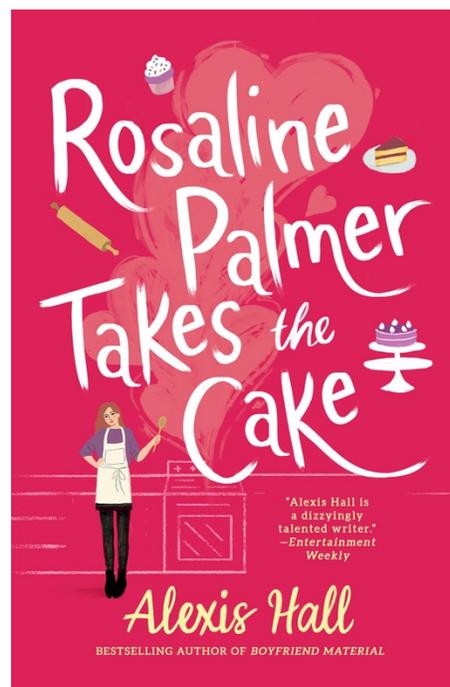




## READING GROUP GUIDE

*Rosaline Palmer*

*Takes the Cake*



## A Letter from the Author

Dear Reader,

I was asked to put something here for people who are reading *Rosaline Palmer Takes the Cake* as part of a book club. Which I thought was a lovely idea until I realized that what it meant in practice was that you probably only read the book because someone else in your club picked it. And, you know, good on them. Or, if it was you, good on you. And, hopefully, you're not currently feeling that they/you made a horrendous mistake.

As you might have noticed, I'm finding this section a little bit awkward, partly because I'm British and am therefore required by law to find everything awkward. But partly because it just seems a bit odd to be asking you questions about my own book. I've always been a big proponent of the Death of the Author—and I feel it's really important for readers to have as much space as possible to decide what's important to them about what they've read and to draw their own conclusions.

But discussion questions have been requested. So, discussion questions you shall have. Please do feel very much at liberty to ignore them and talk about whatever the hell you want. And thank you again for taking a chance on one of my books.

Lots of love,

Alexis Hall

## Questions for Discussion

1. Screw it. Let's start with the big one. Do you think Rosaline made the right choice, back when she was nineteen? Sure, by the end of the book she is in an unambiguously happy place where there is nothing she would change about her life. But she was *nineteen*. That is a hell of a young age to be committing to a set future.
2. Double screw it, let's dig deeper into that question. If you think Rosaline made the right choice, how far would you take that? Is it *only* the right choice because deep down she realized she didn't want to be a doctor? Or is getting pregnant at nineteen just as valid a choice? And, if so, what implications does that have for the way, we as a culture, approach teenage pregnancy?

If you think Rosaline made the wrong choice, on the other hand, what does that mean in practice? It certainly seems harsh on Amelie, who has clearly had a very happy childhood. True, Rosaline has obviously suffered emotionally because of the choices she made, but isn't part of that *because* people keep telling her it was the wrong one?
3. Okay, how about a slightly lighter question. Would you rather be an anglerfish or a sarcastic fringehead? Why?
4. Back on the subject of Rosaline's choices, how do you feel about Harry? Superficially, it seems like Rosaline chooses quite a traditional life at the end of the book, settling down with a child and a romantic partner. But how conventional is it really? What do you expect Rosaline and Harry's relationship to *look* like after the show? Will Lauren still be such a big part of Rosaline's life? If so, is that a problem? If not is *that* a problem?
5. Did you know what ceps are? Be honest.
6. The British class system is a near-constant concern for many characters, especially the Palmers. What examples stood out to you? If you're British, what examples stood out to you that you *don't think would stand out to non-Brits*? If you're not British, was there anything that either reflected similar social concerns in your own country or struck you as genuinely foreign and weird?
7. At what point (I hope I don't have to say 'if any' but just in case 'if any') did you realize Alain was a total shit that nobody should touch with a barge pole? If you realized early, could you at least sympathize with Rosaline's reasons for taking longer?
8. The giant marble run with the magnets that the Palmers buy for Amelie is real. How much do you want one?
9. Let's talk about sex, baby. Sorry, that's an incredibly dated reference. The way Harry and Rosaline's relationship develops, they never actually have penetrative sex on-page. How did you feel about that? What do you think it says about her relationship with Harry compared to her relationship with Alain? What do you think it says about sex in general?

10. Somehow I've got this far without asking any questions about baking or *Bake Expectations*. How does the way the book is structured as days and weeks on a TV show instead of chapters in a novel affect the flow of the story? How did it affect your experience of reading? How does the way the contestants bake express their character? If you want to go full high school English class, you can discuss a specific bake and what it tells you about a specific person. But I won't hold it against you if you don't.

11. When I decided to write a love triangle with a bisexual protagonist one of the things I had to think about was the gender identities of her two romantic interests. In the end I made both of them men because I thought it was really important to emphasize that Rosaline's bisexuality isn't invalidated just because she's never in an on-page relationship with a woman. But that wasn't the only call I could have made about the love triangle. What other choices could I have made? And what implications would they have had?

12. In an early draft of the book, Rosaline's parents didn't appear directly. How do you think this would have changed the story? Would you have felt differently about Rosaline if you hadn't met the people who raised her?