

# Discussion Guide

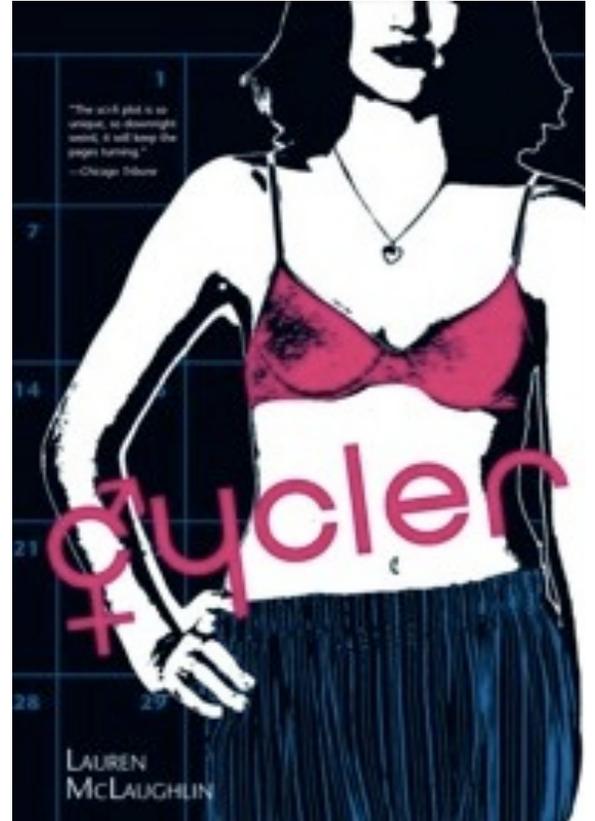
## Cycler

by Lauren McLaughlin

Jill McTeague is your average smart seventeen-year-old, pining for the mysterious new guy in school. But Jill has a secret she'll do anything to protect. For four days of every month, Jill becomes Jack--a boy!

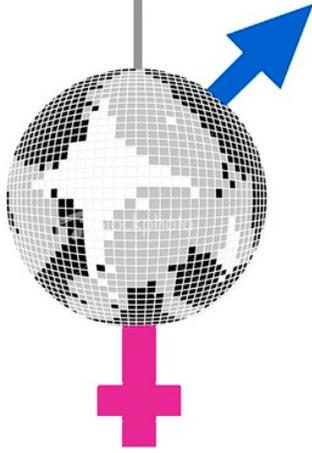
To make sure Jill can live an ordinary life, Jack stays hidden from the outside world. Confined to Jill's bedroom, he entertains himself with vivid recollections of Jill's life. But when Jack develops an all-consuming crush on Jill's best friend this neat little arrangement begins to crumble.

What follows is a battle of wits between ordinary good girl Jill and the bad boy who shares her body. With senior prom on the horizon, can Jill protect her secret? Or will Jack's quest for freedom--and Jill's best friend!--ruin everything?



## Questions for Discussion

1. Do you think it would be easier or harder to be the opposite sex? What things would be easier? What things would be harder? Why?
2. Who did you most identify with? Jill? Jack? Ramie? Tommy? Mrs. McTeague? Mr. McTeague? Why?
3. Jill and Jack are frequently at odds with each other. Did you find yourself sympathizing with one more than the other? Why? Did your loyalty change during the course of the book? Why or why not?
4. Do you believe that the mother's treatment of Jack is justified? Why or why not? What would you do differently if you were in her shoes?



5. Is Mr. McTeague justified in isolating himself in the basement? Is he neglecting his parental responsibilities? How did you feel about his relationship with his wife?
6. Are there aspects to your personality or identity that you keep secret? What about your friends? Are you the same kind of person around everyone, or do you change depending on whom you're with? Why or why not?
7. Jill chooses early on to hide her "condition" from her peers. What do you think would have happened if she had been honest from the beginning?
8. If you were to cast a movie version of *Cycler*, who would you cast as Jack? Jill? Ramie? Tommy? Mr and Mrs. McTeague?
9. *Cycler* refers to a book called *The Guide*, which endorses rigid gender stereotypes in the interests of finding a woman a mate. Do you agree with any of the beliefs about gender endorsed by *The Guide*? Why? Why not?
10. Many people believe that femininity and masculinity are genetically "hard-wired" and that culture and upbringing play only a small role. Do you agree? Disagree? Why?
11. If you were to rewrite this book from someone else's perspective--Mrs. McTeague's, Ramie's, Tommy's, Mr. McTeague's, for example--what aspects do you think would be different? Which would stay the same?
12. Even though the premise of *Cycler* is fantastical, were there aspects of Jack and Jill's plight that you related to personally? Which ones? What about Tommy and Ramie? Could you identify with any of their concerns?
13. Did you find Jack's pursuit of Ramie to be inappropriate? Understandable? Romantic? Creepy? Why?
14. Tommy Knutson refers to the prom as a tacky cliché. Do you agree? Disagree? Why?
15. Did you find any elements of Jack's personality "hiding out" in Jill? Vice Versa? If so, which ones?

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

LAUREN MCLAUGHLIN is a former movie producer and screenwriter who is now devoted to writing novels for teens. *Cycler* is currently in development as a feature film with the producer of the *Transformers* films. The sequel, *(Re)Cycler*, follows Jack and Jill to New York City where they experiment with freedom. Her third novel, *Scored*, is a dystopian thriller about surveillance and high stakes testing that many have likened to George Orwell's *1984*. Visit her website, <http://www.laurenmclaughlin.net/>, or follow her on Twitter, <http://twitter.com/#!/LaurenMcWoof>. She can be reached by email at [me@laurenmclaughlin.net](mailto:me@laurenmclaughlin.net). Both *Cycler* and *Scored* have Facebook fan pages.