



# WHAT IF IT'S US?

by Becky Albertalli and Adam Silvera

## BOOKTALK

Arthur is sure the universe has big plans for him. He's finally in New York, the home of all his favorite musicals, he's got an internship at his mom's law firm, and he's excited about applying to Ivy League schools next year. Ben is convinced the universe hates him, especially considering that he just broke up with his boyfriend and now he's stuck in summer school instead of finishing his epic fantasy novel. When Art and Ben randomly meet at the post office, their attraction is immediate, even if the timing isn't perfect. But finding each other again in the big city is a long shot, even with the help of great friends and the power of Instagram. When they finally do reconnect, they realize that sometimes things don't have to be perfect to be just right—and the universe may have plans they never expected.

## QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

**UNIVERSE.** While Arthur thinks the universe wants them to be together, Ben tells him, “The universe just got the ball rolling. We made us happen” (p. 405). What role do you think the universe plays in Arthur and Ben's lives? What specific moments in the novel influence your thinking? Do you agree with Arthur that fate determines your destiny, or do you agree with Ben that your own actions matter more? Can you name a time in your own life when it felt like the universe meant for things to happen?

**EXPECTATIONS.** Throughout the novel, both Arthur and Ben struggle to live up to expectations. In what ways does Ben let the pressure of expectations affect him—in school, in his writing, and in his relationships with others? Do you think Ben eventually manages to overcome the disconnect between expectations and reality? How is Arthur affected by the high expectations his mom places on him to thrive at his summer internship at the law firm? If you were giving Ben and Arthur advice on how to deal with high expectations, what would you tell them?

**SECOND CHANCES.** After resuming his friendship with Hudson, Ben thinks, “Maybe this is the do-over I needed all along” (p. 328). Why is this do-over so

important to Ben? What are some of the other examples of second chances that characters give each other in this novel? How would their stories be different without those second chances? Can you think of a time when you gave someone or asked them for a second chance?

**MUSIC.** While singing with Arthur, Ben reflects that “Every song we choose feels like we're having a conversation without saying a single word” (p. 281). What do each character's music tastes reveal about him or her? How do characters in the novel use their own art, such as music, writing, or even Instagram photos, to express themselves? What forms of self-expression are you most drawn to, and how do they reflect you?

**WHAT IF?** At the end of the novel, Ben wonders, “What if we rewrite everything we expect from happy endings? Or...What if we haven't seen the best us yet?” (p. 433). What do Ben's questions reveal about his character's growth over the course of the novel? Why do you think the authors chose to use “What if” questions in the titles of the novel and of each section? Do you ever ask “What if” questions like Ben and Arthur do? What do those questions sound like?