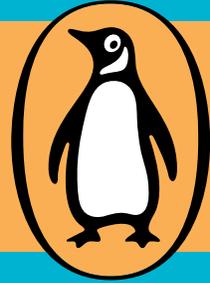
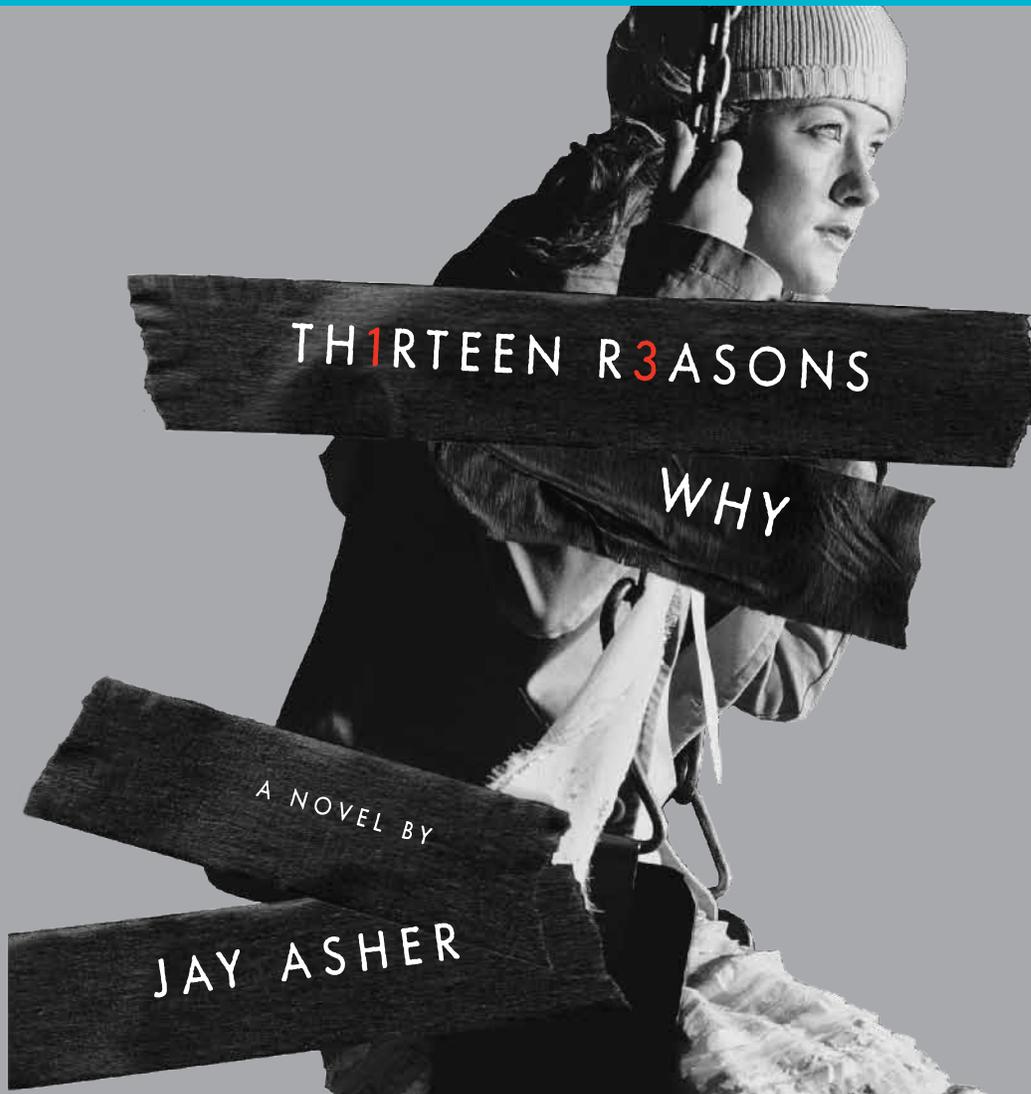


# Penguin's Classroom Classics

Making Curriculum Connections!



