

DISCUSSION GUIDE

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



LAUREN OLIVER is the author of the YA novels *Before I Fall*, *Panic*, and the *Delirium* trilogy: *Delirium*, *Pandemonium*, and *Requiem*, which have been translated into more than thirty languages and are *New York Times* and international bestselling novels. 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 novel *Panic* has been optioned for film by Universal Studios. A graduate

of the University of Chicago and NYU's MFA program, Lauren Oliver is also the cofounder of the boutique literary development company, Paper Lantern Lit. You can visit her online at www.laurenoliverbooks.com



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panic

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Aligns with
Common Core
State Standards
for grades
9–12.

A close-up, profile view of a woman's face with long, wavy, light-colored hair blowing in the wind against a dark background.

panic

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR
LAUREN OLIVER

ABOUT THE BOOK

Heather never thought she would compete in Panic, a legendary game played by graduating seniors, where the stakes are high and the payoff is even higher. She'd never thought of herself as fearless, the kind of person who would fight to stand out. But when she finds something, and someone, to fight for, she will discover that she is braver than she ever thought.

Dodge has never been afraid of Panic. His secret will fuel him and get him all the way through the game, he's sure of it. But what he doesn't know is that he's not the only one with a secret. Everyone has something to play for.

For Heather and Dodge, the game will bring new alliances, unexpected revelations, and the possibility of love for both of them—and the knowledge that sometimes the very things we fear are those we need the most . . .

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Describe Panic. Address the following in your answer: how the game got started, how it is funded, who determines the challenges, and why graduating seniors play the game.
2. Heather Nill attends the first event in support of her friend Natalie. Once there, she decides to compete. Why does she choose to play? Describe Heather's self-image. Are her self-perceptions accurate? Support your answer with evidence from the text.
3. Compare and contrast Dodge Mason with Bishop Marks. Do Dodge and Bishop like each other? Use evidence in the story to explain how their relationship develops over time. Choose either character and describe how he develops throughout the novel.
4. Why does Natalie make a commitment to split her winnings with Heather and then make the same pact with Dodge? Is she a good friend? Explain.
5. The narrator describes Dodge Mason as not being afraid. What is his secret and how is his attitude dangerous? Is he a likable character? Why or why not? Support your answer with information from the story. Discuss the definition of a complex character. How does Dodge fit this definition?
6. What happened to Dodge's sister, Dayna, to make Dodge so angry? How does she surprise Dodge? What impact does her attitude have on Dodge? What impact does it have on the reader's predictions about what Dodge might do?
7. Describe Bishop and Heather's relationship. Bishop does not participate in the challenges; however, he plays a role in the story. Describe his role and explain how his relationship with Heather changes over the summer.
8. Reread the first three chapters of the book. Discuss in small groups how these three chapters set up the story. What do readers learn about the character(s)? About the setting and Panic? In what way do these three chapters begin building suspense?
9. One might argue that the story could have been written without the character of Lily. Study Lily's character and the scenes in which she appears. What does this character contribute to the story? Why do you think the author created a younger sister for Heather? What changes would the author have to make to "write her out of the story"? What would be lost if she were written out?
10. The author uses third-person point of view and rotates between Heather's and Dodge's inner thoughts. Could this story be told from first-person point of view? Why or why not? How would the story be different if it were told in the first person? How does the author's choice in structure create tension and suspense?
11. Identify any two themes in the story and explain in detail how the author uses any one character and/or an event to advance those themes.
12. Some might say the teens in Carp, New York, play Panic or participate as an observer or judge out of a sense of desperation. Analyze any character other than Dodge or Heather. What motivates this character to participate in the game? What motivates him/her to keep the game a secret? What steps would you take if you knew classmates or teens in your community were engaging in dangerous behavior?
13. What role do authority figures, including the police, play in the story? Why is their presence held to a minimum? How would the story change if they played a more prominent role? How could their presence complicate the writing of the story?
14. In the closing scene, the author writes, "The bravery was in moving forward, no matter what" (p. 408). Examine the idea of bravery in this story and in general. One person might think that if someone backs out of Panic or fails a dangerous challenge, he/she is a coward; another might say that anyone who participates at all is reckless. What do you think makes someone brave? Who do you feel is the bravest person in the story? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

Aligns with the English Language Arts Common Core Reading Literature & Speaking and Listening Standards: RL. 9-10.1, RL.11-12.1; RL.9-10.2, RL.11-12.2; RL.9-10.3, RL.11-12.3; RL.9-10.5, RL.11-12.5; SL.9-10.1, SL.11-12.1.