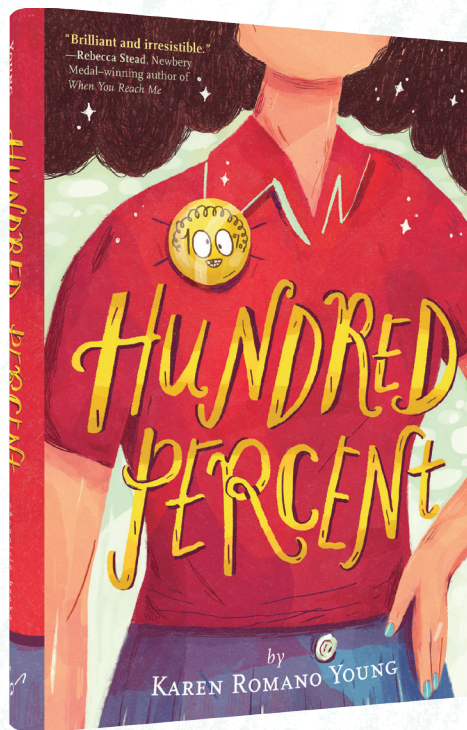


## DISCUSSION GUIDE

“*Hundred Percent* is a brilliant and irresistible book about the sharp pains and joys of real life. Karen Romano Young is a writer like no other. She always finds the truest, most interesting paths to the heart.”

—Rebecca Stead, Newbery Award–winning author of *When You Reach Me*



# HUNDRED PERCENT

by KAREN ROMANO YOUNG

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### ABOUT THE BOOK

It's Tink's last year of elementary school, the year before junior high. And Tink, by the way, is a nickname she's always had, but these days it's just not feeling right. She's too tall for it now, or too big, or too old. Too something. So—who is she, then?

And this year she has, boy, is it a year: the picture day outfit gone all kinds of wrong, the sleepover with the girl she hasn't even hung out with before, the boy she likes saying all kinds of things she doesn't, the best friend she knows better than anyone but suddenly feels different with. All those things that maybe look small when you list them but are actually huge when you're living them. It's throughout all that regular stuff, Tink comes to figure out, that what you call yourself, and how you do it, has a lot to do with who you are.

### ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide contains discussion questions designed to spark conversation about themes and ideas raised by this novel.



1. Tink sees some of the kids in her class behaving like they are inside a circle. Sometimes she feels as if she is part of the circle and sometimes as if she is outside of it.

*This year in their class it was as if there were a circle of people playing Ring Around the Rosy and everybody who wasn't holding hands was outside the ring. Some of the outside people formed little groups of their own, but not enough to make a circle. Most of them were just in little pairs or triangles. Some were alone, just dots, loners, and leftovers (p. 11).*

Does Tink want to be inside or outside of the circle at the beginning of the school year? Where does she want to be at the end of the school year? Who decides who belongs in the circle? Why can't everybody be in the circle?

2. The song lyrics found at the beginning of the novel are from a song called "Never Die Young" by James Taylor. How do these lines echo themes and ideas from the novel?

3. Like Tink, Jackie also struggles with wanting to fit in with the circle. Do the girls deal with this struggle in the same way? What do their responses tell you about each of their personalities?

4. Compare Tink's, Jackie's, and Bushwhack's families. How do their home lives influence their behavior and the way they deal with trying to find their places in the 6th grade social circle? Explain.

5. What does the quote below tell us about Tink and Jackie's friendship?

*Was Jackie happy? She had to be happy, with so many people liking her. She had to be happy, whether or not she was still friends with Tink. So why didn't she seem happy?*

*Was Tink jealous about the circle? Tink knew she wasn't one of them, but Jackie didn't seem to be able to decide. How many more times would she try those people on, like fancy clothes, and come back to Tink, who must have felt to her like cozy pajamas? But pajamas just lived in the drawer waiting for nighttime, when you needed them. That was not the life for Tink (p. 216-217).*

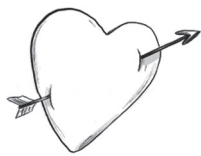
How and why is their relationship experiencing growing pains? Do you think they will continue to be friends throughout middle school? Why or why not?

