

# ReadingGroupGuide

## *ghostgirl* and *ghostgirl: Homecoming* by Tonya Hurley

### ABOUT THE BOOKS



Charlotte Usher feels practically invisible at school, and then one day she really is invisible. Even worse: She's dead. And all because she choked on a gummy bear. But being dead doesn't stop Charlotte from wanting to be popular; it just makes her more creative about achieving her goal.

If you thought high school was a matter of life or death, wait till you see just how true that is. In this satirical, yet heartfelt novel, Hurley explores the invisibility we all feel at some times and the lengths we'll go to be seen.

In *ghostgirl: Homecoming*, Charlotte Usher, a.k.a. ghostgirl, discovers that the afterlife isn't quite what she expected when she's forced to intern at a hotline for troubled teens. But duty calls when Hawthorne High's leading love-to-hate cheerleader and her gothic little sis suddenly find themselves in dire need. Charlotte's opportunity to help them may prove to be the risk of a lifetime—for all of them.



### DISCUSSION POINTS

#### *ghostgirl*

1. Before her senior year begins, Charlotte gives herself a make over. What do you think inspired her to change? How do you feel about the changes she decided to make? What do you think would have happened if she hadn't made any changes?
2. Charlotte is dying to be labeled "popular?" How do you define popularity? At your school, what makes some students popular? Are they popular for the same reasons Damen and Petula are?
3. What sort of social cliques exist at your school? What do you think school would be like if there weren't any cliques? Are all your friends in the same groups as you are? In high school, what makes it seem important to be included in a social group?
4. Each chapter begins with a "life lesson." Which of these lessons is your favorite? To which character does that lesson apply and does that character learn that particular lesson?
5. What are your feelings towards Charlotte? Did your feelings and perception of her change as you read the book?
6. In *ghostgirl*, the author writes about the afterlife and depicts it as a school. Why? The afterlife has been depicted in countless books, movies, works of art, plays, and songs. How do you imagine the afterlife—who is there, where is it, what are you doing, what abilities do you have?
7. Charlotte and the other ghosts are in Dead Ed until they resolve issues from their life. If you died today, what issues would you leave unresolved and how would you want to correct them? Is there something you wish you had done differently in your life?
8. Charlotte and Scarlet take risks and make sacrifices for each other. Have you ever made a sacrifice, or taken a risk, for your best friend? Did that make your friendship stronger?
9. *ghostgirl* is an example of satire, "a literary work holding up human vices and follies to ridicule and scorn" (*Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*,

4<sup>th</sup> Edition). What "vices and follies" is the author ridiculing and how does she depict them in this story? Is there a character in *ghostgirl* who doesn't have a vice?

10. Charlotte has a big choice to make at the dance. When Scarlet is in trouble, what do you think makes Charlotte react the way she does? Which lesson does Charlotte finally learn? Does *ghostgirl* end the way you hoped it would?

#### *ghostgirl: Homecoming*

1. After graduating from Dead Ed, Charlotte finds herself interning in the afterlife. How does this afterlife depiction differ from the one in *ghostgirl*? Which one do you like better? What are Charlotte and her fellow interns doing in this new afterlife?
2. *ghostgirl* is satire. Is *ghostgirl: Homecoming* also satire? In the second book, do the vices in *ghostgirl: Homecoming* belong to Charlotte or other characters?
3. Maddy is a shady character. At the end of the book, her motives are revealed. What were they? Were your suspicions about her correct?
4. When Charlotte and her fellow classmates arrive in their new afterlife, they are met by relatives, friends, or mentors who have died before them. Who would you most want to meet in the afterlife? Why?
5. What do Petula and Virginia teach each other? Do you think Petula has changed for the better? What about Virginia?
6. When Petula goes into a coma, her friends and classmates memorialize her with flowers, candles, and visits to the salon she frequented. In real life, have you seen society react this way toward the death or illness of a celebrity, local figure, or family member? Why do you think people react this way? Is it a sincere reaction?
7. Scarlet takes a huge risk for her not-so-nice sister. Do you think Petula would do the same for Scarlet? Do you think the saying, "blood is thicker than water" is true? What kind of situation would be required for you to help a sibling in mortal danger?
8. Charlotte and her friends answer phones in the afterlife. They help teens with their problems. If you could get advice from someone who was already dead, who would it be? Why would you choose that person?
9. How is Charlotte different in *ghostgirl: Homecoming* than she was in *ghostgirl*? Do you think she's grown in a positive way? What has she learned since she died?
10. Why do you think the parents of Charlotte, Petula and Scarlet, and the other characters make few appearances in either *ghostgirl* or *ghostgirl: Homecoming*? What do you think will happen to Charlotte now that she's been reunited with her parents in the afterlife?

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

New York Times bestselling *ghostgirl* author, Tonya Hurley, has credits spanning all platforms of teen entertainment including: creating, writing and producing two hit TV series, writing, and directing several acclaimed independent films, developing a ground-breaking collection of video games and board games, and creating and providing content for award-winning websites. Ms. Hurley lives in New York with her husband and daughter. Her web site is [www.ghostgirl.com](http://www.ghostgirl.com).



Photo: Kevin Mazur