

The Good Sister Discussion Questions

by Sally Hepworth

Author Bio: (from Fantastic Fiction & Authors Website)

Sally Hepworth has lived around the world, spending extended periods in Singapore, the U.K., and Canada, where she worked in event management and Human Resources. Sally lives in Melbourne, Australia with her husband and two children.

Characters:

- **Fern Castle** – (27) – Librarian. On the autism spectrum. Has a black belt in Karate. Has a twin sister, Rose.
- **Rose Ingrid Castle** – (27) – Interior designer. Diabetic. Desperately wants a baby, but cannot have one. Has a twin sister, Fern. Her ex-husband is Owen. Has a dog, Alfie.
- **Carmel** – Rose’s new boss at the library.
- **Gayle** – Rose’s library coworker.
- **Mrs. Hazelbury** – Rose’s nosy neighbor.
- **Janet** – Rose’s former library manager and mentor. Died of a massive stroke at the library.
- **Linda** – Rose’s library coworker. Children’s librarian.
- **Mum (Nina Castle)** – Rose and Fern’s mother. Neglected the girls as children. Overdosed. In a permanent care facility. Has brain damage.
- **Onnab** – Nurse at Rose and Fern’s mother’s nursing home.
- **Owen** – Rose’s ex-husband.
- **Rocco “Wally” Ryan** – Computer programmer. Living the van life. On the high end of the spectrum.
- **Teresa** – Mum’s new speech pathologist at the permanent care facility.

Discussion Questions:

1. Did you like the book? Why or why not?
2. The story is told from Fern’s first-person perspective interspersed with Rose’s diary entries. Why do you think the author told the story in this way? Did it work?
3. Would you consider this book a Mystery? Thriller? Crime Drama? Psychological Thriller? Romance? Domestic Thriller? Something else? Why?
4. What were your initial impression of the relationship between Fern and Rose?

5. Is Fern a reliable narrator? Is Rose? Whose story is more believable? Why? Did your opinion change over the course of the book?
6. How did Fern's autism help her with her library job? How is it a disadvantage? If you were Fern's boss, what would you do?
7. For those of you who know someone on the Autism Spectrum, what do you think of the author's depiction of Fern and Wally?
8. What was behind Fern's decision to have a baby for Rose? What decision would you have made in a similar situation?
9. Fern considers Rose her "person." Why was Fern so reliant on Rose?
10. Fern is on the autism spectrum and deals with sensory issues while Rose has type 1 diabetes and is unable to have a baby. How did Rose use Fern's condition to manipulate and control her?
11. Fern meets Rocco, who she nicknames Wally, at the library. What did you think about their relationship and romance?
12. Rocco chooses to live "the van life." Is choosing the van life different than being homeless and living in a van? How is it different? Had you ever heard of this lifestyle choice before this book?
13. Do you think Rocco's lifestyle was caused by his being on the spectrum? Why might "the van life" be attractive to someone with sensory issues?
14. The sisters share a dark past. Fern inadvertently killed her mother's boyfriend's son. But we later learn that Rose had a big hand in his death. Were you surprised by this? Why do you think the police decided not to investigate it?
15. What do you think about Rose's interactions as a child with her mother? How did her experience of her mother differ from Fern's? Whose experience is more truthful?
16. Can two people who live through the same event have different experiences and memories of it? Has that ever happened to you?
17. Were you surprised about what happened to Rose and Fern's mother at the end? Did you suspect something was not as it initially seemed? Why or why not?
18. When did Fern realize she didn't want to give up her baby to Rose?
19. If and when did you start to have suspicions about Rose? Or were you surprised at the reveal at the end of the book? Why or why not?
20. What did you think about the ending? What happens next for Fern and Wally? Will Fern talk to Rose again?
21. Who is 'the good sister' in this story?
22. Books can have different covers based on the demographics of the area it is being released in. On the last page of this handout, we have different covers. Which one do you like better? Why?

23. Sally Hepworth has written other books. Will you read any of them?

References:

- Book Club Chat – <https://bookclubchat.com/books/book-club-questions-for-the-good-sister-by-sally-hepworth/>
- Fantastic Fiction – <https://www.fantasticfiction.com/h/sally-hepworth/>
- GoodReads – <https://www.goodreads.com/en/book/show/53137974>
- Grown Up Girls Report – <https://thegrownupgirlsreport.com.au/2021/02/13/book-club-the-good-sister-by-sally-hepworth/>
- Novelist – <https://web-p-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy.clevnet.org/novp/detail?vid=2&sid=e4295ddc-01e8-48d0-b44a-35a77d782693%40redis&bdata=JnNpdGU9bm92cC1saXZl#U=10951301&db=neh>
- Sally Hepworth's website – <https://www.sallyhepworthauthor.com/about>

Sally Hepworth's Books

Stand-Alone Novels

- The Secrets of Midwives (2015)
 - The Things We Keep (2016)
 - The Mother's Promise (2017)
 - The Family Next Door (2018)
 - The Mother-in-Law (2019)
 - The Good Sister (2021)
 - The Younger Wife (2022)
 - The Soulmate (2023)
 - Darling Girls (2024)

If you liked The Good Sister, try...

- The Girl in the Mirror – Rose Carlyle
- Sisters – Daisy Johnson
- Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine – Gail Honeyman
- The Push – Ashley Audrain
- The Lifeguards – Amanda Eyre Ward

Covers:

