

"There are things, I wanted to tell him, unspoken things that can never be fixed. But I said nuthin." — RUBY LEE

BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION GUIDE

Before reading *Unspoken*, did you understand the causes and problems presented by the overused land, the drought, and dust storms? Were you aware of the lingering impacts of the Dust Bowl?

If you were faced with the choices the Becker family faced in 1935, how would you have managed?

Was Ruby's father, Beck, justified in his decision to stay on the farm and persist? Why? How did Beck's choices create the problems Ruby, Willa, and the family faced?

Was Willa's opinion, or Beck's decision, the best choice for Ruby? Can you relate to the disagreement between the Beckers?

How would Willa's emotional breakdown be regarded today, and how would it be handled?

How would the issues of homelessness, mental illness, foster care, poverty, and environmental harms raised in this novel be modified if the setting were changed to the modern world?

Why did Ruby feel abandoned by her mother? Did she feel abandoned by her father, too? Did she blame her herself, or her family's fate in life? Are our lives ruled by fate?

Ruby lands in a state home where she most certainly does not want to stay. Were there better options for her? Was her time there necessary?

Do you think Ruby's attachment to Amelia Earhart ran deeper? Was her sorrow heightened by her own situation and her own losses?

Did anyone at the State Home understand Ruby and her behavior? Was her behavior acceptable or understandable? Did you empathize with her?

Were there any upsides to Ruby's time in the State Home, such as friendships, attachments, mentoring, learning, maturation, health, or something else?

When Ruby flees the State Home only to encounter a dust storm and meet Eleanor Roosevelt, who persuades her to return, did Ruby make the right choice?

What is Ruby's most ardent desire? Is that a misplaced goal? Why?

When Ruby and Will find Pa dead, why didn't they discuss his depression and suicide? How would those issues be handled today?

Were there other unspoken things Ruby feared exposing, besides Willa's whereabouts?

*"I put myself up high, on a shelf, in a dusty corner, where nobody looked.
Where nuthin could touch me." — RUBY LEE*

BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION GUIDE

Did Willa make choices or decisions that contributed to her long confinement in the asylum? From today's perspective, how would her diagnosis and treatment differ?

What reasons did each character have for keeping Willa's fate secret and make it something unspoken? Are there advantages to keeping some things secret? Why?

When Ruby decided to face what had gone unspoken, about her mother's whereabouts and her father's suicide, what enabled her to?

Why was Ruby so determined to avoid intimacy? Which of Ruby's encounters or friendships had the biggest impact on her decision making?

Did Ruby forgive Wade for his teenage betrayal in Waco? Why? Does Ruby trust Wade? Why did she agree to marry him?

Which characters underwent change? What caused their changes? Were their changes better for their personal growth, or less helpful, for each of them?

When characters changed, how did they impact others in *Unspoken*? Do you think relationships can change when just one person is able to?

*Thank you for discussing **Unspoken**!
If you enjoyed **Unspoken**, will you take a minute to
help other historical readers discover it, too?
A quick honest review on **Amazon** is super helpful!*

**CLICK
to review**



*Thanks! I'd love to hear from you! Reach out:
JannAlexander.com*

