomatoes and fresh basil from the local farmers' market, and a loaf of ciabatta from our favorite bakery. Not to mention an insanely delicious berry tart for dessert.

**(For an easier option try...)**

## **Thea's Toaster Oven Pizza with Aspirational Veggies**

Like Lucy, I had also experienced a graduation of sorts, as our recently acquired toaster oven helped me kick my overdependence on the microwave. Last week, we decided that our brand-new tradition would be Toaster Oven Pizza Thursdays, with an aspirational chopped veggie salad on the side.

## **Lucy's Favorite Dessert - Ice Cream (with rainbow sprinkles, of course)**

# Help Spread the Word!

Thank you for reading  
*Ten Thousand Light Years from Okay.*

If you and your fellow book club members enjoyed the book, we'd appreciate you spreading the word to your friends and sharing your positive review or rating online. It really makes a difference.

Thank you!

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