

DISCUSSION GUIDE

If You Don't Have Anything Nice to Say



If You Don't Have Anything Nice to Say
By Leila Sales • For ages 12 and up
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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. This is a line from Chapter 1 that says, "Before we go any further, I want to make sure you understand this: I am not a good person." Knowing what Winter did, do you think she is a bad person, or a person who did a bad thing? What matters more—character or actions?
2. On page 2, Winter says, "Good stories have morals." Do you agree? Does this story have a moral? If so, what do you think the moral of this story is?
3. When Winter tweets about the spelling bee champion, she feels pleased that her friends like and repost it within a short amount of time. Do you feel a sense of approval when you post things online and people respond positively? Likewise, how do you feel when someone has a negative reaction to something you post online?
4. Winter's intent was to make a joke, but it ended up being very hurtful. Have you ever made a joke online to which someone else took offense? Similarly, have you ever taken offense to someone else's joke online? If so, how did you handle it?
5. When someone points out a mistake we've made, it's sometimes hard not to be defensive. Do you think Winter's initial reaction to the public shaming she received as a result of her tweet made matters better or worse? What would your reaction be if you were in her place?
6. Internet trolling is something that happens every day online. Why do you think trolls do what they do? Have you ever known someone who has experienced a public shaming online like Winter?
7. Why does Jason believe that Winter is not sorry for her comment? Do you think she thought about how her "joke" would make other people feel before she posted it?
8. In Chapter 4, Jason tells Winter that people treat him differently because he's black, but when she's around, it doesn't happen, because she looks like the stereotype of someone who would never be a danger. What do you think about Jason's observation? Have you or someone you know felt as Jason does?
9. Is Winter a victim, a perpetrator, or both? Do you think the punishment Winter received fit the crime?
10. What do you think Lisa Rushall's motivation was when she reposted Winter's comment?
11. The members of Revibe committed an offense and were criticized for their actions online. Do you think something like Revibe should exist in real life? Do you think online offenders deserve a chance at redemption?
12. In Chapter 29, Winter tells Abe her sister's theory about people being like houses. Do you agree with the analogy? If so, what kind of house is Winter, and how does this affect her journey? What kind of house are you?
13. Why do you think Winter found it relatively easy to write the apology letters for the other Revibe members but struggled to write her own?
14. Did Winter do the right thing by going to Revibe? What do you think Winter ultimately learned from her actions, the aftermath, and her time at Revibe?
15. One of the lessons we learn from this book is that the way we conduct ourselves online has consequences. What actions and steps do you think teens can take to be more careful about what we share online?



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ABOUT THE BOOK:

BEFORE WE GO ANY FURTHER, I WANT YOU TO UNDERSTAND THIS: I AM NOT A GOOD PERSON.

When Winter Halperin—former spelling bee champion, aspiring writer, and daughter of a parenting expert—gets caught saying the wrong thing online, her life explodes. All across the world, people know what she's done, and none of them will forgive her.

With her friends gone, her future plans cut short, and her identity in shambles, Winter is just trying to pick up the pieces without hurting anyone else. She knows she messed up, but does that mean it's okay for people to send her hate mail and death threats? Did she deserve to lose all that she's lost? And is "I'm sorry" ever good enough?

Decide for yourself.

A novel about public shaming in the internet age, *If You Don't Have Anything Nice to Say* is also an exploration of the power of words, the damage of microaggressions, and the healing power of empathy.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

LEILA SALES is the author of the young adult novels *Tonight the Streets Are Ours*, *This Song Will Save Your Life*, *Mostly Good Girls*, and *Past Perfect*, as well as *Once Was a Time*, for younger readers.

Leila grew up outside of Boston, Massachusetts, and graduated with a degree in psychology from the University of Chicago. When she's not writing, she spends her time thinking about sleeping, kittens, chocolate, and how to get more of all of them. Leila lives in Brooklyn, New York, and works in children's book publishing. Follow her @LeilaSalesBooks or at leilasales.com.



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