



# YOU, ME, AND INFINITY

**DISCUSSION GUIDE**

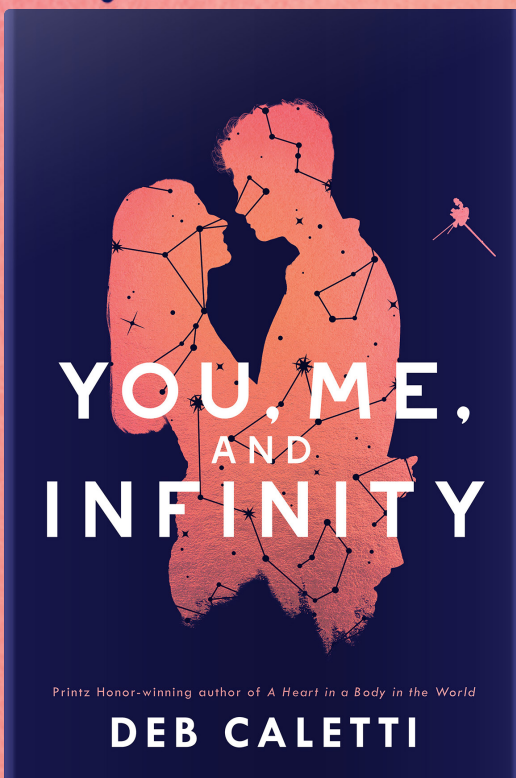
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## ABOUT THE BOOK

When Margaret sees Mars for the first time, it doesn't feel like love at first sight so much as future at first sight—she just knows right away that he will loom large in her life.

When her job delivering pizzas brings Margaret right to Mars's doorstep, she can't deny their connection, even as the anxious voice in her head warns her about everything that could go wrong. Soon they're giving in to fate as their romance deepens over stargazing and moments under the endless night sky, where Mars shares his passionate interest in the Voyager's Golden Record—a time capsule of humanity preserved indefinitely in space. Together, they are absorbed by the unknowable questions we all face: How will we be remembered? What will we leave behind? And can anything truly be infinite?

But even for someone who can't help but anticipate the worst, when the worst actually happens, Margaret is shattered. How can she move forward from tragedy when it feels like the world has stopped spinning? Somehow, she has to let go of the gravity of grief pulling her down and find her way back to the stars. But only if she can let the whole of the universe in—all the beauty and all the pain.



**Themes:** Family & Relationships,  
Emotions & Feelings, Self-Discovery

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Deb Caletti is the award-winning and critically acclaimed author of over twenty books for adults and young adults, including *Honey, Baby, Sweetheart*, a finalist for the National Book Award; *A Heart in a Body in the World*, a Michael L. Printz Honor Book; *Girl, Unframed*; and *One Great Lie*. Her books have also won the Josette Frank Award for Fiction, the Washington State Book Award, and numerous other state awards and honors, and she was a finalist for the PEN USA Award. She lives with her family in Seattle.

## PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. What do you associate with the word infinity? How would you define it? Do you think the universe is infinite? Discuss the symbol for infinity:  $\infty$ . Have you seen it before? What does it make you think of?
2. What do you think is the point of NASA and the exploration of outer space? Why do some people find it inspirational? Are you familiar with any NASA missions from your classes, your own reading, or sources like television and movies? What do you think about space exploration?

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do Margaret and Mars meet? After the first encounter, when do they meet again? Why is Margaret attracted to Mars? Why do you think he is attracted to her? What do they have in common? How are they different? Describe the ups and downs of their relationship and what factors pose problems for them.
2. What's family life like for Margaret? How is it hard? What's school like for her? Describe her friends. Talk about Margaret's anxiety and how it affects her. What does she mean by "flags"? How do you think her anxiety is connected to her parents? Discuss her comment about Ramone, "I knew he was one of us, the mass of people who were silently sure that something was about to go terribly wrong." (p. 297)
3. What are some words you would use to describe Mars? What's his background and living situation? How does he end up in Seattle? What do you learn about his father? Discuss his personality and the effect he has on other people, including Margaret. What are some difficulties that he faces? What are his hopes for the future? Why is Carl Sagan important to him?
4. Describe Angelo. How do customers see him? What's he like at home? How does he try to control his children? What do you think motivates his anger? Discuss Margaret's observation, "I'm not sure what we thought might happen if we disobeyed him. It seemed like we'd be annihilated . . . There was a sense we'd be destroying him, too." (p. 115) How do Mars and Angelo get along? Does Angelo change during the story?
5. What is Margaret's view of her mother? What are some of her mother's problems? How do the problems affect the family? Discuss Margaret's description of her parents, "How passive she was against him—it made me feel furious, as if I were feeling all her rage for her." (p. 79) What shows you that Margaret's mother is changing? Why do you think she does change?
6. Margaret's brothers, especially Maurice, matter a lot to her and help her deal with her father. Discuss Maurice's comment about their father's treatment of them: "We help each other carry it." (p. 188) How else is Maurice crucial to Margaret emotionally? How do they support each other? Describe Sandrine, and the dream that she and Maurice share. Why is their music important to Margaret and Mars?
7. Why is Mars so central to his mother's life? What is she like? Describe some of their interactions. Why does Maurice say about Janite's treatment of Mars, "How would that be, though? When the powerful person uses weakness to control you?" (p. 188) How does Mars try to help his mother? What toll does it take on him? How does Janite feel about Margaret? Why does Janite call Margaret's father, and what are the consequences?
8. "The more people, the more connection, right? That's what matters to me most," Mars says. (p. 55) How does he show in his actions how much he values connection? Who does he connect with? How does Margaret start connecting to other people besides Mars? Why is it such a challenge for her to connect to new people? What role does social media play for her in making connections?
9. What is the Golden Record that's connected to NASA's Voyager mission? Describe Margaret's project that resembles the Golden Record. Why does she undertake it? How does she go about it? How does she need to overcome anxiety to pursue the project? What are some of the photographs, sounds, and comments that she includes, and why? How are the chapter headings connected to the Golden Record and her project?
10. From the first sentence, Margaret addresses Mars as you: "So right away I knew you were special." (p. 1) When do you realize who she means by you? Why do you think the author made that narrative choice? What is the impact on the reader? Discuss how it would have been different if Margaret used Mars's name instead, so the first sentence would have read "I knew Mars was special."
11. "If the universe of love was risky, maybe you were a good planet," Margaret says of Mars. (p. 63) Find other examples of the author's use of imagery connected to outer space and the space program. How do the images enrich the narrative? What are some of the ways the imagery is about love and connection?

# ACTIVITIES

- The Golden Record is a time capsule. Outline what you would include in a Golden Record of yourself, someone you care about, or a group to which you belong. What kinds of images or what specific images would you include? How about music and other sounds? What messages would you want to send to someone in outer space who found your Golden Record in the future?
- In small groups, listen to Warren Zevon's "Keep Me in Your Heart," which Margaret calls "our song." (p. 154) Talk about the lyrics and how they relate to the novel. Why would Margaret think it was a "beautiful romantic song about a loved person on your mind"? (p. 229) Why does she decide it's a song about death?
- Margaret encounters several adults who had written reports on Voyager when they were young, which made a big impression on them. Choose a NASA mission, past or current, or some aspect of astronomy that interests you. Research the topic and prepare a short multimedia presentation to share with the class. Include an explanation of whether doing the research affects your view of space exploration.

**This guide was created by Kathleen Odean, a long-time youth librarian and chair of the 2002 Newbery Award Committee.**

