Girls with Bright Futures

By Tracy Dobmeier and Wendy Katzman

1. The novel begins with Maren and WInnie having a tough conversation with the Elliott Bay Academy (EBA) college counselor regarding the Stanford early admissions process. How does this conversation reflect about schools like EBA, its politics, and how it operates?
2. Maren and Winnie planned to emphasize Winnie’s first-gen status. What would college admissions look like without this and other hooks such as athletics, legacy, or development priorities?
3. WHen Maren compares herself to Alicia, Kelly, and the other parents, she struggles to feel well-connected. Even Kelly, who is wealthy by every reasonable standard, feels inadequate in comparison to Alicia. How do Maren and Kelly handle these self-comparisons?
4. The three women in this book are vastly different from one another. However, they share a common goal--securing what’s best for their child. What do you make of the dynamic in which each character’s actions seemed to push another character to go to further lengths to achieve her goals? Do you think any of them crossed a line?
5. What was one of your favorite humorous moments in the book? Have you ever encountered a person or situation that mirrors their behavior?
6. Maren struggles with the trauma in her own past and Winnie’s origin story. If you were in Maren’s position, would you have consented to meeting with Chase and Naomi? If you were in Winnie’s position, would you have taken the donor match test to see if you could help Eli?
7. DNA testing plays a role in the novel. Have you ever taken a DNA test? What are some of the positives and negatives associated with widespread use of this technology?
8. The book ends with details about where the families are in one year. How do you think the relationships will evolve over the next few years?
9. Ultimately, what do you think the book says about how privilege, opportunity, and ambition cycle through our society?
10. Do you think that parents are more amped up about college competition than in previous generations? If so, why?