## Table of Contents

Discussion Questions  
About Lauren Oliver  
An Interview With Author Lauren Oliver  
Lauren Oliver: 'I don't believe in happy endings'
Discussion Questions from laurenoliverbooks.com

1. List the symptoms of amor deliria nervosa. How dangerous are they? What would lead someone to classify love as a disease? Do you agree that, in some ways, love could be thought of as a disease? Why or why not?

2. Lena says that some years ago, the government broadcast film of a girl jumping off a roof to avoid being cured. What kind of government would broadcast such a warning to its citizens? What does Lena’s government want for its people? What would motivate people to be evaluators, guards, or regulators in such a government?

3. The Book of Shhh says “marriage is Order and Stability, the mark of a Healthy society” (p. 11). What role do you think marriage plays in Lena’s society? What role do you think marriage plays in today’s society? Is love an important part of marriage? Should people be able to marry whomever they want? Why, or why not?

4. Before the evaluations, an unhappy Hana says that if her government really wanted people to be happy, “they’d let us pick” (p. 20). What do you think of the idea of having a pre-determined, worry-free life planned out for you? Do you need to make your own choices in order to be happy? Why, or why not?

5. Lena longs for “the promise of the cure,” which she describes as “the chance to be reborn: newer, fresher, better. Healed and whole and perfect again” (p. 112). If given the chance, would you want to be cured? What are some reasons why a person might wish to undergo the treatment?

6. Describe Hana and Lena’s relationship and the role that jealousy plays in their friendship. Are you ever jealous of your friends? What effect does that have on your behavior or your feelings for them?

7. Near the beginning of the story, Lena says that the words I love you are “strange and terrible” (p. 40). Why? How do Lena’s feelings about those words change during the course of the story?

8. Describe Lena’s memories of her mother. The things they did together are viewed as dangerous in Lena’s society. Do you have childhood memories that are similar to Lena’s? What do you think your life would be like if those memories were inextricably linked to feelings of wrongdoing and guilt? How do things change for Lena when she discovers the truth about her mother?

9. At the barn party, Lena describes music and a singing voice “as thick and heavy as warm honey, spilling up and down a scale” (p. 123). What kind of music do you think she is hearing? Why would the government ban music or other works of art? Alex tells Lena that the music and the parties are all right because “nobody’s hurting anybody” (p. 133). Do you agree?
10. In Lena’s society, uncured girls are segregated from uncured boys. Imagine if you were a teenage girl and never allowed to spend time around boys who were uncured. What effect would that have on you? How would it change your life? Would you try to rebel against society’s rules, knowing the consequences?

11. The government’s raids are incredibly invasive, and Lena says that “private property laws are suspended on raid nights. Pretty much every law is suspended on raid nights” (p. 202). Why do the citizens allow such raids to take place? Would you know if your government was headed in this direction? Would you be able to turn things around? How would you go about it?

12. As Lena walks away from Riley, her neighbors’ dog, as he dies, all she can think is, “I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m sorry” (p. 209). Why is she sorry? If you follow the rules in a society like Lena’s, are you complicit in all the bad things that happen?

13. Alex refers to the government’s tactics as “smoke and mirrors” (p. 270). What does he mean? Do you agree? What does it take to keep people obedient?

14. Lena says she’s glad she has “lost control” (p. 311), and she begins to think that while love can be painful, “the pain only makes it better, more intense, more worth it” (p. 265). Do you recognize these feelings? Do you agree that it’s necessary to lose control or feel pain in order to be happy?

15. What role does The Book of Shhh play in Lena’s society? How have works such as the Bible or Romeo and Juliet been changed in order to fit the needs of Lena’s government?

16. What clues indicate the time period in which the story is set? Do you interpret Delirium as taking place in the future, or in an alternate version of the present?

17. Research the term dystopian fiction. What is a dystopia? Read the first chapter of another dystopian novel or a short story (some ideas: Kurt Vonnegut’s “Harrison Bergeron,” Aldous Huxley’s Brave New World, George Orwell’s 1984, or Suzanne Collins’s The Hunger Games). What similarities and differences do you see compared to Delirium?

http://www.laurenoliverbooks.com/media/Delirium_DiscussionGuide.pdf
About Lauren Oliver

Dear readers,

Hello and thanks for checking out my website! Here’s some information about me:

I was born in Queens and raised in Westchester, New York, in a small town very similar to the one depicted in Before I Fall. My parents are both literature professors, and from a very early age, my sister and I were encouraged to make up stories, draw, paint, dance around in costumes, and essentially spend much of our time living imaginatively. Our house was old and full of art and towers and towers of books, and that’s still the kind of house I like best.

