



**Reading Group Guide: WAISTED by Randy Susan Meyers**  
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*This reading group guide for **Waisted** includes an introduction, discussion questions, and ideas for enhancing your book club. The suggested questions are intended to help your reading group find new and interesting angles and topics for your discussion. We hope that these ideas will enrich your conversation and increase your enjoyment of the book.*

## **Introduction**

In this provocative, wildly entertaining, and compelling novel, seven women enrolled in an extreme weight loss documentary discover self-love and sisterhood as they enact a daring revenge against the exploitative filmmakers.

Alice and Daphne, both successful and accomplished working mothers, harbor the same secret: obsession with their weight overshadows concerns about their children, husbands, work—and everything else of importance in their lives. Scales terrify them.

Daphne, plump in a family of model-thin women, learned only slimness earns admiration at her mother's knee. Alice, breakup skinny when she met her husband, risks losing her marriage if she keeps gaining weight.

The two women meet at *Waisted*. Located in a remote Vermont mansion, the program promises fast, dramatic weight loss, and Alice, Daphne, and five other women are desperate enough to leave behind their families for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. The catch? They must agree to always be on camera; afterward, the world will see *Waisted: The Documentary*.

The women soon discover that the filmmakers have trapped them in a cruel experiment. With each pound lost, they edge deeper into obsession and instability . . . until they decide to take matters into

their own hands.

## Topics & Questions for Discussion

1. How does the mood of the opening scene resonate with you? What did you expect to come after reading this?
2. “What are you?” Alice has gotten this question for most of her life in regards to being mixed-race (page 11). How does the question affect her? What role does race play in her identity and her relationships?
3. Describe Alice and Daphne’s relationship to food and their weight. What are the differences and similarities between them? Do either of their relationships to food match yours?
4. After leaving the film awards ceremony, Clancy and Alice have an argument when they arrive home. Read between the lines and dissect what each character is really trying to say. How does the argument affect Alice’s decision to sign up for the documentary-filmed retreat, *Waisted*?
5. At the wedding of Daphne’s sister, her mother directs some sharp words toward her: “Sunny grabbed Daphne’s upper arm. ‘Cover these,’ she whispered. ‘The photographer is everywhere’” (pg 56). Why do you think Sunny acts this way toward her daughter? Are her actions fitting for a mother? Could you imagine doing this to your daughter? How would you have reacted if you were in Daphne’s shoes?
6. What does Daphne realize about her parenting tactics toward Audrey? What had been her intention in the first place? Discuss what she may mean by her “body [ruining] relationships” (page 65).
7. How do the trainers treat the women upon their arrival? How do you feel about their remarks toward the women and their goals?
8. Besides sharing the experience of acclimating to *Waisted*’s grueling demands, what bonds Alice, Daphne, and Hania? Describe a few of their conversations. What roles do they each play in this friendship that is engendered by being roommates?
9. The weigh-ins had been humiliating enough for the characters when they were clothed, but the trainers take it a step further by ordering them to strip completely before stepping on the scale. What are some of your reactions to this scene? What did Daphne and Alice’s responses reveal about their character growth?
10. The women’s revenge plan is based on what they discover in the filmmaker’s den? What’s their revenge plan? Where do you think their courage came from?

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11. Describe what Daphne and Alice's lives are like after returning from the mansion. Did their weight loss come at a cost? How do people react to their new appearances?
12. Describe Clancy's reaction when he learns about Alice's plans against the filmmakers for *Waisted*. Are you surprised at all? What are your thoughts on Alice and Clancy's reconciliation? Do you think the issues brought up in the beginning of the novel are surmountable?
13. How do the characters view themselves in the end? What do you think their lives will be like going forward?

## Enhance Your Book Club

1. "I wonder if there's a girl in America who doesn't grow up wanting to be skinny?" Alice mused" (pg 115). Reflect on your own relationship with weight and body image. How would you answer Alice's question? Research the history behind the body positivity movement. Read news articles about the movement today and discuss where it might be going.
2. Discuss reality television shows that focus on weight and body image, such as *The Biggest Loser*, *Extreme Weight Loss*, and *Celebrity Fit Club*. If you haven't seen these shows, watch a few clips on YouTube. What value do these shows possess? After reading about *Waisted* and the characters' experience, what are your thoughts about reality TV?
3. One of Randy Susan Meyers's many strengths as an author is her ability to depict women whose experiences feel real and universal, such as Daphne striving to find the right dress for her sister's wedding or her desire to raise her daughter differently than how she was raised by her mother. Alice fears that her weight gain may have caused her husband to cheat, or that her weight lost may cause her daughter to value being thin over all else. Which scenes resonated with you the most? Who do you relate to the most: Alice, Daphne, or Hania?