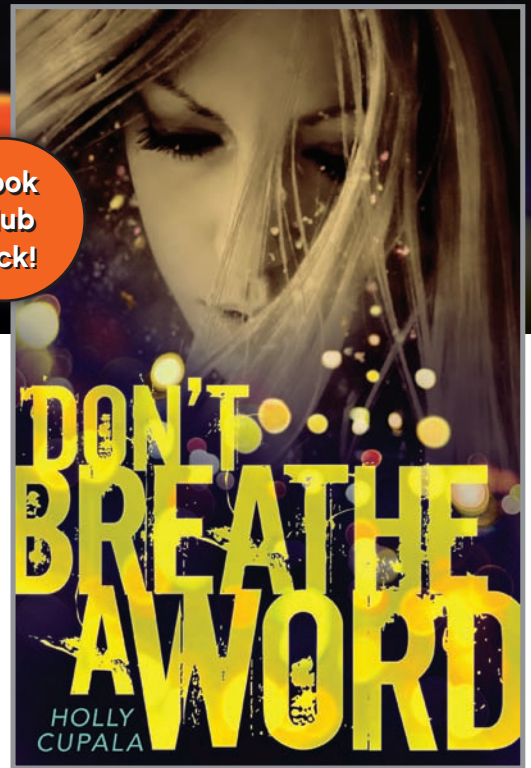


DON'T BREATHE A WORD

by HOLLY CUPALA

Book
Club
Pick!



About the Book

Joy Delamere is suffocating.

From asthma, from her parents, and from her boyfriend, Asher, who is smothering her from the inside out. She can take his cruel words, his tender words...until the night they go too far. Joy escapes to the streets of nearby Seattle and falls in with a homeless "street family" that includes the fiercely protective Creed. But this street family keeps more secrets than her real family did back home....

Discussion Questions

1. After Joy meets Asher, her friend Neeta says that she seems "different" (p. 3). If you, like Neeta, suspected that a friend's relationship was changing her for the worse, would you say something about it? Why or why not?
2. As a runaway, Joy says her "street power" is invisibility (p. 46). Does being invisible help her? Why or why not?
3. "There are scars you can see, and the ones you can't," Creed tells Triste (p. 233). How do her physical scars interact with her invisibility?
4. Creed explains that his street family "doesn't have to be blood" (p. 110). Joy's new friends have troubled relationships with their blood relatives—why do you think they want to hold on to the idea of being family?
5. What significance do you find in Creed's choice of name?
6. When Joy first meets him, Asher compares people to crows; he later gives Joy a charm bracelet featuring a crow. What does he mean by the comparison?
7. Why do you think Jesse turns Joy away when she visits him at his college? Is his reaction justified?
8. At home, Joy feels like her parents are smothering her, insisting that someone—first her older brother, and then Asher—watch over her at every moment. Is it a family's responsibility to protect their children or to help them learn independence?
9. When Santos asks if someone close to Joy hurt her, Joy thinks, "Asher didn't hurt me that night. I did that myself" (p. 176). Why do you think Joy holds herself responsible for Asher's cruelty?
10. What extra challenges does Joy face on the streets because she's afraid someone will find out her real identity?