

# LIST OF TEN

## Discussion Guide

### Synopsis:

A harrowing yet hopeful account of a teen living with Tourette syndrome and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder . . . and contemplating his own mortality.

Ten: three little letters, one ordinary number. No big deal, right? But for Troy Hayes, a 16-year-old suffering from Tourette syndrome and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, the number ten dictates his life, forcing him to do everything by its exacting rhythm. Finally, fed up with the daily humiliation, loneliness, and physical pain he endures, Troy writes a list of ten things to do by the tenth anniversary of his diagnosis—culminating in suicide on the actual day.

But the process of working his way through the list changes Troy's life: he becomes friends with Khory, a smart, beautiful classmate who has her own troubled history. Khory unwittingly helps Troy cross off items on his list, moving him ever closer to his grand finale, even as she shows him that life may have more possibilities than he imagined. This is a dark, intense story, but it's also realistic, hopeful, and deeply authentic.

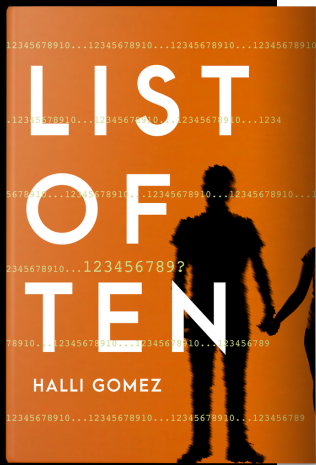
**Age Range:** 14 - 17 years

**Grade Levels:** 9 - 12

**Publisher:** Sterling Teen

**ISBN:** 9781454940142

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



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### About the Author:

Halli Gomez writes for children and young adults and works at her independent bookstore. She has written several stories with neurodivergent characters including her young adult novel, *LIST OF TEN* (Sterling Teen, March 2021) and a short story for the third *BRAVE NEW GIRLS* anthology (June 2018) supporting the Society of Women Engineers Scholarship Fund.



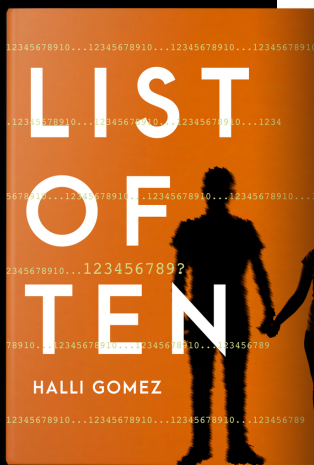
When no one is looking, she sock skates through the house and talks to dogs like they are human. When people are looking, she enjoys reading, outdoors, and breaking out of escape rooms with her family. Halli lives in North Carolina with her husband, two boys, and two dogs.

Halli is available for in person and virtual school visits.

### Reviews:

"Told in the first person, this powerful novel takes readers into the emotional and physical depths of TS, feeling every pain and twitch. . . .This #OwnVoices novel gives insight into living with these conditions, and readers will ponder how friendship means more than being "perfect."—*School Library Journal*

"This story by an author with Tourette syndrome delivers a painfully realistic depiction of living with chronic conditions, trying to fight them, and being bullied for them. . . . Although the hopeful ending feels too quick and tidy, Troy's first-person narrative shows understanding of neurodiverse individuals. . . . An authentic and compassionate look at the ups and downs of teenage life and living with Tourette syndrome."—*Kirkus*



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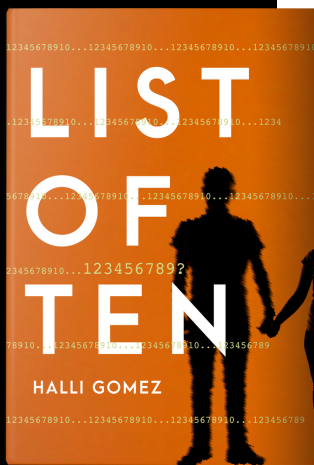
### Pre-Reading Discussion:

- Are you familiar with the term *neurodiversity*? Can you define it? What does the term mean to you?
- What does mental health mean to you?
- Has suicide impacted your life in any way?
- Does the design on the novel's cover suggest anything about the main character's personality?

### Post-Reading Discussion:

*Before high school, my real dream was to have friends and a girlfriend. Someone who would wait at our locker before school and get me in trouble for texting me during dinner. . . . But high school was a rude awakening for what the real world had to offer. Hormones brought on a whole new mess of Tourette tics, emotions, and interactions with society that I would have preferred not to have. So what did adulthood promise? More of the same (pg 13).*

- How did you feel being in the head of someone who talked so blatantly about pain and dying?
- Have you been teased for something out of your control? How did that make you feel?
- People have a hard time getting involved, even when they see a person in distress. Why do you feel that is so?



