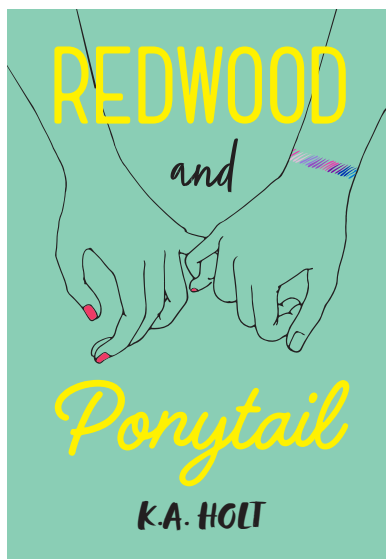


# REDWOOD and Ponytail

## BY K.A. HOLT



### ABOUT THE BOOK

Kate and Tam meet and both of their worlds tip sideways. At first, Tam figures Kate is your stereotypical cheerleader; Kate sees Tam as another tall jock. And yet, the more they keep running into each other, the more their expectations don't live up to the real thing.

It's complicated. Except it's not. When Kate and Tam meet, they fall in like. It's as simple as that. But not everybody sees it that way.

This novel in verse about two girls discovering their feelings for each other is a universal story of finding a way to be comfortable in your own skin, a story that will appeal to anyone who's ever been unsure about the self they're becoming.

### ABOUT THE GUIDE

This guide contains discussion questions designed to spark conversation about themes and ideas raised by this novel.

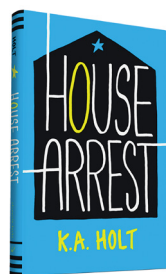
### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



K.A. Holt is the author of *Rhyme Schemer*, *House Arrest*, and *Knockout*, along with several other books for young people. She lives in Austin, Texas.



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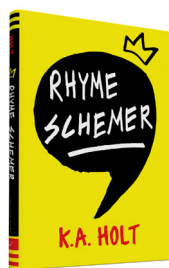
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For more information or questions about this discussion guide, contact Jaime Wong at [jaime\\_wong@chroniclebooks.com](mailto:jaime_wong@chroniclebooks.com).

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are Kate and Tam's first impressions of each other? What do they see on the surface? What do they decide about each other based on what they see? How accurate would you say their first impressions are?
2. At the beginning of the book, both Kate and Tam have a strong sense of who they are as individuals. Yet as the story unfolds, they each begin to doubt their sense of identity. What gives them their confidence initially? What specific incidents trigger their later doubts? Are each of them able to come to a better sense of who they really are by the end of the book? How?
3. How would you describe Kate and Tam's relationships with their mothers? Are they close? What do Kate and Tam want out of their relationships with their moms? Even though we don't get their points of view in this book, what do you think Kate and Tam's moms want from and for their daughters?
4. Kate says, "Dad's not wrong about my cheering uniform. / It does feel like a costume sometimes, / in a weird sort of way" (93). What is a costume? Why would Kate say that her cheer outfit is a costume in a "weird sort of way"? Why is she more comfortable dressed as the falcon mascot? Is that more, or less, of a costume for her? Is there anything that you like to wear that makes you feel more like yourself?
5. Later in the book, Tam calls Kate's cheering uniform "cheerleader camouflage." What do you think that means?
6. What roles do Jill and Frankie play in the book? Why are they so important to Kate and Tam?
7. When Levi first sees Tam's bracelet, he says, "Bracelet? / What? / You're suddenly a girl or something?" (196). What does Tam's bracelet symbolize to Levi? Is he right? Why or why not?
8. One of the most important settings in this book is the school cafeteria. Do students sit in the same sections of your school cafeteria every day? Is it a big deal if someone sits in a different section? What does it say about Kate's character that she decides to start sitting with Tam and Levi? Do you think it would be easier, or harder, for Tam to start sitting with Kate's group? Why?
9. Kate defines "perfection" as when "nothing's wrong" and says that "when nothing's wrong, / everyone's happy" (379). What do you think about her definition of perfection? What does the word "perfect" mean to you, and do you agree that when everything is perfect, everyone is happy? Why or why not?
10. The idea of "being normal" as opposed to "being weird" comes up a few times in the book, but the words "normal" and "weird" are used as placeholders for other words. What do the characters really mean when they say "normal"? What do they mean when they say "weird"? What is problematic about saying something is normal or weird?
11. How would you define a good friend? Who would you say is an example of a good friend in this book?
12. Much of this book addresses our sense of obligation and responsibility to others and to ourselves. How do Kate and Tam struggle with this? Do they resolve this struggle by the end of the book?
13. *Redwood and Ponytail* begins with a section titled "Now," then moves to "Before," switching up the sequence of events in the book. Why do you think the author did this? Can you think of other books that you've read before in which the author used flashbacks, or told the story out of sequence? How would the experience of reading the book have been different if the events had been told entirely in chronological order?
14. Who are Alex/Alyx/Alexx? Check out a few places in the book where they appear. Are they Kate's friends? Tam's friends? Something else? What purpose do they serve? What happens when you read the Alex/Alyx/Alexx poems side to side? What about when you read them up and down? Do they mean the same thing? What's your favorite quote from an Alex poem?
15. At the end of the book, Alex/Alyx/Alexx ask, "Was this a love story? / Was it almost tragic? / Was this a comedy?" How would you describe this book to a friend? What is one thing that it made you realize, figure out, or understand?