



# Let's Never Speak of This Again

## MEGAN WILLIAMS

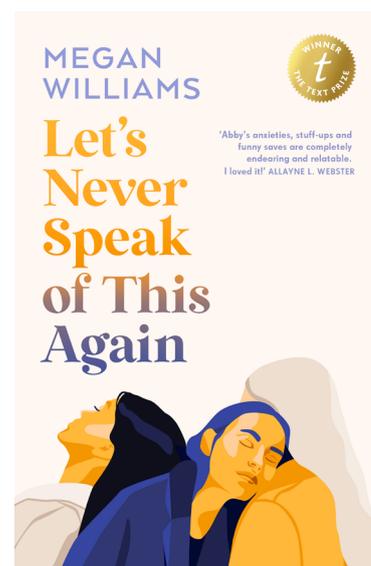
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Fiction

**RECOMMENDED READING AGE: 14+**

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### CURRICULUM GUIDE

The following teaching guide has been designed to embrace shared curriculum values. Students are encouraged to communicate their understanding of a text through speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing and representing.

The learning activities aim to encourage students to think critically, creatively and independently, to reflect on their learning, and connect it to audience, purpose and context. They aim to encompass a range of forms and include a focus on language, literature and literacy. Where appropriate, they include the integration of ICT and life skills.



Credit: Jessie Hope

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Megan Williams won the 2022 Text Prize for her debut YA novel *Let's Never Speak of This Again*. She lives in Brisbane with her husband and their three children.

### SYNOPSIS

Abby, Ella, Jade and Alice are close friends. And Abby and Ella are best friends. Abby has known Ella (and her parents, and her brother, Will) forever. They're practically family. Sometimes though, Abby's insecurity makes her wish things wouldn't go quite so well for her friends, even though she'd never actually want anything bad to happen to them. It's just that sometimes her own envies and insecurities creep in.

When a new girl Chloe arrives at the school, Abby invites her to join their group. She wants to help Chloe fit in, until Chloe begins fitting in a bit too well. Chloe starts dating James, the boy that Abigail has a crush on, and soon it's all Chloe and James and Ella and Angus. Abby is trying not to let her jealousy get the better of her, but it's hard, especially when she and Ella seem to be drifting apart. It sometimes feels as though Chloe's deliberately trying to come between Abby and her best friend.

Then something unimaginable happens. Ella's brother, Will, dies in a car accident. His death is sudden and horrifying, and nobody in the group has experience dealing with this kind of grief. Except... Ella seems fine? Or that's what she keeps telling them. When Abby hears her mum commenting on how worried she is about Ella she's frustrated. Trust her mum to think the worst about everything. Ella wouldn't say she was fine if she wasn't, would she?

Abby notices signs that her best friend isn't actually okay—like when Ella stays over and cries when she thinks no one can hear her; or when she locks herself in the bathroom in tears at a concert. Abby doesn't know how to navigate the strange gap that has sprung up between them. Abby realises that she



might have to start seeing things—and people—from a different perspective. Because it's going to take all of her friends to support Ella in her grief.

*Let's Never Speak of This Again* is a gentle timely story about grief, family and friendship.

### BEFORE READING

1. One of the themes in the book is self-doubt. Share a time that you've struggled with self-doubt. How did you overcome it?
2. Chloe is the new girl at school—what are some of the challenges of being a new kid (either at school or in another class/activity)?
3. Look at the cover of the book. How does it make you feel? As you start reading discuss whether the emotions that are evoked by the cover match the emotions you feel as you read.

### WHILE READING

1. What is the 'what if' game? How do Ella and Abby use it to help them make difficult decisions?
2. What does Abby mean when she describes herself as 'more of an Alice'? (p. 18)
3. What do Alice and Adam fight about?
4. Abby's mum 'gets more upset than she used to when she can't find her car keys'. (p. 44) What do you think she's afraid of?
5. At the beginning of the book, Abby describes herself mostly in comparison to her friends. How do you think these comparisons make her feel about herself? Does her view change by the end of the book?
6. 'Every now and then I have this gut reaction where I wish bad luck or disappointment on someone I love.' (p. 20) Abby says that she doesn't know where this thought comes from—where do you think it comes from? She worries that these thoughts reflect her 'true self'. (p. 21) Do you agree?
7. Why do you think Abby finds it hard to make new friends at high school? Reflect on your first year at high school—what were some of the challenges you encountered?
8. Why does Abby enjoy netball?
9. What is 'lemon and rose'? Come up with your own lemon and your own rose for the day.

