

# Why We Fly

BY KIMBERLY JONES & GILLY SEGAL  
DISCUSSION GUIDE



1. What is the status of Leni and Nelly's friendship at the start of the novel? How does it evolve and change throughout? What do you think will become of their friendship as the girls move through college?
2. Sam's family is dismissive of cheerleading as a sport. Discuss the level of commitment the cheer team has versus the football team depicted in the novel. How does the school treat the teams differently? Are there differences in how the school views the coaches of each team?
3. What does Sam's family think of his relationship with Leni? How does Sam treat Leni over the course of the novel?
4. Nelly, Leni, and the entire cheer team take a knee during the national anthem. However, only Nelly is suspended from school. Why do you feel Nelly was singled out for harsher punishment? Research statistics regarding disparate discipline implemented against Black girls and white girls, and discuss whether similar disparities exist in your school/community.
5. Both girls keep important secrets from each other and from the others who love them. How do those secrets weigh on them? What prevents the girls from sharing those secrets and seeking help? How do their secrets ultimately get revealed and impact them over the course of the novel?
6. After the cheer team first takes a knee, the student-led organizations in the school discuss whether they should collectively do so at the next game. What are the arguments for and against taking this action the characters espouse? What argument does Marisol make for collective action being more powerful than individual? Is there an issue or event around which organizations in your school/community have taken collective action, and what was the impact?
7. What role does Leni's Jewish community play in her life and in her attempts to be an ally?
8. How important is acceptance into Nelly's mother's sorority to her family?
9. Discuss how the following characters affect the girls' decisions: Paris and Bull, Aunt Rhonda and Rabbi Spinrad, and Marisol.
10. Discuss the role social media plays in the girls' experiences, including public social media like Twitter and private social media like the networking app applicants to the Young Dreamers program use. How does social media impact discussion of controversial issues in your community?

