

# EVERYTHING'S FINE



A NOVEL

Cecilia Rabess

---

# W E L C O M E !

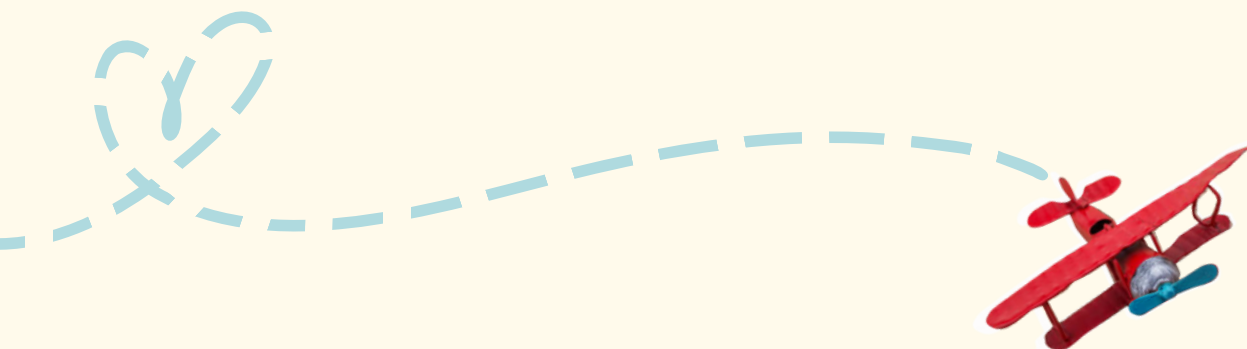
---

This book club kit for **Everything's Fine** includes an introduction to the novel and its themes, discussion questions, and ideas for enhancing your book club (why not try a Strawberry Smash, you know Jess would want you to).

The suggested questions are intended to help your reading group find new and interesting angles and topics for your discussion.

I hope that these ideas will enrich your conversations and increase your enjoyment of the book.

---



Dear Reader,

Everything's Fine is a story about love and it's funny (I hope), but it's not a romantic comedy. It's a novel about a Black woman, navigating white spaces, trying to figure out who she is and, more importantly, who she has the right to be, but it's also not quite a coming-of-age-story. And it's about money and industry and financial precarity, but it's not a workplace novel either. It's none of these things, because it's all of these things.

At its core, though, it's the story of two very different young people who fall reluctantly, complicatedly, passionately in love. Jess meets Josh. She's Black. He's white. She's liberal and though he's conservative, opposites attract. Tale as old as time. But Everything's Fine is a different kind of love story. Because as much as I love a good love story (always have, always will) I think even the best ones can often exist in binary: bubblegum rom-com on the one hand and war torn lovers and somebody dies at the end on the other. I wanted to write something that occupied the space in between. Something that felt real and nuanced and contemporary.

Something that asked more questions than it answered. Questions about race and class and politics and identity. Questions like: What does it mean to be a Black woman moving through a white world, when your relationship with your blackness is constantly being tested, not only by the man you love, but also by your own insecurities? What happens in a relationship when one person says "politics" and the other says "my humanity"? Can people really ever just "agree to disagree"? What do we compromise in order to live and love in challenging times? And what if this isn't a love story that asks will they, but should they?

Writing this novel, and writing towards these answers was sometimes sad, sometimes funny, but always absolutely exhilarating. I hope your experience reading this book is much the same.

