

The Fine Art of Keeping Quiet

By Charity Tahmaseb



About the book:

Sometimes staying silent is the biggest lie of all.

Sophomore Jolia does the one thing no one expects from the girl who has perfected the art of keeping quiet.

She joins the speech team.

Jolia can't confess the real reason—not to her best friend, her new teammates, or even to crush-worthy rival Sam who offers to coach her in secret.

Keeping quiet might be the easy way out, but when what Jolia doesn't say starts to hurt those around her, it might just cost her a best friend, her spot on the team, and even Sam.

But she isn't the only one with a secret. It's going to take words—her words—to make things right.

If only Jolia can find them.

Discussion Guide

1. What made Jolia feel the way she did at the beginning of the book? How did these feelings impact her behavior? How did Jolia evolve from the beginning of the book to the end?
2. Why do you think Jolia is so reluctant to tell Caro she's failing speech? What influence did Caro have on Jolia. Was Caro a leader or follower? At the start of the story, do you think Caro pays too much attention to Jeremy at the expense of her relationship with Jolia? Do you think Jolia should have made her feelings known earlier?

3. What role did Tori play in the story, and how did she interact with Jolia? Why do you think Tori is so bossy? Why does Tori dislike Sam so much?
4. At the second tournament, Jolia must perform her selection in front of Sam. Later, she reflects that it's worse to fail in front of someone you know (rather than a group of strangers). Why does she feel this way? Do you agree with her? How did Sam help Jolia? What strategies did he use to help Jolia overcome her fears? If you were Jolia, would you take Sam up on his offer of secret coaching?
5. Glossophobia is speech anxiety or the fear of public speaking. It's so prevalent that the Mayo Clinic devotes a page to overcoming this fear (<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/specific-phobias/expert-answers/fear-of-public-speaking/faq-20058416>). Why is public speaking such a scary thing? Is it one you have? Would you (or have you) tried some of the things Jolia does to overcome her fear?
6. The "tagline" for the novel is: Sometimes staying silent is the biggest lie of all. Several characters in the story have a secret or something they're hiding from someone else. Do you think not speaking up can be the same or even worse than lying? Why is it so hard to speak up, even when we know we should?

Special thanks to Laura Murphy and her mother/daughter book club, who inspired the creation of this reader guide and supplied several of the questions.

About the Author:

Charity Tahmaseb has slung corn on the cob for Green Giant and jumped out of airplanes (but not at the same time).

She spent twelve years as a Girl Scout and six in the Army; that she wore a green uniform for both may not be a coincidence. These days, she writes fiction (long and short) and works as a technical writer for a software company in St. Paul.

Her novel, *The Geek Girl's Guide to Cheerleading* (written with co-author Darcy Vance), is a YALSA 2012 Popular Paperback pick in the Get Your Geek On category.

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