

Margaret Ferguson Books

THE PEOPLE WE CHOOSE

by Katelyn Detweiler

ABOUT THE BOOK

When Calliope Silversmith meets her new neighbor, Max, their chemistry is instantaneous, but the revelation of her sperm donor's identity throws her whole life into disarray.

Calliope Silversmith has always had just two friends in her small Pennsylvania town, Ginger and Noah, and she's fine with that. She's never wanted anything more than her best friends, her moms, their house in the woods, and their family-run yoga studio—except maybe knowing who her sperm donor is. Her curiosity has been building for years, and she can finally find out this summer when she turns eighteen.

Then Max and his family move into the house across the woods from Calliope, and she immediately feels a special connection with her new neighbor, one that feels different than just friendship. The stability of her longtime trio wavers over the next few weeks as she and Max start to spend more time together.

But when Calliope makes contact with her sperm donor she learns a surprising truth: her donor is Max's father. How is this even possible?

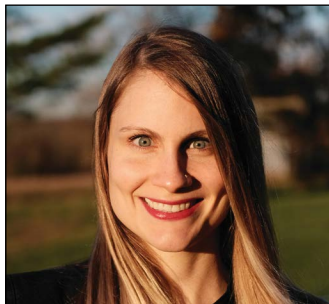
As she and Max struggle to redefine their friendship now that they know they're half-siblings, Calliope realizes she has much to gain by recognizing and accepting that family is both the one she has been born into, and the one she chooses to make.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Describe the friendship between Calliope, Ginger, and Noah. How is their friendship tested when Noah falls in love with Calliope? Noah isn't around for most of the summer. Discuss how he is there when Calliope needs him the most.
- Calliope has made a rule that she won't date before college. What are her reasons? Explain how Noah is the root of her decision. Max moves next door and complicates the issue. At what point does Ginger notice the chemistry between Calliope and Max? What is the first hint that Calliope is starting to have feelings for Max?

- Ginger thinks that Calliope overthinks everything. Cite passages that support Ginger’s assessment. Explain what Ginger means when she says, “Just let life happen sometimes” (p. 13). What happens when Calliope follows Ginger’s advice?
- Calliope has two moms and was conceived using a sperm donor. Discuss why she calls the unknown sperm donor Frank. She is allowed to learn the identity of the donor when she turns eighteen. She wonders if she needs to know who he is, or if she wants to know. What is the difference between the two? Discuss the pros and cons of finding the donor. Why does Calliope contemplate Frank’s identity, but doesn’t care which of her moms supplied the egg? What does this reveal about Calliope’s relationship with Mama and Mimmy?
- Why doesn’t Calliope tell Mama and Mimmy that she contacted the sperm bank? What makes her suspect that Frank is Elliott Jackson? Mama detects that something is bothering Calliope. She says, “Whatever it is, whatever the implications are. Face it head-on and be brave” (p. 173). How does this give Calliope the courage to confront Elliot? Elliot says, “I can’t believe you are my daughter.” Calliope corrects him and says, “Not a daughter. Donor offspring. Those are two hugely different things” (p. 181). How might Calliope explain the difference to Elliott?
- Describe the Jackson family. What did Elliott Jackson hope to gain by moving his family to Green Woods? Why does Max resent the move? Explain why Calliope thinks the Jackson family is “haunted.” How does Elliott’s childhood explain his sadness and anger? Debate whether Elliott knows how to be a father. Discuss whether Max envies Calliope’s relationship with her two moms. What does he mean when he says her family is “totally its own”?
- What is Max’s reaction when he learns that Calliope is his biological half-sister? Why is he so upset to learn that his dad knew this before he did? How does this make his relationship with his dad worse? Calliope tells Max, “I need to learn how to love you without being in love with you” (p. 191). What is the difference in “loving” and “being in love”? Explain the following metaphor: “The funeral has ended. The real mourning has begun” (p. 210). Discuss the difference in the ways Calliope and Max deal with grief.
- The Jackson house is rundown and scary. It is believed to have an evil and sinister history. How did it become such a legend in Green Woods? Max says, “This house never shuts up, creaks and groans and rattles. Like it’s settling into its own deathbed or something” (p. 48). Discuss the “deathbed” metaphor. How is it an appropriate description of the house? Discuss how Calliope reacts when she learns the truth about the house. Explain Max’s reaction when he learns that his dad told Calliope what happened in the Jackson house, but couldn’t tell his son.
- Calliope gets a fortune cookie at a Chinese restaurant. It says, “Make family your friends, and friends your family” (p. 270). How does this explain the title of the book?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Katelyn Detweiler is the author of several books for young adults, including *The Undoing of Thistle Tate*. Says *Booklist*, “this book is perfect for readers struggling with questions of how far to go to protect those you love. . . . Thistle is affable and easy to commiserate with, and, despite her increasingly complicated situation, her plight is lovingly and respectfully written.” Katelyn’s most recent book is *The People We Choose*. Katelyn is a literary agent representing books for all ages and lives with her husband and son in Brooklyn, New York.