

Verify by Joelle Charbonneau

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joelle Charbonneau has performed in opera and musical theater productions across Chicagoland. She now teaches private voice lessons and is the author of the New York Times bestselling *The Testing* trilogy (*The Testing*, *Independent Study*, and *Graduation Day*) as well as two mystery series: The Rebecca Robbins mysteries and the Glee Club mysteries. Her YA books have appeared on the Indie Next List, on the YALSA Top 10 books for 2014 as well as the YALSA Quick Picks for reluctant readers. Visit her online at joellecharbonneau.com

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

As you read and annotate the book, keep these three big questions in mind. Look for quotes or short passages that answer these questions – then mark those sections of the book!

- ★ To what extent do fear and misinformation shape people's decisions and relationships?
- ★ To what extent might it be dangerous to trust systems, institutions, or online sources without critical thinking?
- ★ How much difference can one person make when taking a stand against injustice?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. At the beginning of the novel, Meri Beckley believes she lives in a world "without lies." How does her understanding of truth change after receiving the paper with the word *verify* on it?
2. Meri's mother leaves behind unfinished artwork and hidden clues. How do these objects symbolize the larger themes of memory, truth, and resistance?
3. How does Meri's grief over her mother's death shape her decisions throughout the novel? Does grief make her stronger, more vulnerable, or both?
4. Compare Meri's relationship with her mother to her relationship with her father. How do those two relationships influence her choices?
5. Why is the government so determined to eliminate paper books and control language? What examples from the novel show why words are dangerous to those in power?
6. How does Charbonneau use Chicago as the setting? In what ways does the familiar city make the dystopian world more unsettling?
7. By the end of the novel, Meri is no longer simply searching for truth – she is willing to fight for it. What key moments transform her from a passive citizen into a revolutionary?

8. The novel ends with unresolved conflict and difficult choices ahead. Based on Meri's development, what kind of leader do you think she will become, and what might that cost her?
9. In what ways does social media function as both a tool and a weapon in the story? How might the story be different if it took place before the rise of social media?
10. How does the pressure to conform influence the decisions characters make throughout the novel?
11. What role does identity play in the novel? How do characters present themselves differently online versus in real life?
12. What does the novel suggest about the balance between personal freedom and public safety?