



## Whisper

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### Introduction

Fifteen-year-old Joy is used to hearing Whispers. She's used to walking down the street and instantly knowing people's deepest, darkest desires. She uses this talent for good, to make people happy and give them what they want. But for her older sister, Jessica, the family gift is a curse, and she uses it to make people's lives especially Joy's miserable. Still, when Joy Hears a frightening Whisper from Jessica's own mind, she knows she has to save her sister, even if it means deserting her friends, stealing a car and running away with a boy she barely knows—a boy who may have a dark secret of his own.

### Questions for Discussion

1. Is Hearing a blessing or a curse? What do you think Joy would say at the end of the novel? Would you like to have the ability to Hear?
2. On one level, *Whisper* is the story of a family's struggles. How do family dynamics change throughout the book? Do the changes seem permanent?
3. A major theme in the novel is selfishness versus selflessness. Which characters' selfless or selfish motives surprised you? Was it ever hard to separate the two?
4. What does first person narration 'being in Joy's head' add or take away from the novel? How would it be different narrated in third person?
5. Joy's friendships seem to depend on her Hearing, yet Icka's inability to make friends also seems to be related to her Hearing. What might this suggest about Joy's friends? About the girls' different notions of friendships?
6. What caused Joy and Parker's friendship to change over the course of the book? Have you ever felt like a friend of yours just didn't see the 'real you'? What did you do about it?
7. Why do you think Jamie is unable to block people's Waves? Is he 'defective' as he claims?
8. Joy's mother Kelli seems to shelter her daughters, while her sister Aunt Jane believes in telling it like it is. Do you think the girls would have been better or worse off raised by Jane?
9. Why does Joy never Hear her father Whispering about her? If your child (or best friend) could Hear, would you make the same choice?
10. Both Icka and Ben seem to use their abilities against other people; how are these two different from each other? Do you feel one of them is more justified than the other?
11. In what ways are Joy's and Jamie's abilities different? How are they the same? Is one of the two better off than the other?
12. What is significant about Joy's birthday? How has Joy matured, if at all, by the end of the story?