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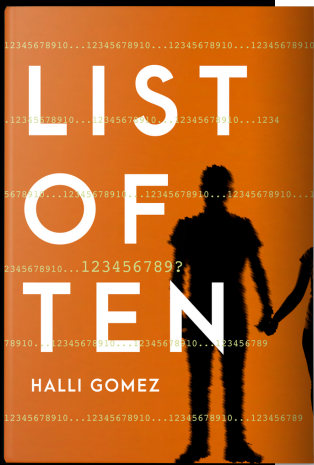
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*I've never talked about it like this. Most people see me as the dead girl's sister. Even Rainn sometimes. But you don't. I could tell that when we first met (pg 107).*

- Troy developed relationships with Khory, Rainn, Jay, and Diego. How would he define those relationships? How would they define them?
- Troy and Khory both lost someone close to them, although in different ways. How are their feelings similar? How does loss influence their relationship?
- Two items on Troy's list involve finding people like him (meeting someone else with Tourette syndrome and finding his mother). Why do you feel belonging is important to him? Do you feel it's important to most people?
- Knowing Troy is searching for others like him, he still chose to physically and emotionally isolate himself. Why do you think he does this?
- Did you feel Troy's thoughts and plans wavered throughout the novel? Can you cite examples?

*I felt Dad studying my every move. I glanced back at him. He smiled, or attempted to, because it was the lamest thing I'd ever seen. His lips may have turned up, but his eyes were all sadness and pity. In the one place I could have been invisible, I'd created my own audience (pg 220).*

- Troy tried his best to hide his plan and either lied or gave excuses for his behavior. Do you feel there were red flags his parents and/or friends should have seen? If so, cite examples from the text.
- Why do you feel Troy didn't tell anyone about his plan?
- How did Khory respond when she found Troy's List of Ten?
- Do you think Khory's response to Troy's behavior was the right thing to do?



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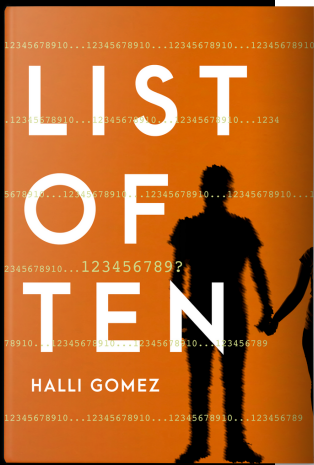
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*Mom found hope and so did Mrs. Isenhour. Enough to stay alive at least. Is that the kind of role model the Isenhours were looking to show David? A kid who survived. I had nothing else to offer, besides the picture. Nothing right now. But what if, in the future, I actually accomplished something great? Was I so sure about number ten that I wanted to erase that chance? (pg 327).*

- At times, it's hard to see one's own self-worth. What qualities do you feel Troy possessed that made him a good son, brother, and friend? Cite examples from the text.
- How did Troy's thoughts on his disorders change throughout the story?
- How did the descriptions of what Troy went through affect your feelings about the character and mental health?
- Consider the themes of loss and hope and how they pertain to this novel. Cite examples to support your observations.

### General Topic Discussion:

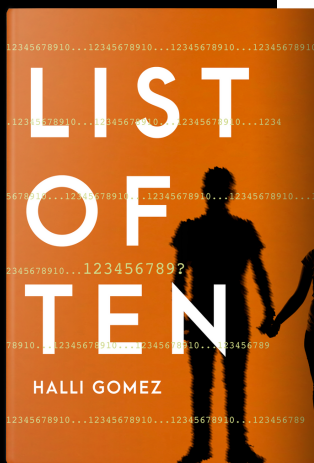
- Did you identify with a specific character in this story?
- Do you find it's easy or difficult to understand another person's situation? Do you feel others understand yours?
- Why is it important to understand someone else's situation, feelings, and motivations?
- What are ways we, as individuals and as a society, can be empathetic toward classmates and others in the community?



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- Do you feel anxiety is prevalent in today's society? What factors do you feel contribute to anxiety?
- Do you feel the issues of your generation are similar to those faced by previous generations? Why or why not?
- Troy begins his story with the word Ten. We know how that number and word has impacted his life. If you were to write an essay about your life, how would you begin?



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### Resources:

The visual aspects of neurological disorders can be compared to the top of an iceberg while numerous other disorders and concerns hide below the surface. Anxiety, depression, and thoughts of suicide are a few that may be found there.

It is important to know that while many things in life can remain private between friends, suicide cannot be one of those. It is not something a person or friend can handle alone. If you, or anyone you know, has thoughts of suicide, please reach out. There are many avenues for help.

#### Suicide

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline  
1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Crisis Text Line  
(Text HOME to 741-741)

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention  
[Afsp.org](http://afsp.org)

Risk Factors and Warning Signs  
[afsp.org/risk-factors-and-warning-signs](http://afsp.org/risk-factors-and-warning-signs)

National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI)  
[Nami.org](http://Nami.org)  
1-800-950-NAMI

Tourette Association of America  
[Tourette.org](http://Tourette.org)