

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

YOU WANNA BE ON TOP? SARAH HARTSHORNE

1. How familiar were you with *America's Next Top Model* before reading *You Wanna Be on Top*? Has the book given you a new perspective?
2. Discuss Sarah's audition process to be on *America's Next Top Model*. What makes it a unique experience? What makes her stand out?
3. Sarah writes, "I was too big to be a model. I was too small to be a plus-size model." How does Sarah's experience as a plus-size model shape her career and personal identity? How does she view her relationship to her body?
4. Discuss the theme of exploitation in reality TV as presented in the book. How does it affect those involved? What insights did you get into the "reality" of reality shows? How does a producer influence the way a participant is edited on a reality show?
5. How does Sarah's mental health journey evolve throughout the book? Why do you think she doesn't recognize the "stresses" of her life? What does it say about how we normalize traumatic events?
6. Sarah writes that she's never been one to keep a secret, "except, apparently, from myself." How does being on the show help Sarah recognize and embrace her queerness?
7. Sarah turns to comedy to overcome crippling social anxiety. How effective is this strategy for her, and what does it reveal about her personality? How does it shape her career trajectory?
8. How does the pursuit of fame impact the contestants' personal lives and relationships? How do the relationships between the contestants evolve over time? Discuss the importance of support systems in high-pressure environments.
9. The contract looms over much of Sarah's time on *America's Next Top Model*. What are the implications of signing contracts without fully understanding them? Do you think reality TV contestants should be paid for their time?
10. What commentary does the book offer on the culture of fame and the entertainment industry? Discuss the ethical considerations of reality TV production as highlighted in the book. Has that changed or remained the same since Sarah's season aired in 2007?
11. How is Sarah's life different since she walked away from modeling? What do you think of her decision?
12. How does Sarah ultimately view her experience on the show? How does she balance her love of the show and its dark side? What do you think she would say to Tyra Banks now?