



Discussion Questions

1. What did you already know or remember about the Kent State shootings before reading this book? How much did you learn about them? Did you look up more information about anything the book mentions while or after reading it?
2. What did you think of the use of different fonts/performers as you read or listened to the book? Why do you think the author chose to use this free verse format instead of a traditional dialogue with quotation marks? Did your opinion of it change by the time you got to the end of the book?
3. This book uses multiple perspectives to tell the story of the tragedy of May 4, 1970. After reading it, do you think it is possible to perceive the events of that day in terms of right and wrong? Are there heroes or villains who can be identified in this story? Why or why not? How many direct or indirect victims of its outcome can you identify?
4. Music is an important part of Kent State. The author uses song lyrics as epigraphs before each chapter and details the musical preferences of each of the four students killed on May 4. What effect did these details have as you imagined the events of May 1-4 taking place?
5. What impact did the details about each of the victims, such as what their families were like and their musical tastes, have on your understanding of the

narrative? Why do you think one of the voices referred to each of the four victims as "my favorite?"

6. What other historical events would you like to see told from the multiple-perspective style Wiles uses to tell the story of May 4?
7. In the chapter titled "Friday May 1, 1970," the dialogue mentions the National Guard shooting several students at Ohio State University a few days prior (24-25), the retroactive curfew (18), and the truckers' strike the guard had been assisting with before arriving in Kent (28-29). The chapter titled "Saturday May 2, 1970" mentions that Dr. Robert I. White, president of the university, was in Iowa when the campus unrest started (57). If these are details you didn't know about before reading the book, how does this information impact your understanding of how the tragedy of May 4 happened? In hindsight, what decisions might have stopped the situation on campus from becoming such a volatile situation?
8. Kent State has embraced the ugly history of May 4, 1970 and has a wealth of information about it online, as well as a memorial and museum, and there are many documentaries and books about it. The other shootings mentioned in the book are not as well remembered or documented. Why do you think that is?
9. Which concerns voiced in the conversation this book presents do you share? If you're a young adult now, do you relate to the concerns voiced by the Kent State students' voices? If you're a more experienced adult, would your concerns have aligned with theirs when you were of college age? Why or why not?
10. The reality of what went wrong on May 4, 1970 is contested to this day, as seen in the disagreements among the book's narrators. To what extent do you think a person's background determines what they are willing to believe about what happened?
11. If you could go back in time, what small change do you think you could make to alter the outcome of May 4, 1970?
12. If things had ended more peacefully at Kent State University that day, do you think the larger course of history would have stayed the same? What might have happened (or not happened) in this alternate reality?