I started writing as a way of extending my love of reading; when I read a book I loved, I would continue to write sequels for it (I was inadvertently a fan fic writer, before “fan fiction” was even a term!). Later on, I began working on my own stories, and keeping company with a lot of imaginary friends.

I pursued literature and philosophy at the University of Chicago, and then moved back to New York to attend NYU’s MFA program in creative writing. I simultaneously began working at Penguin Books, in a young adult division called Razorbill, and while there, I started work on Before I Fall. I left in 2009 to pursue writing full-time, and now I happily work in my pajamas every day.

I have a variety of interests apart from writing, including reading, cooking, traveling, dancing, running, and making up weird songs. Some of my favorite things are: being cozy; fires; autumn; fuzzy slippers; very high heels; great wine; dark chocolate; ketchup; pasta. Things I hate: practical shoes, liars, and bananas. I live in Brooklyn, New York, with my best friend and fiancé, Michael.

http://www.laurenoliverbooks.com/author.php
An Interview With Author Lauren Oliver

Lauren Oliver is young, talented and enthusiastic about writing. In just a few short years she’s taken the young adult literature world by storm with her debut novel Before I Fall and Delirium, her first book in a dystopian trilogy. In February 2012 fans delirious to know what happened to her characters Lena and Alex, rushed to libraries and bookstores to pick up Pandemonium, the second installment in her Delirium trilogy. By virtue of technology, it was my pleasure to email interview Lauren Oliver and learn more about her life, her journey to becoming a writer, and her plans for future projects. In addition, Oliver provided detailed answers to questions fans have about her characters from Delirium.

Tell us about your childhood and where you grew up.

I was born in Queens [NY] and grew up primarily in a small town in Westchester [NY]. My parents are both literature professors, and I grew up in an old house that was filled with books: there were books in the halls, lining the walls, in the basement, stuffed into cardboard boxes in the attic. I was very happy as a child. My parents put a great emphasis on art and the imaginative life, and my sister and I spent a lot of time making up games and imagining ourselves as everything from impoverished servants during the French revolution to famous detectives.

Describe yourself as teenager.

I was a very good student, and involved in a lot of extracurriculars. But I was also kind of a rebel, in my own way—I definitely went to parties, stayed out too late, and dated some questionable boys. I remember lots of joy in my teenage years, especially moments with my friends (I had, and continued to have, a very close circle of friends); but I also remember lots of pain, feelings of insecurity and deep unhappiness. So I guess I was pretty typical! I wore black nail polish and painted bad poetry on my walls.

What types of books and activities did you enjoy doing throughout your childhood and into your teens?

I always loved to read, of course. I’m kind ofmiscellaneously creative, so anything that involves making something appeals to me—I love to cook and sketch and dance and sing. When I was younger, I was very serious about ballet; in high school and college I acted in musicals and sang in an a cappella group. And I’ve been writing my whole life—writing was a constant.

Tell us about the books and authors you most admire.

I have a bunch of childhood favorites, people whose books really stimulated my love of reading, CS Lewis and Roald Dahl, in particular. I love Roald Dahl’s imagination, and his dark sense of
humor. I love JK Rowling—the world she created in Harry Potter is so vivid, so unparalleled; it feels like slipping into a physical space every time I re-read one of her books. I deeply admire Ian McEwan, for his character portraits and knowledge of humanity; and I love Jeffrey Eugenides, because he manages to interweave dozens and dozens of threads in his novels, and he is just a structural genius. I also admire Stephen King—one of the greatest writers of his generation, I think.

We’d love to know your back story and how you came to be a writer.

I’ve been an avid reader my whole life, and my love of writing really grew out of that passion. When I was younger, I started writing sequels to the books I loved; it was an early version of fan fiction, and it was really my first introduction to writing. I simply never stopped. As I grew older, I carried a notebook and wrote down story ideas, dialogue, character descriptions...Whatever struck me or appealed to me.

What or who inspired you to publish a book?

My father, Harold Schechter, is a true crime novelist, so he was deeply influential to me. He’s very disciplined, and has written a page a day, every day, for as long as I’ve known him; and as a result, I learned to be very disciplined myself, and to take my writing seriously. I always knew I had stories to tell, and that I would try and share them.

Describe the moment when you were told your first book was being published.

