

FARRAR STRAUS GIROUX
DISCUSSION GUIDE

MEMOIRS OF A TEENAGE AMNESIAC

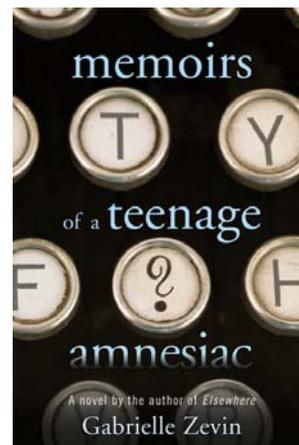
by Gabrielle Zevin

Reading Level

Grades 9 up

About the Novel

If Naomi had picked tails, she would have won the coin toss. She wouldn't have had to go back for the yearbook camera, and she wouldn't have hit her head on the steps. She wouldn't have woken up in an ambulance with amnesia. She certainly would have remembered her boyfriend, Ace. She might even have remembered why she fell in love with him in the first place. She would understand why her best friend, Will, keeps calling her "Chief." She'd know about her mom's new family. She'd know about her dad's fiancée. She never would have met James, the boy with the questionable past and the even fuzzier future, who tells her he once wanted to kiss her. She wouldn't have wanted to kiss him back. But Naomi picked heads.



Gabrielle Zevin has crafted an imaginative novel all about love and second chances.

Discussion Questions

The book opens with Naomi in an ambulance with amnesia. As Naomi is discovering who she is, so are you: as she is now, who she has been in the past, and who she wants to be. Focus on some of the things she discovers about her life over the last few years: some of them feel right, such as her friendship with Will; some startle her, such as her mother's remarriage; some mystify her, such as her relationship with Ace.

1. Build a profile of Naomi pre-amnesia.
2. Describe some of the "watershed" moments for Naomi—times when she does not act like the girl she was—for example, when she cuts her hair or quits yearbook. How are the actions defining who she will become?
3. Amnesia gives not only Naomi a second chance but also others in her life. Pick a character and examine how Naomi's amnesia affects his/her life.
4. Why is the fact that Naomi is an orphan important? How does the author weave this theme throughout the story?
5. Explore the symbolism of Naomi's being found as a baby in a typewriter case. How else are typewriters and books relevant to her story?
6. Photography is a recurring motif. How does it enrich the story?
7. Discuss the role of music throughout the book.
8. Compare and contrast Naomi and James.

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9. Examine the scene in which Naomi's memory returns. Why is it significant that it is the French word for camera that seems to open the floodgates? Why are the two memories Naomi recounts—and the individuals they involve—pivotal?
10. Read the prologue again. Speculate: Would Naomi have made some of the same choices/charges if she had not experienced amnesia?
11. What would you do with a second chance?



About the Author

Gabrielle Zevin's first young adult novel, *Elsewhere*, was an ALA Notable Book and a Quill Book Award nominee. Of her writing, *The New York Times Book Review* said, "Zevin's touch is marvelously light even as she considers profundities." She lives in New York City.

For more information on Gabrielle Zevin: Web site:

www.fsgkidsbooks.com

Includes a biography of the author and additional information about her novels.

Memoirs of a Teenage Amnesiac

by Gabrielle Zevin

ISBN-10: 0-374-34946-0 · ISBN-13: 978-0-374-34946-2

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