

TO THE WORLD, THEY WERE A SCANDAL.
TO EACH OTHER, AN OBSESSION.

THE FAVORITES

LAYNE FARGO

a novel

BOOK CLUB KIT

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What threads does *The Favorites* share with its literary inspiration, *Wuthering Heights*? Where do the stories differ?
2. How does Kat Shaw's self-description in the beginning ("a bitch, a diva, a sore loser . . .") shape your initial perception of her? How does this perception evolve throughout the book?
3. Kat's ambition often conflicts with her relationships. How does her drive to be the best impact her connections with Heath, Garrett, and Bella?
4. Heath Rocha's background is touched upon briefly. How do his racial and cultural identity play into his experiences and relationships within the story?
5. Kat loves Heath—but she loves skating even more. What was it like for you to read a love story where one of the leads prioritizes something else over her love interest?
6. Sheila Lin is a significant mentor figure in the book. How does her influence shape the paths of the younger skaters, and what does her character reveal about the pressures of competitive sports?
7. What makes Bella and Garrett Lin such perfect competition for Kat and Heath? How do the relationships—and everyone's skating—change when the foursome switches partners?
8. What roles do race and class play in the novel? How do these themes affect the characters and their trajectories?
9. The book includes multiple perspectives and flashbacks, as well as interview transcripts. How does this narrative structure affect your understanding of the characters and their motivations? How does author Layne Fargo use these devices to add tension and foreshadowing?
10. How do Kat and Heath's reputations—on the ice-dancing circuit and then in the blogs and tabloids—affect their senses of self? Conversely, how do they change as people when they're out of the spotlight?
11. The theme of betrayal runs deep in the novel. Discuss specific instances of betrayal and how they affect the characters' dynamics and development.
12. "When I was strong and self-assured, people recoiled from me," Kat says. "They told me I was too competitive, too ambitious, too much. But when I was brought low, bruised and bleeding, a princess in need of rescue instead of a conquering queen, they loved me." Discuss the parts of herself Kat feels compelled to hide.
13. How does Heath change after Russia? What did it teach him? What did the experience teach Kat?
14. Discuss Kat and Bella's friendship. Did you think it was authentic—or would you call them frenemies?
15. Kat's outburst during the interview about being asked when she will start a family highlights gender expectations. How does the book address the pressures faced by women in sports—and society at large?
16. What does the book suggest about the cost of ambition? Are the characters' sacrifices justified by their achievements?
17. What did you think of the ending of the book?

MEET THE ICE DANCERS

Name:

Katarina Shaw
USA

Skating Partners:

Heath Rocha, Garrett Lin

Strengths:

- Fierce Determination
- Bold Independence
- Artistic Expression

Weaknesses:

- Rebellious Nature
- Emotional Turbulence
- Intense Rivalries

Katarina Shaw has always known she was destined for greatness, despite lacking a famous name, funding, or family support. Her instant connection with Heath Rocha, a foster kid, made them an unstoppable duo on the ice, known for their scorching chemistry and rebellious style.

“Call me what you want. I don’t give a damn anymore. My story is mine, and I’ll tell it the same way I skated: in my own way, on my own terms.”

Name:

Heath Rocha
USA

Skating Partners:

Katarina Shaw, Bella Lin

Strengths:

- Emotional Depth
- Musical Expression
- Resilience

Weaknesses:

- Emotional Volatility
- Guarded Past
- Dependence on Kat

Heath Rocha, a child of the foster care system, found solace in figure skating and an unbreakable bond with Katarina Shaw. Their partnership on the ice was both his anchor and Achilles’s heel.

“Katarina, you’re my home.”

Name:

Isabella “Bella” Lin
USA

Skating Partners:

Heath Rocha, Garrett Lin

Strengths:

- Ambition
- Technical Skill
- Competitive Spirit

Weaknesses:

- Pressure of Legacy
- Rivalries
- Perfectionism

Bella Lin, daughter of legendary skater Sheila Lin, has always been at the top of the skating world. Confident, ambitious, and willing to do whatever it takes to win, Bella is both a friend and a rival to Kat. Her drive to surpass her mother’s legacy defines her.

“I want my mother to be a footnote on my page in the record books.”