I was at my desk at work. I was actually in a meeting and knew that my agent was going to call me to share the news of whether the manuscript had been bought, and by whom. And I started hearing my cell phone go absolutely crazy, and then my desk phone. But I still had to sit in the meeting! I was in total agony; I was bouncing all over the place. Finally, my boss released me, and my agent told me that HarperCollins had bought my first book, Before I Fall. I think, as a result, my boss was the first person to know, since I started crowing out the news immediately.

Besides young adult fiction, what other types of writing do you enjoy?


Where did you get your inspiration for Delirium?

The idea for Delirium came from an essay I read by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, in which he wrote that all great books were about love or death. The next day I was thinking about that quote--particularly about how and in what form a modern love story could be told--while I was on the treadmill at the gym. I was simultaneously watching a news story about a flu outbreak that had everyone freaking out about the possibility of a pandemic, and I was kind of marveling that people so easily go into panics about reports of these diseases, and at some point the two trains of thought--love, and disease--just sort of combined in my head.
Reviews for Delirium note its lyrical writing style. First, how do you achieve this quality in your writing, and second, have you written any poetry?

Thank you! I write terrible poetry, actually, but I read a lot of poetry and language, words, are very important to me. I think the lyricism comes from a lifelong focus on the way that images and phrases are put together. I underline books as I read them, and I make note of descriptions that move me. Over time, I’ve developed the ability to “hear" words as I write them, and to find the right rhythm.

What characteristics do you find most intriguing in Lena and Alex?

I like how their relationship enables them to evolve together. I like that although Alex is young, he is generous and moral and brave; and that through his love, Lena is able to develop her own moral compass, her own values and courage. The best relationships are the ones that allow us to be better than we were as individuals.

Which part of Delirium’s story was the most difficult to write? Why?

It was definitely a challenge to extrapolate from a single radical idea—that love is a disease—all of the societal, political, and social institutions that would have to change both to enable and perpetuate this belief. I had to think carefully about every aspect of society, from the words people would use to the music they would listen to. That was part of the fun, though!

As fans of Delirium, we’re interested in knowing more about the procedure of removing the ability to love from a person. How would you explain the operation to eradicate love?

I imagined the procedure as a sophisticated form of brain chemistry, in which the neurological "loops"—i.e. the pathways, the receptors—that permit intense feeling would be disabled. Like a lobotomy for the 22nd century! My sister actually studies brains, so I talked it out a lot with her.

Pandemonium is one of my favorite words. Tell us why you chose this title for the next book in your series and, if possible, share some tantalizing previews about Lena, Alex, her mother, and life beyond the fence.

I didn’t choose it, if you can believe it! I’m notoriously bad at titling books. I actually wrote a little appeal to my fans on my blog, and asked whether anyone could generate sequel titles for Delirium. I got an incredible quantity of creative responses, and thus Pandemonium and Requiem (the final book in the series) were born! Pandemonium actually just hit shelves, and we definitely see a huge amount of growth in Lena, as she struggles to find a place in a world on the verge of revolution.

What do you like best about writing young adult fiction?

I like exploring themes of self realization, and the tension between established “norms" and the need to find an inner voice, to tune into the self. And young adult fiction is a great place to explore those themes, as they really resonate with the audience. Plus, I love my fans!! They are too adorable. I get the best fan messages ever.
Additional Recommendations From Your Guide Elizabeth Kennedy

For more information about several of Oliver's childhood favorites, read The Chronicles of Narnia and C.S. Lewis FAQs, The Enduring Roald Dahl and The Harry Potter Series: Fast Facts.

For more about dystopian novels, read Dystopian Novels and Teens: Frequently Asked Questions. For recommended books, see Dystopian Novels for Teens: A Top Picks List and the overview of the Hunger Games trilogy.

http://childrensbooks.about.com/od/Interviews-of-Authors-Artists/a/An-Interview-With-Author-Lauren-Oliver.htm
Lauren Oliver: 'I don't believe in happy endings'

She is the biggest thing in Young Adult fiction right now. So why does she feel so conflicted, asks James Kidd

James Kidd, Saturday 20 April 2013

It is tempting to view Lauren Oliver's literary career as working in reverse. Arguably the hottest property in Young Adult fiction right now, Oliver spent her own teenage years reading Henry James and nursing a precocious ambition to compose the great American novel. "I was failing to write these long, depressing books," says the 29-year-old. "My first novel was about a 35-year-old whose wife dies of cancer and who takes up with a prostitute. It was ridiculous." These fledgling efforts earned Oliver an agent but little else. "They were roundly rejected by every publisher because they had no plot. I was writing boring books."

