

DISCUSSION GUIDE

The fire begins in the basement.

Does it hurt?

Yes and no. This is, after all, what I wanted.

And I'm beyond hurting now.

But the fear is almost like pain.

It is driving, immense. This body, our last body, our
final chance, will be burned to dust.

What will happen to me then?

From the kitchen, to the pantry, to the dining room
and the hall; up the stairs, a choking

smoke,

darkness, soot, and stifling heat.

From the attic to room, from the roof to the basement.

We burn.

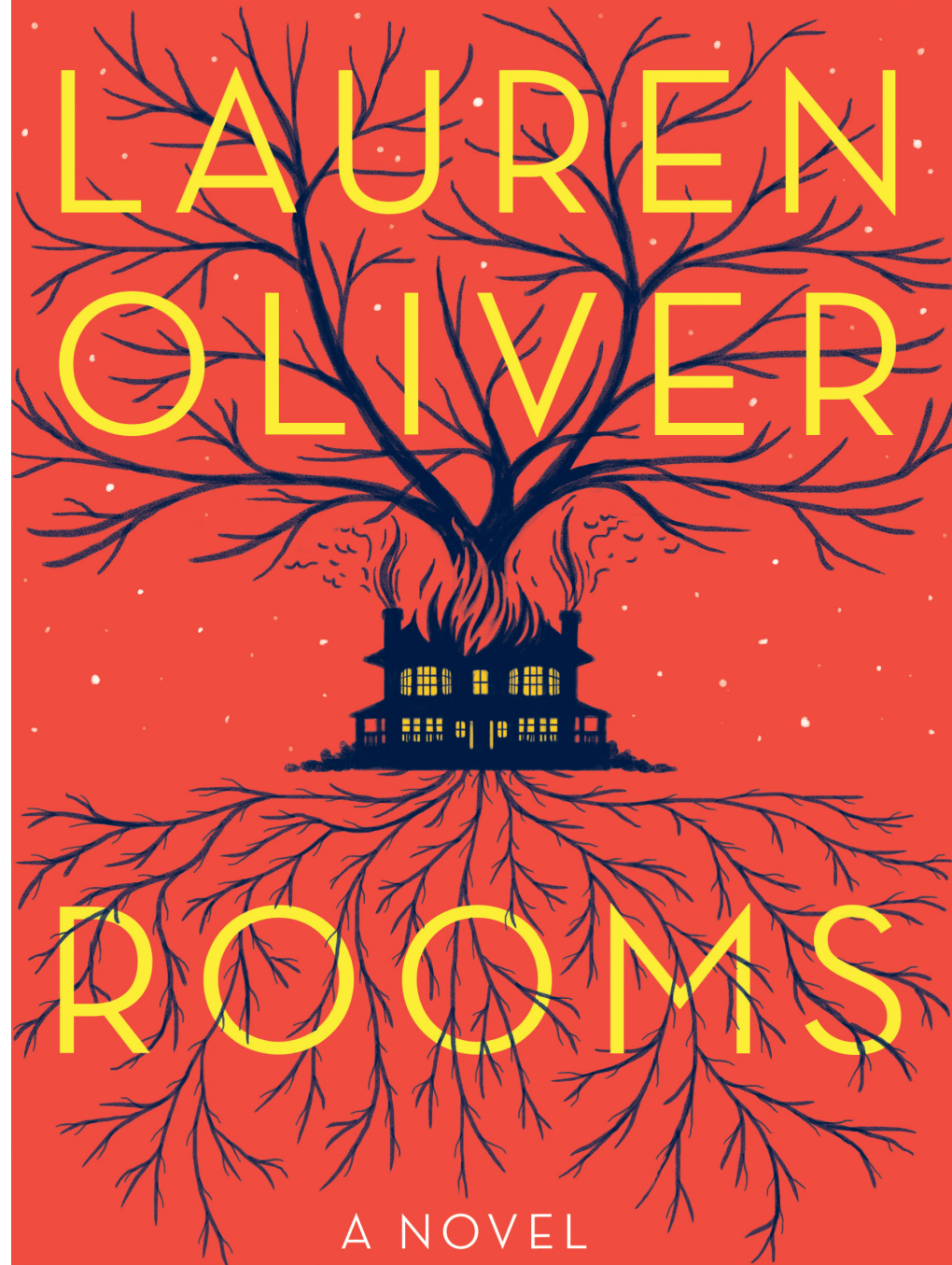


Lauren Oliver is the author of the New York Times bestselling YA novels *Before I Fall*, *Panic*, and the *Delirium* trilogy: *Delirium*, *Pandemonium*, and *Requiem*. Her books have been translated into thirty languages. She is also the author of two novels for middle-grade readers, *The Spindlers* and *Liesl & Po*, which was a 2012 E. B. White Read-Aloud Award nominee. Lauren's first adult novel, *Rooms*, will be published in September 2014. A graduate of the University of Chicago and NYU's MFA program, Lauren Oliver is also the co-founder of the boutique literary development company Paper Lantern Lit. You can visit her online at www.laurenoliverbooks.com



DISCUSSION GUIDE

LAUREN
OLIVER



A NOVEL

ABOUT THE BOOK

Wealthy Richard Walker has just died, leaving behind his country house full of rooms packed with the detritus of a lifetime. His estranged family -- bitter ex-wife Caroline, troubled teenage son Trenton, and unforgiving daughter Minna -- have arrived for their inheritance.

But the Walkers are not alone. Alice and Sandra, long-dead former residents bound to the house, linger within its claustrophobic walls. Jostling for space, memory, and supremacy, they observe the family, trading barbs and reminiscences about their past lives. Though their voices cannot be heard, Alice and Sandra speak through the house itself -- in the hiss of the radiator, a creak in the stairs, the dimming of a light bulb.

The living and dead are haunted by painful truths that will soon surface with explosive force. When a new ghost appears, and Trenton begins to communicate with her, the spirit and human worlds collide -- with cataclysmic results.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) Everyone in *Rooms* has a secret. What do you think the book is saying about the relationship between secrets and intimacy?
- 2) How does the physicality of the ghosts compare to the ways ghosts manifest in other stories? How does that change our conception of an afterlife?
- 3) In what ways is the house a character in the story?

4) What does this story say about the relationship between people and their objects?

5) The members of the living family, as well as the ghosts, all struggle with some form of depression, and they all use different methods to either deny the feeling or try and escape it. What does this say about the nature of depression? What does it say about coping mechanisms?

6) The characters in the story all have a different connection to *The Raven Heliotrope*. Is *Rooms* making a point about the stories we read as children? Why do you think Alice wrote the story?

7) Why do you think Trenton was able to communicate with the ghosts in the house?

8) What do you think happens to the characters after the book ends?

9) Why do you think Alice and Sandra were able to leave the house at last?

10) Consider all of the different examples of parent-child relationships presented in *Rooms*, and the lasting ways these reverberate with the main characters. In what way do our childhoods impact us?

11) What do these differing views of parenthood say about the difficulties and joys of caring for other people?

12) What does the book say about memory? Do you think memories are ever completely truthful?

