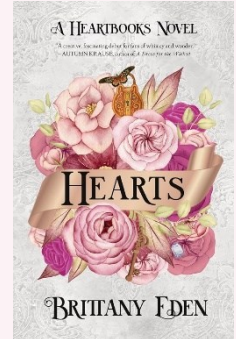




## TEEN'S BOOK CLUB GUIDE

# HEARTS By Brittany Eden



"The door of my heart is finally found... I know who I am. I am loved."

– Elizabeth Rhodes

### GENRE

Young Adult Fiction

Fairytale Romance

### THEMES

Mental Health

Mother-Daughter Relationships

Healing

Creativity

Redemption

Secrets

Misunderstandings

Regret

Fear of Rejection

### Mental Health:

Mental Health includes our emotional, psychological and social well-being. The state of our mental health can impact how we manage stress and decision-making, how we relate to others and our overall happiness in life.

\*If you are struggling emotionally, psychologically or socially, please seek help from a trusted adult and health professional.

## CHARACTERS

### *Elizabeth Rhodes (Libby)*

Elizabeth is on the cusp of nineteen and deeply desires to build her reputation as an artist, but with her regular anxiety attacks and feelings of abandonment and resentment towards her parents, she doesn't know if she can hold it all together. She needs enough strength to get through her big art auction day at the end of the week, which just happens to be on her much dreaded and cursed birthday. Elizabeth is driven by her art and finds peace in the creative process, but she has hidden her heart from the world for so long that the darkness is overcoming her. Up until now, she solved all of her problems with a cup of tea, but her future requires more than a strong cup, and she must heal and be set free from her burdens by sharing the truth she knows about others, and discovering the truth about herself.

### *Madame Penelope Garcon*

Penelope is a lover of clocks who is perpetually late, and a sweet and encouraging soul, who delights in creating sweet delights to go with her tea addiction. Penelope is a kind and wise woman, whose internal light radiates like "stardust" and causes Elizabeth to deeply desire the light and freedom found in a heart full of hope!

### *Lincoln Garcon*

Lincoln is Elizabeth's childhood friend, whom everyone believed to be imaginary. On Elizabeth's seventh birthday, he became orphaned when his parents died in a car crash, and his aunt Penelope took him in to care for him. Now a grown young man, Lincoln has been hired by his Aunt Penelope as a gardener. Lincoln is an encourager, and peacekeeper, and prefers transformation over perfection. His tender care of Elizabeth helps her heart to heal. While Elizabeth refers to him as the mad hatter and the boy who never grew up, she also calls him a Prince, and his love for her helps her to discover her value as a uniquely created person and equips her to push back the darkness.

### *Gloria Beaumont-Rhodes*

Gloria is Elizabeth's mother. She is referred to as the 'Queen of Hearts' for her seemingly callous and uncaring nature. Elizabeth eventually realises her misconceptions about her mother, and that her mother is much more alike to herself than she ever could have imagined.

## *Sterling Irwinæus Figgleston*

Sterling is Elizabeth's godfather. He's a quirky older gentleman with a perpetual twinkle in his eye. He is determined, as a benefactor, to help Elizabeth become the next Briar Rose and a successful artist.

## *Aunt Melody*

Aunt Melody is Elizabeth's reclusive aunt, who first used the name 'Briar Rose' as a pseudonym to sell her artwork and keep her identity hidden. While growing up, Elizabeth suffered significantly from anxiety, and while her parents were unable to understand and help her, her Aunt took her in, homeschooled her, and helped her unleash her creativity through drawing. Aunt Melody's recent death has caused a dispute within the family and also handed down the Briar Rose pseudonym to Elizabeth.

## *Declan*

Declan is the villain of the story and is nicknamed Lucifer. It's not until the end of the novel that we understand the extent of his wickedness.

## **STORYLINE**

Elizabeth Rhodes is a gifted pencil artist whose tender and fragile soul can see into another's heart. Having caught a glimpse of something beautiful or wicked, her eye for detail expertly crafts an image of doors, keys, flowers, and mystery – all wrapped up in the image of a heart. While Elizabeth has drawn the hearts of others, she has never drawn her own, and amidst her mental illness and the sinister secrets she's kept hidden since her seventh birthday, she doesn't know if her heart holds more darkness than light.

Elizabeth is not only concealing her true identity under the artistic pseudonym Briar Rose – a name she inherited from her beloved aunt on her deathbed – but she is also concealing a truth that has tormented her for over 10 years from the boy she has always loved. When Philanthropist Madame Penelope commissions Elizabeth's new series, Hearts, Elizabeth finds herself down a rabbit hole! Whether she allows the truth to set her free and break the curse or allows the darkness to consume her, is a journey she must take. But she is not alone, the boy who never grew up – the endearing mad hatter friend of her adolescence - holds the key to opening her heart.

This is a journey about discovering truth – the truth about ourselves, others, and the world - and becoming whole and healed. Amidst the turmoil and darkness, we find ourselves surrounded by, *Hearts* asks the question, “How can the heart survive?”, and endeavors to answer through a whimsical collision of the classic books we love, endearing and clean romance, and vivid storytelling that is rich in hope and light.

## 1 QUESTION ONE

What did you enjoy most about reading *Hearts*?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## 2 QUESTION TWO

Elizabeth wonders, “Does anyone else see the world differently and feel like an outsider to anything bright and beautiful?”. How did Elizabeth’s secrets contribute to her feeling alone, afraid and surrounded by darkness? Can you relate to how she felt?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## 3 QUESTION THREE

Elizabeth comes to realise that she is no longer the vulnerable child she once was and that the armour of “dragon scales” she had built to protect herself, was causing herself and others harm. Discuss Elizabeth’s transformation throughout the story, and the quote “The truth set me free. I kill the dragon, the curse is broken.”

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## 4 QUESTION FOUR

Lincoln has endured significant hardship with the loss of his parents, but he is still drawn towards light and hope. Discuss the similarities and differences between Lincoln and Elizabeth. How does he help her to overcome her struggles?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## 5 QUESTION FIVE

Lincoln's character portrays allusions to Jesus, and he could be considered a "Christ figure" throughout this story. Discuss the symbolism and metaphors used to describe Lincoln which may be similar to how the Bible describes Jesus.

(If you need a hint, read Lincoln's character description).

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## 6 QUESTION SIX

Elizabeth's art and creativity play a significant role in her emotional well-being. While many things cause her to be anxious, her art and the act of creating soothes her soul. Why do you think creating calms us? How are you creative?

(Creativity comes in many forms including; writing, music, drawing or painting, creating a lovely home, baking, arranging flowers, and so much more!)

---

---

---

---

---

---

## 7 QUESTION SEVEN

Tea plays a very important role in the story, and Elizabeth says, "Tea really can fix everything." What is your favourite type of tea? Do you have any significant memories connected with that type of tea?

---

---

---

---

---

---

## 8 QUESTION EIGHT

Penelope and Aunt Melody are strong and influential women in Elizabeth's life. Discuss the quote, "A woman is like a tea bag – you can't tell how strong she is until you put her in hot water", and other wise words used to encourage Elizabeth.

---

---

---

---

---

---

## 9 QUESTION NINE

In the Author's Note at the end of the book, Brittany reminds us that *Hearts* is a fictional fairytale journey of healing. While this story captures the turmoil of grief, trauma and suffering, more often, true healing takes time and is a lifelong process. Have you ever experienced something traumatic or struggled with your mental health? If you're comfortable share your story with the group.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## 10 QUESTION TEN

If Elizabeth sketched your heart, what do you think it would look like? Why?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---