Oliver sublimated her ambition to be a novelist by working for Penguin in New York. It was on this supposedly grown-up stage that she began reading stories for young adults. "These novels were strange, ambitious and entertaining. They had stories that propelled you. I feel a lot of adult fiction looks down on plot as a lesser form of literature."

Oliver’s first novel for teens was Before I Fall, a smart, vibrant and romantic re-imagining of Groundhog Day. It was followed by the trilogy of Delirium, Pandemonium and now Requiem. Currently being filmed for US television, the series is attracting the highest-profile fans. Barack Obama was photographed in a Virginia bookstore buying Delirium and Pandemonium as Christmas presents for his daughters.

Set in a dystopian America where romantic love is illegal, Requiem completes a story that is epic and intimate at the same time. Oliver's two narrators, Lena and Hana, face stark choices between freedom and security, rebellion and conformity, certainty and mystery, and, of course, boys who are brooding or boys who are more genial. Oliver plays skilfully with genre conventions, and tackles grand narratives with an intelligence that should make some adult novelists blush.
Nevertheless, not everyone is thrilled. "Requiem has been controversial because people don't feel I gave it closure," says Oliver. But the deliberately incomplete finale encapsulates the entire point of the trilogy. "It's a coming-of-age story. Part of what adults have to live with is ambiguity. It's not like you make a choice and find happiness hiding behind one of three doors looking like Kim Kardashian. You have to choose what you want every day. There is no one point at which you get your happy ending."

Oliver's conversation, like her books, also puts many so-called "serious" novelists to shame. Despite jet lag and a half-serious claim to "misanthropy", her ideas bounce around like hyperactive puppies. Whether she is unpicking her "politically bifurcated country" or talking about her personal life, she answers questions with eloquence and openness.

***The next paragraph contains spoilers***

She mentions Lena's uneasy reunion with her mother, who abandons her children in her desperation to escape political and social oppression. "That theme of betrayal reflected the fact that a person I dated for four years and was engaged to died at 29 due to substance abuse issues. I only realised it in retrospect, but I think Lena's agonizing about her mother reflected my own feelings – why wasn't I good enough to stay alive for?"

One could see Oliver as encapsulating the extremes of her two heroines. "There are times I wish I was more conventional," she says. "I would get a husband and a baby and a big SUV in the 'burbs and be happy. But forging my own way – my career, my relationships with wonderful but troubled people – that's who I am."

Raised in Westchester, Connecticut, she describes her upbringing as liberal and comfortable. Her mother and father are literature professors who divorced when Oliver was young, then remarried to other literature professors. "My parents were pretty liberal, but they were still parents. I definitely had my teenage rebellion." What sort of things? "Nothing I would repeat on record," Oliver laughs. "I was kind of a wild teenager, but I always got great grades at high school. I became a huge nerd later in life."

Oliver takes her success seriously but wears it lightly. Clearly ambitious, she divides her time between writing and a publishing venture, Paper Lantern, that encourages teenagers to write fiction. "I didn't miss working in a traditional publishing house – certainly not the dress code or meetings – but I did miss working with writers. We're a small operation – the five of us meet around my dining room table. We are experimenting with an e-venture and looking for new writers."

Oliver herself has two new books ready for publication next year. A Young Adult novel called Panic ("about a dangerous game played by adolescents"), and The Rose which is aimed at more "mature" readers. ("A family clear out a house after the death of a patriarch.") Whether this signals that Oliver has come full circle or is simply growing up remains to be seen. What she does know is that today's teenagers can heal the social and political rifts in her divided nation.

"The good news is that teenagers agree on the most divisive issues in America: 75 per cent of young people support gay marriage. There is definitely the sense that future generations can heal the rift in the US." She says much the same about their attitude to literature. "I have never
met a teenager – and I probably meet 5,000 a year – who prefers ebooks to real books. Their parents like ebooks. Teens like to own a book and have it on their shelves."

Before she disappears for a well-earned afternoon nap, I ask about her most famous young readers, Malia Ann and Sasha Obama. Having campaigned for Obama in 2008, Oliver could not imagine a better endorsement. "All I can say is that they have excellent taste. It is just so flattering. A friend said: 'When a celebrity reads your book, that's great. But the President – he is really famous.'"

http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/lauren-oliver-i-dont-believe-in-happy-endings-8581410.html