

About the Author



Lisa Heathfield launched her writing career with *SEED*, her stunning debut about a cult. Before becoming a mom to her three sons, she was a secondary school English teacher and loved inspiring teenagers to read. Lisa lives with her family in Brighton, England.



Flight of a Starling

Lisa Heathfield

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DISCUSSION GUIDE

She was alive. She was real. She was my sister.

Rita and Lo, sisters and best friends, have spent their lives on the wire—flying through the air in their trapeze act, never staying in one place for long. Behind the greasepaint and the glitter, they know that the true magic is the family they travel with.

Until Lo meets a boy. Suddenly, she wants nothing more than to stay still. And as secrets start to tear apart the close-knit circus community, how far will Lo go to keep her feet on the ground?

A story of sisterhood, family, love, and loss, from the award-winning author of *Paper Butterflies*.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why do Rita and Lo's parents forbid them from associating with flatties? Do you think something bad happened in the past, or are they trying to avoid something bad happening in the future?
2. Why does Rita feel jealous of Lo when she meets Dean? How does this affect Rita's approach to romantic relationships later in the story?
3. Rita thinks their family is lucky to live in the circus because it's the only place they fit in, but Lo isn't so sure. Why does Lo feel as though the circus lifestyle is a restriction on her freedoms but Rita feels the opposite?
4. Would the circus be better off with or without Rob? Why?
5. When Dean finds Lo crying by the fountain, why does he take her right to the abandoned soap factory without asking what's wrong?
6. Why does Lo slowly begin to identify with her changeling character in the circus act as the story progresses?
7. Is Lo protecting others or hurting others when she keeps her troubles secret? How does her decision to keep it all inside affect her?
8. Why does Lo begin to question the circus lifestyle when she meets Dean?
9. Lo says it is possible to miss what you've never had. Why does she think this, but Dean disagrees? Do you think you can miss what you've never had?
10. Why is Rita drawn to Rob and what makes him more interesting to her than Ash? When Rita confesses her love for Rob to Lo, is Lo's reaction helpful or harmful to Rita?
11. Why is Lo not able to come forward about her mother's affair? Is it her responsibility to do anything? Is she helping anyone by keeping it secret?
12. Lo gets to know her grandfather much better after they talk about her grandmother on the beach. What are the similarities and differences between how her grandfather misses her grandmother and how Lo misses Dean?
13. Why doesn't Lo decide to paint herself alongside the portrait she makes of her family?
14. Rita tells Lo that settling with someone from the circus is the right thing to do, but Lo doesn't want to settle for anyone less than Dean. Is it better to settle for safe love or strive for something riskier? Is Rita being hypocritical when she says this because Rob was originally a flattie, or does Rob now count as circus family?
15. Dean is worried that pursuing his passion for art as a career is a bad choice. What is he worried will happen, and what's the right decision for him to make to be happy?
16. Who or what is most responsible for Lo's decision? Why does she instantly regret it? Which has a more permanent effect: Lo's decision or the problems that drive her to do so?