10. What are the different ways that Abby and Toby react to conflict? What makes her so angry at her mum?
11. What happens between Chloe and James? How does Abby feel about it?
12. Why is dinner at Francesco's so important to Abby's mum? What do you think it represents to her?
13. How does Abby find out that Will has died? Discuss the way she processes this shock.
14. What are some of the ways Will looked out for Abby?
15. What do you think Chloe's intentions were when she posted photos of Abby at the Victory Party in the WhatsApp chat?
16. Abby says, 'I feel as though there are rules and etiquettes that are so obvious to everyone but me'. (p. 163) Is she right? What are they?
17. How does Abby reconnect with Meema?

### AFTER READING

#### CHARACTER

1. Who is Ella? How does Abby see herself in comparison to her friend?
2. What makes Abby feel good about herself? Why do you think she often doesn't feel good about herself? What would you say to Abby about this if you were her friend?
3. What are some of the changes that Abby describes in Meema? What does Abby miss the most?
4. Ella tells Abby, 'I don't think it'd be very easy going to be you.' (p. 64) What does she mean by this? Is she right? Why do you think Abby says it feels 'lonely' to be mistaken for easy going?
5. How do Abby and her mum say they're sorry? What are some of the ways you say sorry to the people you love?

#### STYLE & STRUCTURE

##### Fragments

*Let's Never Speak of This Again* makes use of shorter scenes rather than traditional chapters. Why do you think the writer does this? How do the subheadings help to move the story forward and show the reader where they are in the story?



## THEMES

### Grief

1. Abby isn't sure how much grief she's entitled to feel about Will. Is there an easy answer to this? What are some of the factors that make grief so complicated?
2. Discuss the way that feelings of grief of Will's death are similar and different to the grief around Meema's dementia and memory loss.
3. After Will's funeral, Abby overhears her mum talking about how worried she is about Ella—why? How does Abby finally discover how Ella is feeling? What does she do? What could she have done differently in this moment?
4. What does Ms Scott say about grief? Can you find examples of grief doing this in the book?
5. Ella tells Abby that she's fine, but Abby knows from 'her flat unemotional tone' that she isn't. (p. 151) What are some of the ways a friend might show they're not okay? How can we support them?

### Friendship

1. Abby says that 'although Alice and Jade are best friends, they couldn't be more different'. (p. 18) Discuss the saying 'opposites attract' in relation to the friendships in the book. Does it apply? Why/why not?
2. Why does Mrs Miller choose Abby to be the new girl's buddy? Describe Abby's first impressions of Chloe. How does she feel when Chloe starts to become close with her friends, and with Ella in particular?
3. When Abby is invited to Nicole's house for a netball dinner, she feels out of place until she realises that her friendship with Will gives her a hotline to gossip that the other girls are interested in. She says, 'For the rest of the night, I happily trade everything I know about Will in exchange for their attention and approval.' (p. 89) Is this something a friend would really do? Is the attention Abby receives as a result of this and her ongoing Will updates real friendship? Why/why not?
4. How has Abby's friendship with Ella changed since primary school?
5. 'My friendship with Ella isn't the same as it was at the start of the year, but we're not the same either.' (p. 206) Is friendship something that should stay the same? How do the differences in Abby and Ella's friendship by the end of the book make it stronger?

## RESPONDING

1. When Abby accuses her mum of being horrible for putting Meema in 'that awful nursing home', her mum calls her 'a little bitch' (p. 73), even though it's a word she hates. What do you think she was thinking before she said this? Rewrite this scene from her perspective.
2. 'I wish I knew how my story ends, or even just what comes next.' (p. 127) What do you think comes next for Abby? Write a fortune that tells Abby what's around the corner for her.
3. Write an alternative version of the story in which Will doesn't die. What do you think would happen?
4. How would you encourage someone to pick up this book? Come up with a way to encourage other people at the school to read this book.
5. Using some of the examples provided in the book, and your own discussions in class, make a list of red flags and green flags on consent, and turn them into a poster to put up around the school.