

Girl, Unstrung:

A Reader's Guide

Clara's story touches on lots of themes that are helpful for teens, and especially young musicians, to think about. *Girl, Unstrung* makes for a great starting point to talk through how they feel about pursuing their ambitions and their musical journey.

- Clara loves playing the viola for all sorts of reasons. What are some of the reasons you love playing your instrument?
- At the beginning of the story, Clara is 100% focused on her viola playing and on getting into LACHSA. But as the story goes on, she realizes there are other things she wants to experience and enjoy in life. Have you ever felt that tension between your musical ambition and wanting to live a "normal" life?
- What are some of the sacrifices Clara has made, or needs to make, to achieve her dream of being a professional violist?
- How about you – what sacrifices do you think you might have to make to achieve your dreams of being a musician, whatever that looks like for you? How do you feel about that?
- Do you agree with Clara's decisions in the book – like going on the ski trip, for example? Would you have made the same decision?
- Have you ever felt physical pain when you've played, especially when you've practiced intensively for a recital or an audition? What do you think is a healthy way to manage that pain?
- What are some times when you've played for pure enjoyment, as Clara does in London? How does that feel?
- What decision would you have made in Clara's position at the end? Do you think her dad should try to get her another audition date?
- Do you think Clara will continue playing her viola after the end of the story?
- How do you think Clara has changed during the book? What has she learned about herself and about the world?