Thank you and all the best,

*Cecilia R.*

*Josh  
Jess*

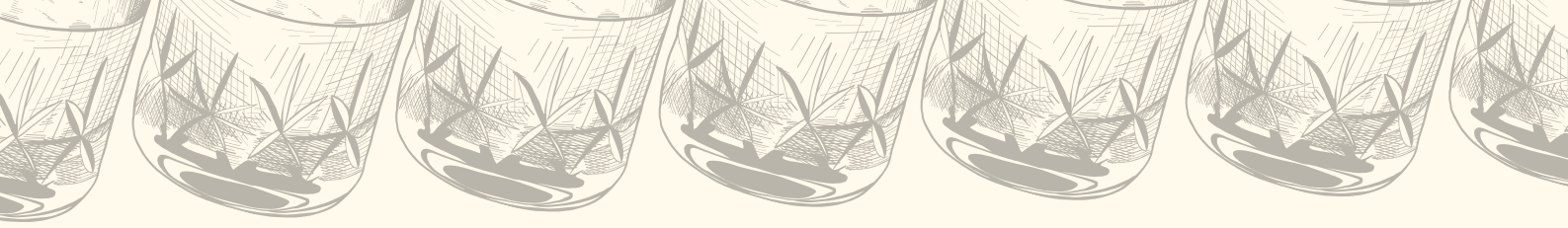
---

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

---

1. What was your initial impression of Jess? Of Josh? How did your impression of the characters change over the course of the book?
2. How does the relationship between the two main characters evolve over time?
3. Jess and Josh have very different relationships with money; how do their relationships with money affect each of their choices at work, in relationships (with family, friends, romantically), and in other areas of their lives?
4. Jess struggles with defining what it means to be successful. How does her definition of success change over the course of the book? How would the different people in her life—Josh, her father, her friends—define success?
5. The novel is set partially in the world of investment banking and finance. How does this setting contribute to the themes and conflicts in the book?
6. Are the characters' political identities portrayed in a realistic way?
7. Jess is a Black character who moves through the world in predominantly white spaces. She grew up in Nebraska, has mainly white friends, and then, after graduating, works at companies that aren't very diverse. As Jess evolves and matures over the course of the book, how do you think her relationship with her Blackness changes?
8. Jess was never fully open with her father about the details of her life in New York. If her father had lived to see Jess at the end of the book—and if Jess had filled him in on her life—what do you think he'd have made of various aspects of her life? Do you think his assessment would have aligned with Jess's expectation of said assessment?
9. Everything's Fine is not a traditional "will they, won't they" narrative, but more a "should they, shouldn't they," story. Do you think the author takes a clear position on whether Jess and Josh should or shouldn't be together? Do you think they should or shouldn't be together?
10. Do you think Jess and Josh's relationship will survive? Where do you see them—as individuals or as a couple—in the years after the book ends?
11. After finishing the book, how would you categorize it? Did the book—and the love story within it—align with your expectations? In which ways—if any—did the book subvert your expectations?





---

# STRAWBERRY SMASH

---

4 large strawberries  
(fresh, hulled)

2 oz peach schnapps  
(or, peach ice tea)

2 oz vodka (optional)

1 oz lime juice

6 oz lemon-lime soda

---

1. Add strawberries and peach schnapps (/peach ice tea) to cocktail shaker.
  2. Muddle with drink muddler until strawberries are broken and mashed.
  3. Add vodka (optional), lime juice, and 1/2 cup ice.
  4. Add top to drink shaker and shake vigorously for 30 seconds.
  5. Pour entire contents of shaker cup into glass and top with lemon-lime soda. Stir to combine.
  6. Serve garnished with extra strawberry slices.
- 

Recipe from: <https://jennifermeyering.com/strawberry-smash-cocktail/>



# SPOTIFY PLAYLIST



## Everything's Fine by Cecilia Rabess
















Music included and used as inspiration for EVERYTHING'S FINE by Cecilia Rabess



Simon Books

Scan this QR code for the  
Everything's Fine playlist:



1	 <b>Empire State Of Mind</b> E JAY-Z, Alicia Keys	The Blueprint 3	"Eight million stories!" So many people and perspectives give NYC its energy.	4:37
2	 <b>Ivy League Circus</b> Gordon Voidwell	Ivy League Circus	College classmates who "missed" each other — in more ways than one.	4:03
3	 <b>bad guy</b> Billie Eilish	WHEN WE ALL FALL ASLEEP, WHERE DO ...	Not actually a song about a "bad guy." But not, not a song about a bad guy, either...	3:14
4	 <b>Pool Party</b> nite swim	Pool Party	This one is diegetic and pairs perfectly with a pool party — it's fun, it's sexy, it's wet!	3:27
5	 <b>Primetime (feat. Miguel)</b> Janelle Monáe, Miguel	The Electric Lady	The temperature is rising...	4:40
6	 <b>Sexual Healing - Kygo Radio Edit</b> Marvin Gaye, Kygo	Sexual Healing (Kygo Radio Edit)	Now the heat is officially all the way up!	3:05
7	 <b>Drunk in Love (feat. Jay-Z)</b> E Beyoncé, JAY-Z	BEYONCÉ [Platinum Edition]	Love is a potent drug that'll make you do things you normally wouldn't (for better or worse!)	5:23
8	 <b>I Can Change</b> LCD Soundsystem	This Is Happening	The million dollar question: can people change?	5:52
9	 <b>Treat You Better</b> RÜFÜS DU SOL	SOLACE	The billion dollar question: can anything compel a person to change?	4:34
10	 <b>Daddy</b> Beyoncé	Dangerously In Love	A father/daughter relationship can be one of the most deep and nourishing there is.	4:58
11	 <b>Happier Than Ever</b> E Billie Eilish	Happier Than Ever	Wait for the transition—it changes things (not unlike this novel.)	4:59
12	 <b>Sorry</b> E Beyoncé	Lemonade	Middle fingers up. Bye boy. Better call Becky with the good hair. Iconic!	3:53
13	 <b>Feeling Myself</b> Nicki Minaj, Beyoncé	The Pinkprint (Deluxe)	The confidence that a good haircut and a good hug can bring.	3:58
14	 <b>Old Thing Back (feat. Ja Rule and Ralph Tresvant)</b> E Matoma, The Notorious B.I.G., Ja Rule, Ralph Tresvant	Old Thing Back (feat. Ja Rule and Ralph Tres...	You know that heady, roller-coaster feeling of getting an "old thing back." Whee!	5:22
15	 <b>To Pimp A Butterfly</b> E Kendrick Lamar	To Pimp A Butterfly	But guess what? The check always comes due. Especially in America.	4:28



WHAT HAVE YOU GOT TO LOSE WHEN YOU FALL IN LOVE?

ABOUT THE  
  
AUTHOR

Cecilia Rabess previously worked as a data scientist at Google and as an associate at Goldman Sachs. Her nonfiction has been featured in *McSweeney's*, *FiveThirtyEight*, *Fast Company*, and *FlowingData*, among other places. *Everything's Fine* is her debut novel.

You can find news and updates from Cecilia on TikTok and Instagram:

[@cesafra](#)

and through her website:

[www.ceciliarabess.com](http://www.ceciliarabess.com)



THE NOVEL OF THE SUMMER