6. When does Tink begin to realize that she likes Bushwhack as more than a friend? What does she like about Bushwhack? Why does she go out with Stanley? Why is she afraid to let Jackie know how she feels about Bushwhack?

7. Names are very important in this story. Christine is given nicknames by different people (Tink, Tinker Bell, Chris, Hundred Percent, Christine). Who gives her each name? What does each nickname say about how she is seen by the person who calls her by that name? What name does she ultimately choose as the name she wants to use? What other characters have nicknames? What do their nicknames tell us about them?







8. On Tink's class photo frame, Bushwhack writes:

Stay as ~~stupid~~ as you are.



Tink can't think of a word that she would want to see written in the blank. She thinks to herself, "It didn't matter what the word was, it amounted to saying stay just the way you are. And that was the last thing in the world she wanted" (p. 273). What word do you think Bushwhack crossed out? What does Tink's response, "that was the last thing in the world she wanted," reveal about her? What word would you put in the blank if you were writing to Tink? Why? What word would you hope someone would put in the blank if they were writing to you? Explain.



9. Much of this book is about Tink figuring out where she fits in, how she feels about herself, and what kind of person she wants to become. Read the following passages:



*When it was just her, she sometimes felt beautiful. She liked herself. Alone, she was a sugar cube, settled with firm edges and strong corners. But when other people were around she thought that some of them were better—smarter, funnier, cuter, thinner, hotter, cooler—and she felt herself come apart a little, like sugar on the kitchen table, spilled from a spoon.*

*Something worse happened when the whole class was around. She felt like some people were not better than her. She didn't want to think she was the smarter, funnier, cooler one (she sure wasn't cuter, thinner, or hotter). But she had to admit there were people she wouldn't go sit with or talk to. She couldn't get interested in them. Worst of all, she worried what people would think if they saw her with them. Tink hated the way it felt to be so aware of how she seemed to other people. (p. 62–63).*


*Some days Tink felt like magic was happening inside her, like she really was growing up in to something better, brighter (p. 110).*

*But some days she didn't know what was wrong with her. It was like, how long have you got to listen to the list? The last day of school before Christmas was that way. Tink looked in the mirror and just felt disgusting (p. 114).*

Do you understand the way Tink is feeling? What makes you feel more confident and strong at times? Are there specific situations in which you've found yourself feeling a little out of place? Do you have a sense of how you appear to other people? How do you feel when you're around people you are interested in? What about people you're not interested in?

10. How does the way Tink sees herself differ from the way others see her? How would you describe her? How do you think others see you? Your parents? Your best friend? A new kid in school? How does this differ, if at all, from the way you see yourself? Explain.



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11. During the graduation party, Tink’s teacher, Ms. Cho, tells Tink that she is “a brave, good girl.” Ms. Cho goes on to describe Tink: “Peaceable, really. But fierce” (p. 277). What does she mean by this? Is it meant as a positive or negative attribute? What behaviors of Tink’s do you think she is talking about? Does Tink believe that she is brave and fierce? Do you believe that Tink is brave and fierce? Why or why not?
12. *Hundred Percent* is told from Tink’s limited third-person point of view. How would the story be different if it was told from another character’s point of view or if it had multiple narrators? Which other character’s point of view would you like to hear?
13. What do you think the book’s title, *Hundred Percent*, means? Is there more than one possible meaning? What is your interpretation?



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### KAREN ROMANO YOUNG

Karen Romano Young has written nearly two dozen books for children, and has illustrated several, including the groundbreaking graphic novel *Doodlebug* and its sequel *Stuck in the Middle (of Middle School)*. She lives in Connecticut. When not at sea writing and drawing about ocean science, she writes stories in a barn in the Connecticut woods. She would not be caught dead wearing pants with whales on them—lobsters, maybe.

THIS GUIDE WAS PREPARED BY DARIA PLUMB, AN EDUCATOR AND PAST PRESIDENT OF THE ASSEMBLY ON LITERATURE FOR ADOLESCENTS OF THE NCTE (ALAN).

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