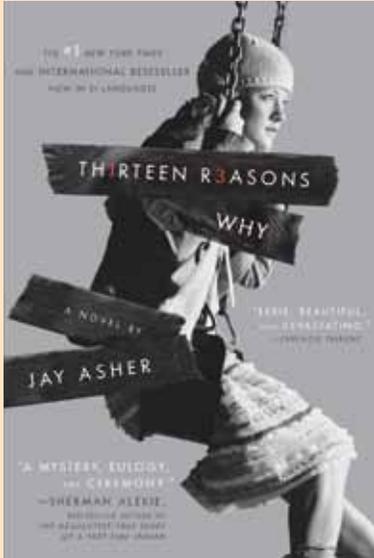
## An Educator's Guide to



**INSPIRE • ENGAGE • EDUCATE**

The activities in this guide align with Common Core State Standards  
and fit into the curriculum for grades 7–10

[PenguinClassroom.com](http://PenguinClassroom.com)



## About the Book:

Suicide and bullying, unfortunately, touch the lives of teens all around the country. Asher's book provides teachers and community leaders with an authentic way to engage teens in these important topics. We hope that this guide will:

- Begin a conversation with teachers, teens, and community leaders that focuses on prevention.
- Lead to the realization that all actions have a ripple effect with consequences.
- Increase the empathy ratio on school campuses.

We hope that *Thirteen Reasons Why* will be a catalyst for improving life for all the Hannahs of our country, not only in our schools, but in our communities as well.

Note: *Thirteen Reasons Why* by Jay Asher is a novel. This novel, however, deals with very intimate and painful topics. Asher discusses suicide and bullying, topics we would hope your students will never face in real life. If statistics are to be trusted, however, some of your students will be contemplating suicide or will be the victims of bullying

(or both). Maybe you know one of those students? Jay Asher, his publisher, and all the people connected with this book are deeply concerned with your ability to find help for your students. Make sure your community has a procedure for handling reports of suicide or bullying. If your community is not equipped to deal with these subjects, familiarize yourself with the links for the National Institute for Mental Health and the Rape, Abuse, Incest, National Network (RAINN). Placing contact information for these organizations regularly on handouts is highly recommended. Make sure your students understand the importance of reporting ALL INSTANCES OF BULLYING, HARRASSMENT, TEASING, ASSAULT, etc. Having students practice reporting make-believe incidents is a good use of time! Create a culture of caring on your campus.

If you have students considering suicide, and the odds are that you do, the National Institute for Mental Health (<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/suicide-prevention/index.shtml>) is a good place to investigate. Make your students aware of the National Suicide Hotline at 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433). If any of your students are a victim of sexual assault (and while females are more often the victims, males may be victims too), the Rape, Abuse, Incest, National Network (RAINN) will help provide answers for you and your students. Online information from RAINN is located at [www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org). RAINN has a toll-free number at 1-800-656-HOPE. Let's change the tapes for all of the Hannahs in our schools: "She lived a long, productive life because of the help and support of her school, teachers, classmates, and community."



## A Note from the Author:

When I wrote *Thirteen Reasons Why*, I felt confident that teens would understand and appreciate the ideas I wanted to talk about in the book. And I've received many inspiring letters from readers saying it made them more conscious of how they treat others, as well as the importance of really reaching out when they need help and not simply dropping hints. With adults, my fingers were crossed that they would see this as an opportunity to begin a dialogue with teens about some important issues. Thankfully, they've jumped at the chance. It's been wonderful to hear about some of the conversations that have started. Of course, simply hearing that they loved the book is great, too!  
—Jay Asher

This guide was created by Ed Spicer. Ed Spicer has his Master's in diagnosing early reading and writing problems. He writes young adult book reviews for the Michigan Reading Journal and runs a teen book group at the high school in Allegan, MI. Ed has served on many American Library Association committees, including the Printz Committee and the Caldecott.

# Activity and Discussion Prompts for *Thirteen Reasons Why*

1. **First Impressions:** We begin the book with the word, “Sir” and a question mark. In one word the author hints at questions of maturity for our main character, who, we later learn, is named, Clay.

- Explore the words that set the mood of this novel.
- What else does the author do to entice reader participation?

**Technology Integration:** Find chapter samplers of some newly released YA titles online (Amazon, Goodreads, Scribd) How do the first pages of other novels accomplish the same task?

