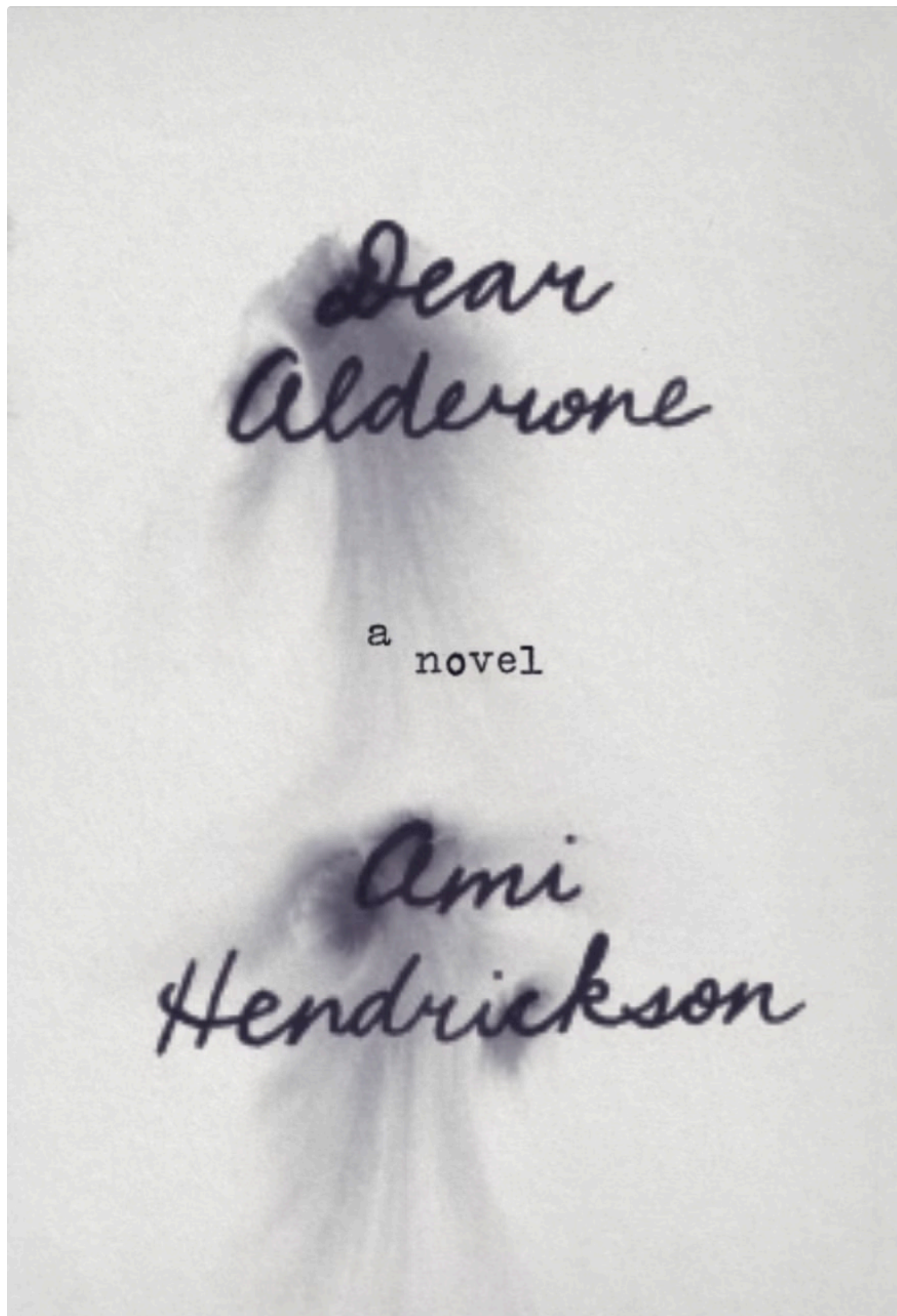
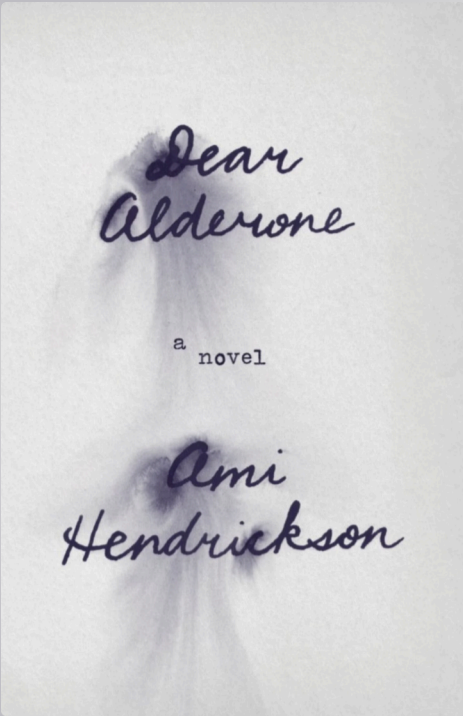


# Book Club and Reading Group Guide





# Dear Alderone: A Novel by Ami Hendrickson

What do words written long ago have to say today?

**Everything.**

*I went back to the den and put the stereo on. I don't know how long I sat there zoning, listening to the music and trying not to think. Suddenly, my brother came in the room.*

*His hair was all messed up and his face looked gray and shadowed. Neither of us spoke for a while. Strange. All I could think about was that for fourteen years nothing ever happened in my family. I go out on a real date for one afternoon and suddenly everything falls to pieces. Go figure.*

Jera Fowler is hardly excited about having to keep a journal for ninth grade English class. “What can happen in a day?” she grumps as she chronicles the 1984–85 school year.

She doesn’t realize that a single day can be the dividing line between life and death.

