

UNSAID READER'S GUIDE

1. Unsaid is about the healing power of animals. Have you had any personal experiences where an animal has helped you heal? Physically? Emotionally? Spiritually?
2. In the novel, one of the characters points out that there is a distinction between “unspoken” and “unsaid”. Do you think there is a difference? What is it?
3. What characters in the book have left things “unsaid” when we first meet them? What remains “unsaid” by the end of the novel?
4. In the novel, Helena is unable to move on after she dies. Do you believe that her continued presence is voluntary or involuntary? In what way? What is the mechanism for her final release?
5. The novel ends with the word “Amen.” Why do you think the author chose that word?
6. The novel points out an ever-present tension between specieism and anthropomorphism. Is anti-specieism always anthropomorphic? Is anti-anthropomorphism always speciest?
7. Is there an ethical way to use animals in invasive science research? What if the research causes the death of the animal?
8. Which characters in the novel are motivated by rejection? Which are motivated by the fear of rejection?
9. Cindy is limited in her ability to communicate with humans. In what ways are the human characters limited in their ability to communicate? What has caused these limitations?

10. Does Clifford's communication impairment result in his understanding more or less than the other characters? What does your answer lead you to conclude about the relationship between speech and understanding?

11. At the end of the novel, David insists that he be the one to inject the euthanasia solution that ends his dog's life. Have you ever made that request? Would you consider doing so?

12. Many of the human characters in the book experience grief. Do you believe that animals experience grief? Have you ever witnessed an animal displaying grief?

13. One of the themes of the book is that meaning only comes from juxtaposition and dissonance. If you could choose, would you "live small" in a numb and painless existence or seek meaning and purpose even though that price of that understanding is pain?

14. How would the story have been different if narrated by Clifford? If narrated by David?