



I'm Not Her by Janet Gurtler

Discussion Questions

- 1 The story is told from the point of view of Tess, who in the beginning of the story feels invisible around her older sister, Kristina. Each sister has a different set of comfort zones with people.

How do those comfort zones change throughout the story?
- 2 Right before the family discovers Kristina is sick, Tess finds out about an art contest and she desperately wants to win it.

Why does she want to win the contest so badly?
Should she still care about the contest even though her sister is sick?
- 3 Each member of Tess's family handles Kristina's diagnosis differently.

How do Tess's parents handle Kristina's diagnosis? Does this change during the course of the story? If you were Kristina, how would you want your parents to react? If you were Tess, what would you want to say to them?
- 4 Kristina makes Tess promise not to tell anyone about her cancer.

Why do you think she wants to keep her illness a secret? Do you think it's the right thing to do? Would you be able to keep a secret like this from your best friends?
- 5 Do you think things might have worked out differently for Tess if she'd been able to share the news? How do you think Melissa would have handled things if she'd known the truth from the beginning? Would it have changed the other friendships that Tess made?
- 6 When Nick finds Tess crumpled and falling apart on the side of the road, we see a different side of him. It is at this point that Tess begins to realize that her perceptions of people are often different from who they really are.

What is Tess's initial impression of Nick and how does it change? What about Jeremy? Clark? Gee?



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- 7** When the doctor reveals that Kristina will lose her leg, Tess wonders, *“Is she supposed to be ashamed of her bones?”*
What do you think Tess means?
- 8** Early in the story, Jeremy reveals that he knows about Kristina’s illness.
How does Tess feel? How do her feelings toward Jeremy change? How does she feel about his friendship with her sister?
- 9** Tess is confused by Nick’s attention.
What does she think/hope he wants from her? What is the real reason he is turning to her? Do you think there is more to it than Nick admits? Why does she go to Nick when her mom gets drunk?
- 10** Discuss the significance of Jeremy’s death in the story. What did his death teach Kristina?
- 11** At one point in the book, Kristina tells Tess, *“It’s my fault. That this happened. I’ve thought and thought about it. All the running and jumping I did. I should have taken it easier. I pushed myself too hard and brought this on.”*
Why do you think Kristina blames herself?
- 12** How did you feel when you found out Nick won the art contest? Did your opinion change after Tess spoke with him at the dance?
- 13** What do you think will happen with Tess and Clark?
- 14** How do you think Kristina’s future will unfold? If you were to lose a limb, how would it affect your life? What plans would you have to change or adjust?