

## DAMSELFLY QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1

From the outset of *Damselfly*, Mel seems to represent the orderly, civilized, and compassionate side of human nature, while Rittika typifies the violent, selfish, animalistic side. In what ways is Sam pushed and pulled between these two opposing forces? Though Mel and Rittika usually appear radically different, in what ways are they similar?

2

In the first pages of *Damselfly*, Sam reveals, “I didn’t know how to function without my cell, my iPad, and my laptop. They were as much a part of my everyday life as my toothbrush.” Like Sam, many people—especially teenagers—are more connected to technology than at any other time in history. In what ways does an absence of technology, and in particular an absence of social media, affect the teens’ experience on the island?

3

It can be argued that the girls—specifically Sam, Rittika, and Mel—are the central characters in *Damselfly*, and that the boys are more peripheral. Do you agree with this assessment? Why or why not? How might the plot of *Damselfly* have been different if Chester, Rish, and Pablo were in charge of major decisions?

4

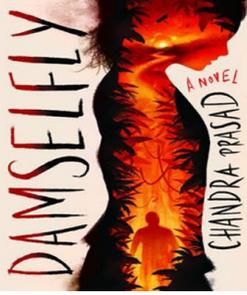
Why do you think the novel is named *Damselfly*? Do you think the title is appropriate? Why or why not? What title might you pick for the book?

5

Throughout the book Sam painfully recalls her troubled home life. Conversely, she describes the Sharpe household in glowing, happy terms. At Mel’s house, she fondly recalls “whooping and hollering and running amok, five blondes and one brunette, all of us clutching birch spears we’d whittled ourselves. All of us ecstatically free.” Compare and contrast Sam’s own home with Mel’s.

6

Like Chester and Ming, Sam is mixed-race (half South Asian, half Caucasian). In what ways does Sam’s multiracial identity seem to affect her sense of self both on and off the island?



## DAMSELFY QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION (CONTINUED)

7

In Chapter 7 Rittika describes how the kids on the island fall into two groups: the Golds and the Pales. She says, “We’re naturally stronger, Sam. Me, you, Rish, Pablo, too. And it’s not just our skin I’m talking about. Darker people in general—we’re survivors. We’ve always been survivors. Unlike the Pales over there.” Why is Rittika trying to convince Sam of this distinction? Do you think her argument is logical? Why or why not? Do you think she would be able to make the same argument at Drake Rosemont?

8

Anne Marie reveals to Sam in Chapter 9 that she is experiencing side effects as a result of not having access to her daily medication. “I have a hard time figuring out what’s real and what’s not. The world, like, loses its structure,” she says. In what ways does Anne Marie’s untreated mental health condition make her experience on the island unique?

9

Animals and nature abound in *Damselfly*. From wild boars, ibises, poison dart frogs, ants, and monkeys to bamboo canes, giant trees, creepers, conches, and sharks, Mother Nature is in every chapter of the book. How does nature’s abundance impact the setting and tone of *Damselfly*?

10

When Mel breaks her arm, she suddenly becomes as reliant on Sam as Sam has been on Mel in the past. How does this shift in power dynamics affect their friendship?

11

In the end, Sam and Mel leave the island on a raft, while the others stay behind. Which characters do you think stand a better chance of survival? Why?

12

If the kids in *Damselfly* eventually return to regular society, how might life be different for each of them as a result of having spent time on the island?