Correlates to Common Core Standards RL.CCR.4; Key Ideas and Details (College and Career Readiness Anchor Standard); RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.5, RL.9-10.7.

2. **You Are the Potter:** Using clay (or any other art medium, including collage):

- Create an impression of Clay listening to the tapes.
- Write a poem or a word picture using several of the words or phrases from the very first page or section to create a mood that matches the book.

**Technology Integration:** Go to the website of a major classical art museum such as the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. Find a portrait that will serve as a model for creating an interactive, multimedia poster of Hannah or Clay or yourself. Note: Students may keep adjusting these posters as they move along in the book and they may add newer characters as they meet them).

Correlates to Common Core Standards RL.9-10.3; W.9-10.3; W.9-10.9, W.CCR.4 (College and Career Readiness Anchor Standard).

3. **Beware of Surprise Gifts:** Clay is initially thrilled to receive a package, but quickly changes his tune.

- With the entire class, discuss some potential consequences of Hannah’s tapes. Could the consequences be worse than she hoped?
- Discuss in small groups and as a class whether or not the gift will do what Hannah expects.
- What are the desired effects, and could there be other reasons?

**Technology Integration:** This may be a good time to read O. Henry’s “*The Gift of the Magi*” to understand how gifts often have unintended effects: <http://www.online-literature.com/donne/1014/>.

Correlates to Common Core Standards RL.9-10.4, RL.9-10.6; SL.9-10.1.

4. **Where is my GPS?:** Hannah directs Clay and other people on Hannah’s list to follow her mental journal by creating a map.

- Make a map and include a key for places that signify the important events in your life.

**Technology Integration:** Create an audio guided tour of your map, using a Walkman (ideally) or a smart phone.

Use Google Maps to help create templates of your neighborhood. Imagine your neighborhood as Clay and Hannah’s neighborhood. Convert your icons to places mentioned on Hannah’s map.

Correlates to Common Core Standards SL.CCR.6 (College and Career Readiness Anchor Standard); Reading Technical Subjects, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, RH.CCR.7 (College and Career Readiness Anchor Standard); SL.9-10.5.

5. **Following Rules:** Hannah provides Clay with the rules for listening to her tapes and what to do with them upon completion.

- Are these rules worth following? Discuss the rules from the perspective of the listeners. Why would they send the tapes on?
- Hannah hints that she has set up a method for insuring compliance with her wishes. Speculate and predict a course of action that would convince Clay to follow the rules.

**Technology Integration:** History is replete with rules requiring people to do odious actions. Search your school’s history database (or check with your public librarian) for examples of unfair rules. Report your findings.

Correlates to Common Core Standards Reading Technical Subjects, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, RH.CCR.8 (College and Career Readiness Anchor Standard); SL.9-10.1, SL.9-10.4.

# Classroom Lesson Plans for *Thirteen Reasons Why* (Cassettes One and Two)

1. **Truth or Rumor:** How many times have we received an email or a post, along with six million other people, that turns out to be a hoax? Hannah states that for any problem, there are thirteen different explanations from thirteen different perspectives.
- Think of a problem at home or at school that you feel comfortable sharing. In small groups, map out plausible reasons that trace the logical progression of the problem. Make sure that the sequence of events is in order.
  - Discuss whether you think Hannah's rumor would have stopped, if any one person hadn't passed it on.

**Technology Integration:** Investigate Snopes, the urban legend fact finder ([www.snopes.com](http://www.snopes.com)). Click on the top scams of the day. With a partner, pick the scam with the closest connection to what Hannah's classmates think. Present your evidence to other groups or to the entire class.

Correlates to Common Core Standards RL.9-10.2, RL.9-10.5, RL.9-10.10.

2. **Cause and Effect:** In addition to saying that each event has thirteen explanations, Hannah also says that the least attractive explanation is the one that is true.

- Pull out the details of Jessica's growing distrust of Hannah. Make a time line.
- Clay has not always proceeded in chronological order. Why?
- Compare Hannah's explanation of the break up with the comments Clay makes in between her recording.

**Technology Integration:** Compare this breakup with other partings with which you are familiar.

Explain your answers by creating four panel graphic novel pages. For suggestions on how to create your pages, see: <http://www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Comic-Book> or <http://www.ereadingworksheets.com/point-of-view/point-of-view-activities/>.

