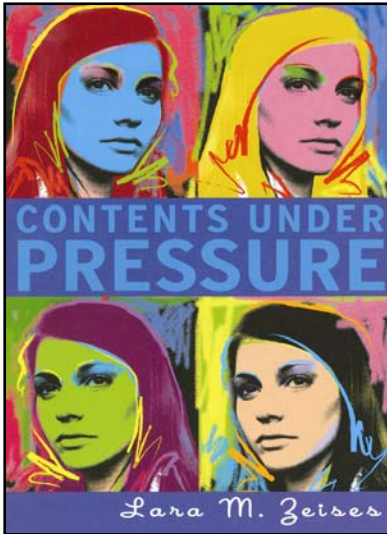


## Discussion Guide for Lara M. Zeises's *Contents Under Pressure*

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*Lucy Doyle is sure her name might as well be Loser, because she's fourteen and never, ever been kissed. To make matters worse, nearly all of her friends have left her behind for boys. Even Lucy's favorite brother doesn't seem to have time for her anymore. He's just moved home from college with a distant new attitude and a big-haired girlfriend Lucy can't stand. Freshman year is definitely not off to a good start.*

*So when Lucy attracts the attention of Tobin Scacheri, the junior everyone wants to date, she can barely believe her luck. Tobin is cute, and funny, and he might like Lucy as much as she likes him. But Lucy's brother has a secret that will turn her already mixed-up world completely upside down. Now Lucy must figure out how far she's willing to take her relationship with Tobin—and how to deal with a brother who's not as perfect as she thought.*

1. What do you think about Lucy's relationship with her brothers? Are her expectations for Jack too high? Why do you think she doesn't get along with Brody?
2. Lucy starts off disliking Hannah, but soon Hannah becomes the sister Lucy never had. Do you think this is due to Lucy changing and "growing up"? Is it a matter of Lucy getting to know Hannah? Do you think Lucy dislikes Hannah at first because she sees Hannah as a threat to her relationship with Jack?
3. Lucy and Tobin spend a lot of time running into each other—literally—at the beginning of their relationship. What do you think this means?
4. At the beginning of the book, Lucy is sad that her circle of friends has changed now that they're in high school. What do you think of Lucy's friends? Do you think Allison is a good friend, even though she dumps her plans with Lucy to go out with a guy? Are the Kims good friends to Lucy? At the end of the book, why is Lucy still friends with Allison and Tabitha, and not friends with Kim Tate and Kim Talbot?
5. Things seem to be changing a lot for Lucy. Has this ever happened to you: lots of things in your life change all at once? How do you think Lucy handles these changes?

6. What do you think of Tobin? Does he seem like a realistic character, or a little too good to be true? Is he the kind of guy you would like to date? What makes him appealing to you?
7. Lucy considers Jack to be the perfect big brother at the beginning of the book. She often refers to him when she's talking to other people. Yet by the end of the book, she feels closer to Hannah than to Jack. Why do you think this happened? Was there one event that made Lucy see her brother differently, or was there lots of little things that changed her attitude towards Jack?
8. News travels fast around Haley High as Lucy and Tobin's relationship develops. Is this similar to what happens at your high school? Do you spend a lot of time talking with your friends about other people, and wondering if someone likes you? Is telling one friend a secret, and not telling another friend, a big deal?
9. How is Lucy's family different at the end of the book from how it was at the beginning of the book? What impact do these family changes have on Lucy?
10. Lucy says, "I guess maybe I need help learning how not to have sex, if that makes sense."

Does Lucy's statement make sense to you? What are some reasons that Lucy doesn't want to have sex? Why do you think she talks more to Hannah about this than to her mother? What do you think of the boundaries that Lucy sets with Tobin?

11. Can you understand Jack's actions during the book? Why do you think he buys a trumpet when he's supposed to be saving money? Do you understand why Hannah is mad with him?
12. Lucy is told by her mother that she is acting "very fourteen." Tabitha says, "And for god's sake, Lucy, will you lose the ponytail? You're fourteen now." Sometimes, Lucy seems very mature, like when she's talking to Tobin, but then she'll get in fights with her younger brother. What does this tell you about Lucy? Is being fourteen more than an age, but a state of mind?