

## BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

### *Based on a True Story* by Elizabeth Renzetti

1. The book's epigraph, from Evelyn Waugh's *The Loved One* reads, "Her heart was broken perhaps but it was a small inexpensive organ of local manufacture." Why do you think the author chose this passage?
2. In a quote from Frances's newspaper profile, Augusta says stories are "what we tell ourselves to make sense of our lives" (p. 31). How does this apply to the book's main characters?
3. Augusta and Frances are unlikely partners, but their connection is undeniable. What do you think each woman sees in the other? It's clear that Frances saves Augusta from difficult situations, but does she get something from Augusta in return?
4. Do you find yourself rooting for Augusta despite her flaws? If so, what is it about her that makes her sympathetic?
5. Were the book's depictions of London and California what you expected? What do the two settings tell us about the differences between the celebrity cultures of the respective countries?
6. The whole purpose of Augusta's journey to California is ostensibly to stop Kenneth from writing about her, yet she doesn't seem wholly satisfied when she discovers that his book doesn't reveal her secrets after all. What does she really want?
7. Augusta puts a great deal of energy into maintaining her facade. Are there moments where Augusta is completely honest or where her true feelings come through?
8. Although it's clear that Augusta has difficulty maintaining close relationships, her friendship with Alma has weathered the test of time. Why do you think this is, and what does Alma mean to Augusta?

9. Do you believe Augusta when she professes not to remember the events that instigated her estrangement from her son? Are the holes in her memory the result of her substance abuse issues or something more complex?
10. When Frances says to Augusta, "I think perhaps I was meant to be a ghost" (p. 287), do her words have a deeper meaning?
11. As Frances and Augusta work on the new book, they come up with a number of potential titles, including *Giving Life the Finger: A Survivor's Guide to Overcoming Adversity*, *Deep-End Diva*, and the sadly rejected *Bitch in a Ditch*. If you were tasked with writing Augusta's life story, what would you call it?
12. At the end of the book, Augusta tells Frances, "Don't give the best of yourself to the world . . . Save the best part of yourself, the kindest and most resourceful part, for yourself" (p. 306). Do you think this is good advice? How might Augusta's life have turned out differently if she'd followed it herself?
13. Frances tells Augusta that her editor is pleased she's ended up back in rehab "because it gives the whole story a redemptive arc" (p. 305). Do you think Augusta's real-life narrative is redemptive? What do you think the future holds for her?