

Discussion Questions
The Hidden Life of Aster Kelly

1. The novel focuses primarily on the two female protagonists, Aster and Lissy. Did you relate to one more than the other? Why?
2. Did you know previously about what was called the “lavender scare” in Hollywood during the studio era, namely the studios’ fear of the public discovering that an actor was gay? What do you think about how Fernando, Christopher and Aster handled the situation?
3. Aster makes several major choices throughout the book which might be described as courageous or bold, and yet others might think them rash or naïve. What did you think of Aster’s key decisions? Why? Would you have made different choices?
4. In fact, many of the characters in this book make similarly significant decisions (including Lissy, Christopher and Noah) that impact those around them. What do you think of each of these characters’ major decisions? Would you have done something different?
5. Do you think there are times for keeping secrets or do you think it’s best for the truth always to be on the table?
6. Aster thinks at one point (pg. 84) “Kids never do get to know their parents as young people with a life ahead of them, only as caretakers, or as impediments, or both.” Have you experienced this (either as a parent, or as a child not knowing much about your own parent’s past)?
7. Aster and Lissy both struggle to find their true calling. Do their winding paths ring true to your life experience?
8. Did you recognize the musical Lissy convinces Bae to pass up before it was named? What do you think about Lissy and Bae’s relationship? How do you think you’d feel about it all if you were Bae?
9. There are three main love stories in this book. Were you rooting for one in particular? All of them? Why or why not?