

Dear Mr. Knightley: Book Club Questions

1. Sam found a “safe haven” in books. Do you have places to which you naturally gravitate when you feel afraid, hurt or vulnerable?
2. Hannah accuses Sam of “hiding.” Knowing Sam’s past, it may seem justified. Was it? Do you hide? Why?
3. Sam declares at the beginning of the story that she does not forgive, but does so at the end? What changes for her? What are barriers to forgiveness?
4. How hard is it to recognize a “Josh”– a Wickham, a Willoughby, a Henry Crawford? Why do we let them “impose” on us? “Injure” us? Is there a difference?
5. Sam states that Kyle will need “more courage to learn to surrender” than he needed to survive his abusive childhood or than he needed to write about it. What does “surrender” mean? Do you agree with Sam?
6. Alex states that he “doesn’t like to disappoint people”? Is that a failing or a virtue? How would Alex answer that?
7. Sam writes that the Muirs drop “hope and hints like breadcrumbs.” What does that mean? Was that the right approach for the Muirs to take to introduce love and Christ? Could Sam have heard or understood a more overt approach? What stands in our way when hearing and absorbing such messages?
8. Was Alex right to continue in his anonymity? If not, when did it go too far? Is it justifiable to withhold the truth from someone when you believe it’s in that person’s best interests?
9. Did Alex manipulate Sam with the letters?
10. Do agree with Father John that the “best” for Sam is finding her way around the “real world and its people”?
11. Did Father John take away Sam’s “right to choose” by selecting journalism? Was it her right or was it a gift to accept or reject as offered?
12. So many characters change in this story – Sam, Alex, Kyle, and Ashley. It offers up the notion that we are all constantly changing, defining and redefining ourselves. Do you believe that? If so, at what point, does that end?
13. Sam states that Austen is brilliant partly because she so accurately reflects human nature and “human nature doesn’t change.” Do you believe that? Can our natures change? If so, what might change them?
14. The professor tells Sam she can “walk away” at the end. Did his advice surprise you? Why? Why did he give her that advice?