Correlates to Common Core Standards RL.9-10.2, RL.9-10.5; W.9-10.2.

3. **Molding Clay:** It is time to add Justin Foley, Alex Standall, Courtney Crimsen, and Tyler Down (for extra credit, speculate on Ms. Antilly) to our character collection from the previous collection (You are the Potter).

- Discuss why you think the author rarely describes the characters physically.

**Technology Integration:** Go to the website of a major modern art museum such as the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Look at several of the portraits of people. Find a portrait that will serve as a model for creating an interactive, multimedia poster of Hannah or Clay or yourself.

Correlates to Correlates to Common Core Standards RL.9-10.3; W.CCR.4 (College and Career Readiness Anchor Standard); W.9-10.3, W.9-10.9.

4. **Peeping Tom:** Tyler is described as "creepy." Many in our society also describe the press or paparazzi as creepy too.

- Does Tyler have any redeeming value? What is the value, if any, of the pictures he takes?
- Examine yearbooks (yearbooks at least ten years old). Find various pictures that hint at a bigger story. Copy the pictures and write caption stories beneath that provide a plausible explanation.

**Technology Integration:** Using digital cameras, take posed pictures in which you try to tell a similar misleading story.

**Technology Integration:** Look at the way professionals manipulate images on sites like <http://www.illusionworks.com/>.

Correlates to Common Core Standards RL.9-10.7; W.9-10.2, W.9-10.6; RI.9-10.1, RI.9-10.7.

5. **Just Kidding:** In Marcus Cooley's section, Hannah states that she is now starting to seriously consider the idea of suicide. Marcus is described as a goof off. Hannah does not think Marcus is funny.

- Find examples of jokes or humorous videos. Explain what makes the humor work and then explain how it can be misinterpreted.

**Technology Integration:** Visit an online humor site such as <http://www.ajokeaday.com/>. Find several examples of jokes that you think are funny and jokes that are not funny. Read them to the class or to your group. Discuss which ones work and which ones do not for the whole group. Pay attention to those jokes in which your reaction differs from the group.

- Find online examples of celebrities who remind you of Courtney Crimsen. Provide annotated URLs that explain why.

Correlates to Common Core Standards RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.3, RL.9-10.7; SL.9-10.1, SL.9-10.3, SL.9-10.5, SL.9-10.6.

# Classroom Lesson Plans for *Thirteen Reasons Why* (Cassettes Three and Four)

1. **You're Not My (Arche)Type:** When Hannah describes what she likes about poetry, she says, "The closer we get to the end, the more connections I'm discovering. Deep connections. Some that I have told you about, linking one story to the next. While others, I haven't told you about at all."
- Find copies of William Carlos Williams' *The Red Wheelbarrow*. Read it aloud several times emphasizing different words to hear the effect different enunciation has on meaning.
  - Perform one version for the class and write a poetic glossary for each word in the poem with that word's various possible meanings. Why do you think Asher includes this poem?

**Technology Integration:** Visit <http://www.pongoteenwriting.org/>. Click to the teen poetry collection and read several of the poems until you find two that share connections with Hannah and her problems. Then click to the writing activities and complete one (perhaps the "I Just Thought You Should Know" poem addressed to Hannah. <http://www.pongoteenwriting.org/activities/featured/i-just-thought-you-should-know.html>).

Correlates to Common Core Standards RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.4, RL.9-10.7, RL.9-10.9; W.9-10.4, W.9-10.5.

2. **Love and Dollars:** Valentine's Day theoretically represents a day devoted to love. When Hannah sings, "Oh my Dollar Valentine," it is clear that she does not think highly of the commercialization of Valentine's Day.
- If you were fining the characters who have appeared so far, list the characters in order of smallest to largest fine.
  - It is in the discussion of Zach that Hannah speaks of the warning signs for suicide, even recognizes that she is manifesting suicidal behavior. Consider the effect on Hannah if just one of the people listed on the tapes had not done as described. If everyone else still does exactly as described, would it make a difference for Hannah?
  - Finally, if the severity of the transgressions against Hannah is not a consideration in how the characters appear, what is? Explain. Is it simply and exclusively chronology? Factor into your answer the anomalies, such as Clay playing around with time sequences, readers knowing who will receive the tapes last, and the other out of order scenes in the novel.

