

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Very BAD People

ABOUT THE BOOK: Six years ago, Calliope Bolan's mother drove the family van into a lake with her three daughters inside. The girls escaped, but their mother drowned, and the truth behind the "accident" remains a mystery Calliope is determined to solve. Now sixteen, she transfers to Tipton Academy, the same elite boarding school her mother once attended. Tipton promises a peek into the past and a host of new opportunities—including a coveted invitation to join Haunt and Rail, an exclusive secret society that looms over campus like a legend.

Calliope accepts, stepping into the exhilarating world of the "ghosts," a society of revolutionaries fighting for social justice. But when Haunt and Rail commits to exposing a dangerous person on campus, it becomes clear that some ghosts define justice differently than others.

As the society's tactics escalate, Calliope uncovers a possible link between Haunt and Rail and her mother's deadly crash. Now, she must question what lengths the society might go to in order to see a victory—and if the secret behind her mother's death could be buried here at Tipton.

BY KIT FRICK



Very Bad People Discussion Questions

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1. The book opens with the narrator, Calliope, speaking in the plural first person pronoun, "we." Why do you think Kit Frick chose to start the novel this way? How does this establish Calliope's relationship with her sisters, Lorelei and Serafina?
2. When Clarice and Calliope first meet, Calliope says that she thinks she attends Tipton Academy on scholarship but that she is unsure. Clarice quickly corrects her, saying that if Calliope doesn't know, then she is probably not attending the Academy on scholarship. What do you think Clarice means by this? What happens when Calliope brings up the topic to her Aunt Mave?
3. Sisterhood is an important theme in the book. Calliope is close to her sisters, and her mother and aunt's relationship is also discussed in the story. Why do you think sisterhood is such an important theme? Do you relate to these relationships in the book?
4. Calliope is invited to become a ghost in the Haunt and Rail Society. How does she react to being invited into the secret society? How do you think you would react if you were invited to join a secret society?
5. Traditions like Hoards of Gourds are revered at Tipton. How do traditions in the book bring people together or push them apart? Do you have any school or family traditions you enjoy?
6. When Calliope first arrives at Tipton, she goes to a coffee shop and sees a familiar older blond man with thick eyebrows and sunburned cheeks through the window. He triggers her memories of the accident, and Calliope becomes suspicious of him. Do you think her memories of the accident are reliable? Why or why not? Have you ever doubted your own memories?

7. Calliope befriends Aymée Rivas, who is also a ghost in the Haunt and Rail Society. How does their membership in Haunt and Rail affect their friendship? What do you think you would have done if you were in Calliope's position?

8. Haunt and Rail makes it very clear that everything about them is to be kept secret, even from closest friends and relatives. How does this secrecy affect Calliope's relationship with Nico? How do you think Nico would react if he found out about Calliope's involvement in Haunt and Rail?

FOR FURTHER READING:

Publishers Weekly: Q&A with Kit Frick, author of *Very Bad People*

United By Pop: Kit Frick On Her Gripping New YA Thriller, *Very Bad People*

The Young Folks: Essential Ingredients of a Good Thriller

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Kit Frick is a MacDowell fellow and ITW Thriller Award finalist from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She studied creative writing at Sarah Lawrence College and received her MFA from Syracuse University. The author of the poetry collection *A Small Rising Up in the Lungs* and the young adult thrillers *Before We Were Sorry* (originally published as *See All the Stars*), *All Eyes on Us*, *I Killed Zoe Spanos*, and *Very Bad People*, Kit loves a good mystery but has only ever killed her characters. Honest.

