

Reader Guide: *The Secret Year*, by Jennifer Hubbard. Viking (Penguin), January 2010. ISBN 978-0670011537 or 0670011533

This reader guide contains questions for book clubs, book reports, or classroom discussion, as well as suggestions for supplemental activities, and a list of related reads.

Discussion Questions

Notice that even though the neighborhoods of Black Mountain and the flats are set up as opposing forces, there are also friendly interactions between the residents of each, and times when they help one another. Why do you think characters such as Keith Groome and Nick like to confront one another over their differences? Why do you think characters such as Syd and Pam are able to form friendships across this boundary? Which approach do you most identify with?

Do you know of group divisions in your own life like those between Black Mountain and the flats? Are the relationships friendly or confrontational, or both? Do you know people like Kirby, Syd, and Michael, who cross boundaries between groups?

In Chapter 5, Colt mentions the new developments going up, houses that don't seem to belong to the traditional flats or Black Mountain style of house. How do you think Colt's town is changing, and will continue to change? How is Colt's town similar to, or different from, the place where you live?

What do you think would have happened to Julia's relationship with Colt if she had lived? What about her relationship with Austin?

Julia has a strong personality. Why do you think she was never able to confront Austin?

Why do you think Julia wrote so many letters to Colt that she never showed him? Have you ever written messages that you never sent?

Why do you think a secret relationship was so appealing to Colt? What do you think he learned from it?

Why do you think a secret relationship was so appealing to Julia? What did she get from Colt? From Austin?

How do the subplots involving Tom, and Syd, and Kirby, reflect the topic of secrecy?

How does Colt change over the course of the book?

Is this a love story? Why or why not?

Suggested Projects

Writing:

Choose a scene in the book and write it from someone else's point of view—for example, Austin's, or Syd's, or Kirby's, or Michael's.

If Colt and Julia could have met one more time, what do you think they might have said to each other? Write that scene.

Oral Report:

Compare this book to others you have read.

Pick one of the discussion questions above.

Other Media:

Create your own music playlist for this book

Related Reads

If you liked this book, you may also enjoy:

13 Reasons Why, by Jay Asher

Twenty Boy Summer, by Sarah Ockler

Willow, by Julia Hoban

The Outsiders, by S. E. Hinton

Looking for Alaska, by John Green