**Technology Integration:** Make a multimedia collage of images and songs that link love and money, especially images and songs that Hannah would have seen.

Correlates to Common Core Standards RL.9-10.2, RL.9-10.4, RL.9-10.10; W.9-10.1, W.9-10.2, W.9-10.6.

3. **Personal Poetry:** Hannah speaks of poetry as if it were a puzzle.
- Find a jigsaw puzzle for children, one with about sixty-three to one hundred pieces so the individual pieces are big enough to show significant detail. Personify a piece and write a few poems describing all of the things in life the piece is lacking.
  - Find a piece that can serve as a metaphor for Hannah and write about the pieces of her life that Hannah hopes to add to the puzzle.
  - Grab another puzzle piece and write a thirteen-line free verse poem about thirteen connections or needs that you have. Feel free to exaggerate or feel free to treat the exercise honestly.
  - Write at least one poem about yourself that you are willing to share.

**Technology Integration:** Visit Teen Ink (<http://www.teenink.com/poetry/>) and find a poem that can be "solved" as Hannah explains on page 175.

Correlates to Common Core Standards RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.4, RL.9-10.7, RL.9-10.9; W.9-10.4, W.9-10.5.

4. **Clay Time (Revisited):** We need to add Courtney, Marcus, Zach, and Ryan. Since we last left them, we now have a lot more detail about the relationship that Clay had with Hannah.
- Go back and find all of the information that you can about the interactions Clay had with Hannah. Is there any information up to the end of cassette four that explains how Clay fits with any of the previously named characters?
  - If you have not finished reading the book, predict what role you think Clay will fill when he finally does show up on one of the tapes.
  - Update your maps as well.

**Technology Integration:** Go to the website of an online royalty free clip art provider. Look at several photographs of people. Find one that will serve as a model for creating an interactive, multimedia poster of Hannah or Clay or yourself.

Correlates to Common Core Standards RL.9-10.3; W.CCR.4 (College and Career Readiness Anchor Standard); W.9-10.3, W.9-10.9.

# Classroom Lesson Plans for *Thirteen Reasons Why* (Cassettes Five and Six)

1. **Romeo, Oh Romeo:** Hannah's first words about Clay come from *Romeo and Juliet* by Shakespeare. She quotes, "Romeo, oh Romeo. Wherefore art thou, Romeo?" Readers may know that Juliet kills herself because Romeo has died. Readers also may know that Romeo believes Juliet has died, which leads to his suicide.
- Why does Asher have Hannah, the poet, use these lines to introduce Clay? Hannah then says to Clay, "Clay, honey, your name does not belong on this list."
  - For extra credit, read *Romeo and Juliet*. Is there anything in this story, especially in the mixed up, mistake-filled, tragic ending that makes sense in the story by Asher? Is Hannah correct in telling Clay that he does not belong?
  - Clay now believes that his name should appear on Hannah's list. What responsibility does Clay own for Hannah's suicide, if any?

**Technology Integration:** Watch a movie version of *Romeo and Juliet*, noting which sections (write down the times) Hannah (or the author) would have found relevant to this novel.

Correlates to Common Core Standards RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.2, RL.9-10.3, RL.9-10.6, RL.9-10.9.

2. **Clay in the Kiln:**
- Using clay (or another art media), show the transitions Clay has made from the first cassette through the sixth cassette, with at least three different representations.
  - List all the commonalities of character in your class and list those characterizations in which no other classmate views Clay in the same way. Keep in mind the fact that when Hannah discusses the class interpretation of her poem, she does not believe many people understood what she is talking about.

**Technology Integration:** Design an annotated playlist of thirteen songs that capture the essence of this book. In your annotation explain why your song belongs.

Correlates to Common Core Standards RL.9-10.3; W.CCR.4 (College and Career Readiness Anchor Standard); W.9-10.3, W.9-10.9.

