

HIGH SCHOOL IS HARD. PERIOD.

The
UNEXPECTED
CONSEQUENCE
of BLEEDING
on a Tuesday

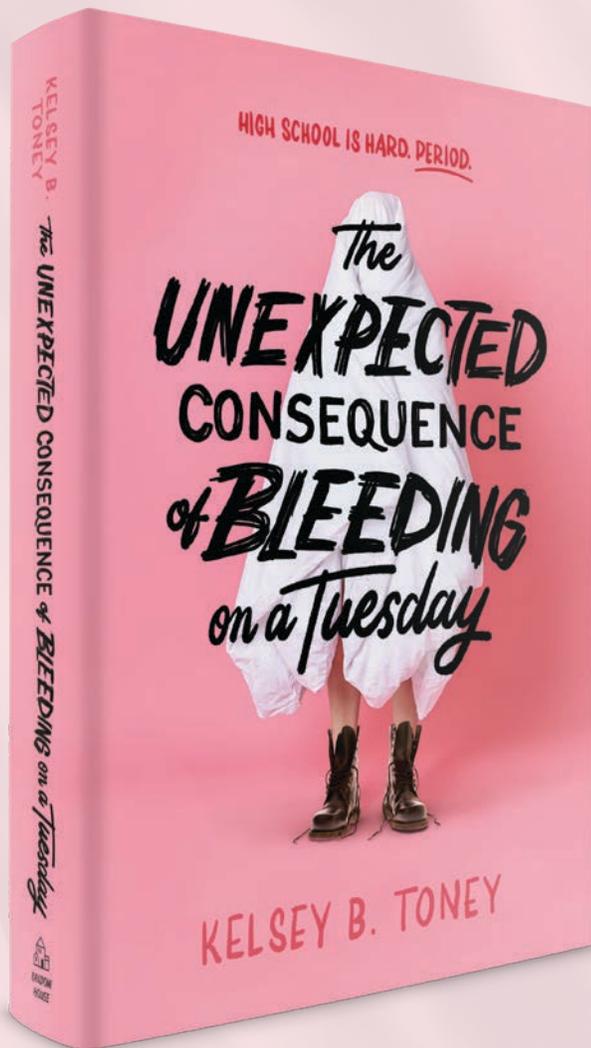


KELSEY B. TONEY

DISCUSSION GUIDE

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ABOUT THE BOOK

High school senior Delia Bridges has the most amazing mom and sister, a killer GPA, and periods that are so painful they make her scream, pass out, and throw up. Though she doesn't know it yet, Delia has endometriosis, an affliction plaguing millions of people that is notoriously difficult to diagnose.

The pain makes everything harder, but Delia is just one semester away from graduating from Stockwood Prep and pursuing her dream of becoming the kind of doctor she's never had: one who takes her symptoms seriously. But when she breaks a rule for the first time ever and uses marijuana at school to manage her pain, Delia is expelled.

Her expulsion jeopardizes her college acceptance, her upcoming mentorship, and everything she had carefully planned for years. Without her academic success and no closer to a diagnosis, is Delia anything more than her period?

Themes: Humor, Disabilities & Illness, Gender Issues, Self-Discovery, Divorce & Single Parent Families



Photo credit: Friedmud Photography

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kelsey B. Toney writes humorous, heartfelt stories about the hope that exists after our most laughably bad decisions. In past lives, Kelsey has been a teacher, a recording artist, and an actress—always in pursuit of connection through art and empathy. Learn more at kelseybtoney.com, on her podcast, or in her newsletter.