Forty years later, while Jera is in the hospital facing an uncertain future, her teenage granddaughter Rayna discovers the journal and reads all night long.

Ami Hendrickson’s epistolary novel *Dear Alderone* spans generations, exploring those moments in life when—for good or for ill—everything changes in an instant.


A love-letter to the written word and a testimony to the power of preserving personal history through journaling, *Dear Alderone* embraces the experiences that define our friendships, our families, and ourselves.


|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Genres    | Fiction, Epistolary Fiction, Women's Fiction, Historical Fiction |
| Paperback | 320 pages  |
| Publisher | Life to Paper Publishing   |
| ISBN 10   | 1990700764   |
| ISBN-13   | 978-1990700767   |

# Playlists

## 80's Songs


- Shout – Joan Jett
- You Give Love a Bad Name – Bon Jovi
- Time Warp – (Rocky Horror Picture Show) / Richard O'Brien
- The Twilight Zone – Marius Constant
- Rumours in the Air – Night Ranger
- Today I Met the Boy I'm Gonna Marry – Darlene Love
- Young Guns – Wham!
- Rebel Yell – Billy Idol
- Three Little Birds (Every Little Thing Gonna Be Alright) – Bob Marley and the Wailers



 Spotify


Dear Alderone by Ami Hendrickson


80's Songs



## Contemporary Songs


- Sound of Silence – Disturbed
- Save Your Tears – The Weeknd
- As I Am – Justin Bieber
- Wake Me Up – Avicii
- Symphony – Clean Bandit x Zara Larsson
- Gravedigger – Dave Matthews
- Shadow – Livingston
- Six Feet Under – Billie Eilish
- Stressed Out – Twenty One Pilots
- Talking to the Moon – Bruno Mars
- It's OK – Nightbirde




 Spotify

Dear Alderone by Ami Hendrickson

contemporary playlist






 Spotify

Characters (Piano Improv)

Stan Stewart · Album · 2017 · 13 songs



# Discussion Guide

1

## Privacy and Personal Writings

1. Discuss the ethics of reading someone else's personal writing. Have you ever been tempted to do so? What did you do?

2

## Friendship and Teenage Experiences

2. When you were Jera's age, who were your best friends? What did you do when you hung out together?

3. Discuss Jera's crush on Rolfe. Have you experienced similar situations? What happened?

3

## Journaling and Self-Reflection

4. What are your thoughts on Mrs. Taylor's year-long journaling assignment? If you had been given that assignment, would you have kept the completed journals? Why or why not?

5. Do you keep a journal? What purpose does it serve in your life?

4

## Intergenerational Relationships

6. Should Rayna tell Jera about reading her journals? Why or why not?

7. How does reading the journals affect Rayna's perception of her grandmother?

5

## Generational Changes and Nostalgia

8. What are some things you loved doing as a teenager that today's kids wouldn't understand? (If you're still a teen, what are some things you expect to be obsolete by the time the next generation arrives?) How do you feel about these experiences being lost to history?

6

## Advice and Future Scenarios

9. What advice would you give Rayna for the coming months?

10. What advice would you offer Jera during her recovery?



# Journaling Prompts

## For Group Journaling & Sharing

### **Freshman Memories.**

What is the most memorable thing that happened in your freshman year of high school? Revisit the event and paint a scene from your past. (Then share it with the group, if you dare!)

### **20/20 Hindsight.**

In *Dear Alderone*, Jera appears not to know her family when she awakens after surgery. Only later do they realize why. Write about an experience you had in which you thought the worst had happened, only to discover later that you didn't have all the facts at first.

- a. Share your experience with the others in your group, then—
- b. Write one or two more sentences describing and anchoring the emotions that are present when you recall this experience.

## For Individual Journal Reflection

### **My Imaginary Friend.**

Write a note to your imaginary friend. (This may be a friend you had when you were younger, or it may be a friend you've only just dreamed up. If no imaginary friend comes to mind, write a note to Alderone.) Identify the elements of friendship that you value most. If you could build the perfect friendship, what would it include?

### **My Best Friend.**

Complete the following sentence: "The best friend I ever had was \_\_\_\_\_. " For the next 10 or 15 minutes, explore what made that friendship monumental.

# Dear Reader

Thank you so much for spending a few moments of your precious life reading *Dear Alderone*. I am grateful for our connection through the written word.

I believe books are some of the most magical things in the world. The impact a few lines and squiggles on a page can have on our lives is akin to real alchemy.

At its core, *Dear Alderone* is a love letter to the written word—and a love song to the power those words can have on those who mean the most to us, even when decades separate us.

People often ask me, “how much of this really happened?” The answer is both more and less than you might think.

All of Jera’s journal entries are entirely fictitious. Jera is not me. Nor is Rayna. They are not thinly veiled avatars of me or anyone that I know.

However...

“Write what you know,” the sages advise. Jera’s medical condition, her surgery, and her expectations for recovery are taken directly from real life. Everything I know about brain surgery, I learned from “WunderGuy,” my late husband, whose initial diagnosis was identical to Jera’s. Our first conversation upon his waking up from the procedure mirrors the conversation Jera had with her husband. Nothing I could have made up would have been scarier or funnier.

Some people take issue with Rayna reading Jera’s personal journals. I don’t. I don’t begrudge anyone the comfort they gain from reading marks on paper and feeling more at peace and more connected to the people in their lives who matter most. That’s the deepest and best magic I know and I am here for it.

These words are written especially for you. Thank you for reading, reflecting, reviewing, and sharing.

Wishing you only the best and brightest,

## Ami Hendrickson

 [www.amihendrickson.com](http://www.amihendrickson.com)



**Ami Hendrickson | Helping Experts Write Books Worth Reading**

Every Book is an Adventure. Your Dream. Your Vision. Write Now!