3. **Innocent or Guilty?:** Justin Foley returns for a second turn under Hannah's magnifying glass, which may be surprising considering the actions of Bryce Walker.
- Does this suggest that Justin bears twice as much blame? Prepare a case both for and against Justin.
  - Tape six also includes Tony's story. Tony states, "We're all to blame. . . . At least a little" (p. 235). Can you make a persuasive argument that Tony should replace Justin?
  - Considering Tony's claim that all are culpable, put the names of all characters in a hat (except Justin and Mr. Porter) and draw the character you will prosecute.

Correlates to Common Core Standards RL.9-10.3, RL.9-10.5; W.9-10.2.

4. **What Are Friends For?:** Fifteen percent of people calling into a sexual assault hotline report suicidal tendencies. Only thirteen percent of rapes are reported.
- It is too late for Clay to do anything to help Hannah, but what is his responsibility, if any, toward Bryce and Jessica? What would you do?
  - We have looked at individual responsibility toward Hannah, but what is the group responsibility? In your personal reflection, consider the collective responsibility of the school and the people on Hannah's list; compare this with how you see your own personal responsibility. Answer the question of whether or not you would mail the tapes.
  - Would you tell Hannah's parents? The school administration? Your own family? The police?

Correlates to Common Core Standards RL.9-10.10; W.9-10.3.

5. **Final Messages:** Jenny Kurtz knocked over a stop sign. Hannah does not report this fact and a student dies. Hannah has quit at this point of the book and is discussing the way in which she will kill herself. Jenny, Bryce, and Mr. Porter have not yet received the cassettes.
- Using just six words on a sign, summarize what has happened in the book.

Correlates to Common Core Standards RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.2, RL.9-10.3, RL.9-10.5; SL.9-10.4, SL.9-10.5, SL.9-10.6.

# Classroom Lesson Plans for *Thirteen Reasons Why* (Cassette Seven and the End)

1. **The Potter Meets the Clay:** The final cassette is a live, taped conversation between Hannah and Mr. Porter. Hannah clearly is angry with Mr. Porter, saying he should rot in hell.
- What signs did Mr. Porter miss? What should he have noticed, if anything?
  - Did Hannah give him a fair chance at helping her?
  - Check with your school's counseling center or guidance office and research the tools available for suicide prevention. Look at the warning signs for suicide and find instances of them in the book (list the sign and the appropriate page number for that warning sign).

**Technology Integration:** Go to the site for the National Institute for Mental Health (<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/suicide-prevention/index.shtml>) and two other similar sites. Compare the information found online with the information in your school. Make recommendations, if necessary, for updating the information in your school's counseling or guidance office.

Correlates to Common Core Standards RL.9-10.2, RL.9-10.3, RL.9-10.4, RL.9-10.5, RL.9-10.10; W.9-10.7, W.9-10.8.

2. **The Beginning:** At the very end of the book, Clay ends the book by saying, "Skye."

- Is there a significance to ending the book this way?
- Have you changed? How and why?
- Write your final thoughts, including how effective Asher is with his novel.

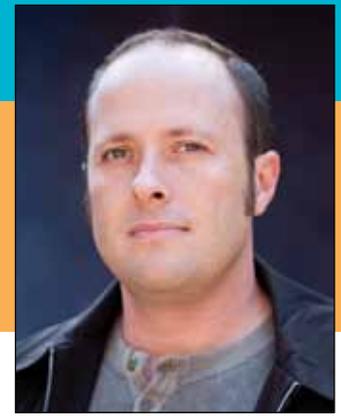
**Technology Integration:** Go to Goodreads, Amazon, Barnes and Noble indiebound, and other sites that review books. Read at least ten different reviews of *Thirteen Reasons Why*. Copy the review that most closely matches your own review and the review that makes you think the author read a different book. Explain what each person gets right and gets wrong.

Correlates to Common Core Standards RL.9-10.10, RL.9-10; W.9-10.8.