MEET THE ICE DANCERS

Name:

Garrett Lin
USA

Skating Partners:

Bella Lin, Kat Shaw

Strengths:

- Steadiness
- Supportiveness
- Technical Precision

Weaknesses:

- Identity Struggles
- Emotional Restraint

Garrett Lin, Bella's twin brother, shares the same high expectations and talent on the ice. Known for his steady and supportive nature, Garrett is the yin to Kat's yang. He wants to support his sister, but also needs to find his own identity and path.

"It wasn't enough to compete. We were expected to win."

Name:

Ellis Dean
USA

Skating partner:

Josephine Hayworth

Strengths:

- Charisma
- Perception
- Wit

Weaknesses:

- Cynicism
- Uses Humor as a Shield
- Provocateur

Ellis Dean is a former skater-turned-commentator known for his sharp wit and keen observations about the world of figure skating. Charismatic and perceptive, Ellis often sees through the facades of those around him.

"You want to win on the ice, you have to win here first."

Name:

Sheila Lin
USA (Retired)

Skating partner:

Kirk Lockwood

Strengths:

- Ambition
- Expertise
- Leadership

Weaknesses:

- Ruthlessness
- High Expectations
- Emotional Distance

Sheila Lin is a two-time Olympic gold medalist and the tough, ambitious mother of Bella and Garrett Lin. Running an elite skating school, Sheila has high expectations for her children and students, and is known for her ruthless drive and expertise.

"Yes, I do consider myself a role model—for all American women."

PLAYLIST

“Perhaps, Perhaps, Perhaps” by CAKE

“Frozen” by Madonna

“Night and Day” by Ella Fitzgerald

“Try Again” by Aaliyah

“Fever” by Peggy Lee

“Sour Times” by Portishead

“The Good Fight” by Dashboard Confessional

“Truly Madly Deeply” by Savage Garden

“Haunt Me” by Sade

“Somewhere Only We Know” by Keane

“Under Ice” by Kate Bush

“Promiscuous” by Nelly Furtado

“At the Heart of It All” by Nine Inch Nails

“Wicked Game” by Vitamin String Quartet

“Bad Romance” by Lady Gaga

“Rolling in the Deep” by Adele

“Crazy in Love—Electro Swing Version”
by Swing Republic

“Damned If She Do” by The Kills

“The One That Got Away” by The Civil Wars

“The Last Time” by Taylor Swift
feat. Gary Lightbody

SCAN THE QR CODE
FOR THE FULL PLAYLIST



ICE DANCING: RULES AND FUN FACTS

Rules to Remember:

It's All About the Rhythm: Unlike other figure skating disciplines, ice dancing focuses on rhythm, interpretation of the music, and precise steps. It's like ballroom dancing on ice!

Dances on Ice: Competitions include the Rhythm Dance and the Free Dance, each testing the skaters on timing, technique, and artistry.

Touch Is a Must: Partners must remain in contact almost the entire performance in ice dancing, unlike pairs in figure skating where throws and separations are common.

No High Flying Allowed: You won't see any triple axels here. Jumps used to be left out of the ice dance discipline entirely. Now simple partner-assisted single or half rotations are allowed, still emphasizing grace over acrobatics.

The Lifts Are Different: While both ice dancing and figure skating have lifts, ice dance lifts have restrictions; in ice dance, the lifting partner cannot fully extend their arms (locking out their elbows). In pairs figure skating, they can.

Fun Facts:

A Dazzling Debut: Ice dancing was first recognized as a competition sport in 1952 and made its Olympic debut in 1976. It's been captivating audiences ever since!

Not Just a Cold Climate Game: Surprisingly, Australia made history with its ice dance team. Despite being a country known for its beaches rather more than its ice rinks, Danielle McGrath and Francis Rigby competed in the World Championships in 1980.

The Fashion Statement: Ice dancers' costumes are often more elaborate and thematic compared to other figure skaters.

Perfect Harmony: The goal of ice dancing is to appear as one unit moving across the ice. Achieving this level of synchronicity requires years of practice and a deep, intuitive connection between the partners. See Tessa Virtue and Scott Moir's "Moulin Rouge" performance at the 2018 PyeongChang Olympics for a perfect example.

Legendary Moves: A key ice-dancing move is the "twizzle." The silly name may conjure visions of licorice, but it's one of the most difficult elements to execute well: The skaters' rotations have to match up exactly.