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever told the truth and been doubted? If so, describe the circumstances and your feelings. If not, imagine and discuss what it would feel like.
2. Talk about the book's title, what it might mean, and situations in your life that had unexpected consequences.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Give an overview of Delia's situation and character when the book opens. Who are her family and friends? What is school like for her? What are some of her goals, and how likely do they seem? What are some of her strengths? What are some challenges that she faces?
2. What is Delia's relationship like with her mother? How does she depend on her mother? What does she hide from her mother? How does her mother interact with Delia's schools? Do you think her mother is doing a good job of raising her daughters? Why or why not?
3. What kind of person is Regan? How is she similar to Delia and how is she different? Give examples of how the sisters relate to each other.
4. Describe the Bloodbath that occurred during middle school and made Delia so unhappy. What happened? How did Delia feel Ruby betrayed her? What was their friendship like before the event? What were the consequences of the Bloodbath for Delia? When did Delia finally tell Priya and Keisha about it, and why?
5. Talk about the role of shame in Delia's life. For example, why does she feel "unreasonable shame" that Regan knows her menstrual schedule? Why is chapter 21 titled "Ride of Shame"? Discuss Ruby's comment about IBS: "I've tried to save my shame for the stuff that's shameful. And this just ain't it." (ch. 19)
6. At the beginning of the novel, what has been Delia's experience with doctors? Why has she found this experience so discouraging? Why does she want to see doctors without her mother's help? Describe her appointments, including the one she ends up recording. Why does she record and what does she do with the recording? Why do you think doctors are so dismissive of her pain?
7. Delia finds it hard to share her medical issues with her friends, saying: "The self-doubt was so brutal, and it made me feel childish and separate, and insecure." (ch. 4) After she collapses on the bathroom floor, Delia thinks, "There may not be anything quite as awful as the self-doubt that comes after a bad flare-up." (ch. 22) Relate Delia's self-doubt to her middle school experiences and her visits to various doctors.
8. Delia writes a letter to Dr. Steele in chapter 9, "Read Between the Lines." Discuss the letter including the side comments in italics. Why do you think the author used this structure for the letter? How do the side comments add humor? Why does Delia sign between the lines "*With shame*"?



9. Dr. Steele tells Delia, “Every bad decision has consequences. Every minute you don’t sleep that makes you drowsy, every mile you speed over the limit, every second you wait before you act has permanent, irreversible consequences that you can’t always predict.” Discuss why he says this, what he means, and to what extent you agree with him. Why does Delia think “everything he said was like gold in my heart”? (ch. 28)
10. Discuss the book’s title as it relates to Dr. Steele’s comments and to other aspects of the story. How does the title foreshadow the novel’s plot and tone? Talk also about the chapter titles, citing specific ones, and what they add for readers.
11. Why does Delia dread running into Ruby at Blythe High School? What does she expect? What actually happens when they meet again? What do they have in common medically and socially that they didn’t in middle school? How do their medical conditions draw them closer? Talk about Ruby’s personality and about their renewed friendship.
12. How do Delia and Caleb meet? What do you learn about Caleb? Why does Delia like him? Talk about their relationship, how it evolves, and how Delia’s medical situation affects it. What is Ruby’s relationship with Iggy like? How do they deal with Ruby’s medical problems?
13. How do Delia’s medical problems limit dating in general? What are other ways that they affect her social life, first in middle school and then in high school? How do they make it hard to make plans with friends? How do her problems make Delia feel like a burden to her family and friends?
14. Explain the policy of both high schools about missing more than ten days of school. What are the consequences for Delia and Ruby? How do their fellow students protest Ruby’s treatment? Discuss whether you consider the policies reasonable or how you think they could be more fair.

ACTIVITIES

1. Delia mentions her vision board more than once, describing it as “so many little scraps of paper meant to inspire me to keep my goals in mind.” (ch. 9) Create a digital or handcrafted vision board for Delia, one of the other characters, or yourself that spells out short- or long-term goals in any area of life. Make it colorful and specific.
2. Visit author Kelsey Toney’s [website](#) and find the link to her podcast “Space Not Taken.” Listen to the podcast called “In Medical Care—Kelsey and Endometriosis.” Meet in small groups and discuss the podcast, including ways that the podcast relates to the novel and ways in which it’s different.
3. Why is it so difficult for Delia to get a diagnosis? Why does Dr. Evans try to refer her to a psychiatrist? Read this [short article](#) on sexism and pain, and discuss why you think women are taken less seriously by many medical professionals. Relate the information to Delia’s experiences.
4. The author provides resources about endometriosis in the back matter. Choose a topic related to the body that is often ignored or considered shameful such as menstrual periods, STDs, IBS, panic attacks, menopause, breastfeeding, or others. Prepare a list of resources, including websites, books, and organizations. For each one, write a few sentences about the credentials and history of each resource and why you chose it.

*Guide created by Kathleen Odean, a long-time youth librarian,
who chaired the 2002 Newbery Award Committee.*



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