## Awards and Honors for *Thirteen Reasons Why*

- 2008-2009 Kansas Heartland Award (Grades 6-12)
- 2008-2009 Florida Teens Read Award (Grades 9-12)
- 2008-2009 Kentucky Bluegrass Award (Grades 9-12)
- 2008-2009 Michigan Thumbs Up! Book Award (Grades 7-12)
- 2009-2010 Arizona Grand Canyon Reader Award (Teen Books)
- 2009-2010 Georgia Peach Book Award for Teen Readers (Grades 9-12)
- 2009-2010 Missouri Gateway Readers Award (Grades 9-12)
- 2009-2010 New Hampshire Flume Award (Grades 9-12)
- 2009-2010 New Jersey Garden State Teen Book Award (Grades 9-12)
- 2009-2010 North Carolina NCSLMA YA Book Award (High School)
- 2009-2010 Oklahoma Sequoia High School Book Award (Grades 9-12)
- 2009-2010 South Carolina Children's Book Awards (Young Adult)
- 2009-2010 Texas Tayshas High School Reading List (Grades 9-12)
- 2009-2010 Virginia Reader's Choice Award (High School)
- 2009-2010 Washington Evergreen Young Adult Book Award (Grades 7-12)
- 2009-2010 Wyoming Soaring Eagle Book Award (Grades 7-12)
- 2009-2010 New York 3 Apples Children's Choice Award (Teen)
- 2010-2011 Indiana Eliot Rosewater Indiana High School Book Award (Grades 9-12)
- 2010-2011 Pennsylvania Young Reader's Choice Awards (Young Adult)

# A Q&A with *Thirteen Reasons Why* author JAY ASHER



**Q. Describe your research and writing process, briefly?**

A: Years before I came up with the premise, a close relative of mine attempted suicide. She was the same age as Hannah Baker. Over the years, we spoke about how she got to the point where ending her life seemed the only way out of her pain. I learned what brought her to that point, and she was also able to describe what she hadn't seen clearly and what more she could've done for herself. When I began writing, I didn't want to do more research into suicide, other than what I'd learned from my relative. After I wrote a draft, I read books on suicide to see how Hannah's story fit into a more general view of signs and patterns, and it fit almost perfectly. I first wrote Hannah's portion of the story from beginning to end. That took eighteen months. Then I spent almost as long adding Clay's reactions to her recorded words. Because so much time had gone by, I forgot most of what I'd written, so a lot of Clay's reactions are similar to my own reactions to reading what she had to say.

**Q. What are some of the most important messages you hope to send in writing *Thirteen Reasons Why*?**

The main message is simply the Golden Rule. At one point, Hannah states that you never truly know what's going on in anyone's life but your own. You don't know what else they're dealing with or have dealt with. As well, I wanted people to notice where Hannah could've done more to help herself, and that's why Clay's half of the conversation is so important.

**Q. How did you come up with the various characters, and the order that they appeared?**

I came up with their reasons for being on the tapes first. There were certain situations I needed Hannah to experience, and then I developed characters that would bring those situations about. The order was mostly concerned with building tension.

**Q. Who was the hardest character for you to write? The "easiest"?**

Clay wasn't necessarily hard to write, but coming up with things for his character to do while listening to Hannah's words caused some frustration. But that frustration always developed into interesting predicaments or insights. Hannah's character was the easiest because her voice was there the moment the concept came to me. My job was simply to let her speak and not add my own judgment to her character.

**Q. *Thirteen Reasons Why* has reached teen readers and communities on a global level. If you could visit every fan or reader, what would you tell them?**

The phrase Thank You plays a part in the book, and that's the first thing I would tell them. It's a huge honor to know people have taken time out of their lives to spend with my characters. And then I would listen to their impressions of the book, and what it meant to them.

**Q. Why is this an important community read?**

There are so many books that could be important community reads, but I've been told this book has qualities that make it particularly great for group reads. In a way, this is thirteen short stories connected by a few characters, so there are many places to begin a discussion. The characters are all flawed, though many of them don't realize the flaws, so almost every chapter can be dissected many ways. What are some reasons each situation happened? Why did it have the effect it did? What could the characters have done differently, and why didn't they? Each "reason" bleeds into other stories, which is interesting to discuss, but each "reason" also stands alone, which makes it easy to focus the conversations. It also helps that many readers become frustrated with characters they also have sympathy for. With a community read, people often have very different levels of that frustration and sympathy for each character. Discussing why can be very powerful.

**Q. With the prevalence of bullying, what are the lessons we can hope to teach with *Thirteen Reasons Why*?**

Treat each other with respect. Don't be afraid to reach out to someone in need. And don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it.



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