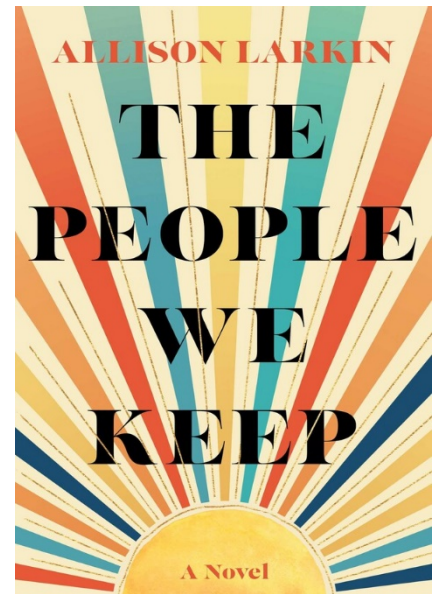


1. Margo, who owns the local town diner, is the closest thing to a parent the reader is introduced to at the outset of the novel. Having once dated April's father, Margo took April out to lunch after they separated, telling her, "What I want you to remember, girl, is that I'm not breaking up with you." Though Margo was candid when she said this, a young April remembers feeling disheartened by the prospect of more loss in her life. Discuss how loss can shape one's life. Can just the idea of losing someone affect how you respond to building relationships?

2. By chapter 6, it's become abundantly clear to April that she has to leave behind Little River, her selfish father, and her old life, all of which have nothing more to offer her. Was April's departure inevitable? If it wasn't, what might staying have looked like? Does April leaving potentially tell us anything about why her mother left years earlier?



3. April meets Adam, an architecture student, at the cafe shortly after she begins working there. When she needs a place to stay, he offers his couch. After initially hesitating, she decides to accept his offer. Adam thankfully proves both hospitable and generous, and in the following days, the two grow close. Discuss the likelihood and the risk of this kind of situation, as well as April's decision. How difficult is it to build trust with someone new? Would you accept Adam's offer if you were in April's place?

4. As her relationship with Adam becomes romantic, April finds that she can't tell him the truth about herself, that she's still underage. Her choice to withhold her age becomes fraught when Adam tells her about his stepmother forcing sex on him at a young age and how that has impacted him greatly. April even goes as far as changing the date of birth on her ID. Discuss why she might have done this. How can the fear of losing something important to you influence your actions?

5. April builds deep, lasting friendships with people who also feel lost and alone. As she grows close with Carly, the cafe manager opens up about her failed relationship, coming out to her parents, and being thrown out of her home. April and Adam even take Carly in for several nights. How does Carly's experience mirror/differ from April's? Consider how the two bond over what they share. Who else in the novel shares a lot with April?

6. The campground by the lake is the first place April finds after leaving Little River. She returns more than once in the book, first with Carly, then by herself when she's older. Discuss the importance of place and time in the novel. What important realizations has April had while at the lake?

7. Rosemary learns of April's fabricated date of birth on her ID after finding her wallet. Terrified that the truth about her age will be revealed, April makes the heartbreaking decision to leave Ithaca, and Adam and Carly. Consider the shock of being discovered. Is it at all confusing that April leaves? Discuss how this response to fear becomes a habit throughout the novel, how it may even be a kind of comfort for April to leave. Can what April experiences be considered a form of impostor syndrome? What is she an impostor of?

8. In part two, the novel jumps forward three years, and April has made a living on the road, performing in cafes and bars. "*Even though I know it's just a fairy tale, I keep waiting, waiting for you/To rescue me from the pale.*" Though April's songs draw from her life, she knows that her audience "make[s] my words mean what they need them to mean." How does April's music come to embody her lived experiences? Does she share anything in common with her music? Discuss how art and creativity can encompass personal struggle.

9. In chapter 35, April takes a road trip to Florida with a college student named Justin, who occasionally lets her crash at his place in Binghamton in exchange for being "his excitement." Nonchalant about his future, unsure of what he wants to do, and, buckling under career pressure from his father, Justin chooses to join April on the road for spring break. Compare and contrast Justin's desire to escape with April's. How do their similarities/differences make April, or you, feel?

10. Once April arrives in Asheville in chapter 42, she meets Ethan, who is a theatre teacher, while busking. He offers her a room in his house and helps her find work at his friend Robert's cafe. When he asks about her music, April responds saying that it's her way of getting by. "Your way of getting by is a lot of people's dream." Consider April's journey thus far. Would she view her path as a desirable one? Discuss how one person's dreams can differ from another person's reality. What are some jobs that seem ideal, but are probably different in reality?

11. Through Ethan, April and Robert grow close and their connection becomes romantic. "I sleep at Robert's house. All night. I don't leave before he wakes up. Sex is one thing—just putting parts together. It's another thing entirely to exist together. Robert is someone I want to exist with." What does it mean for April to have this realization? Discuss how her perspective on leaving and home has or hasn't changed at this point in the novel.