

Discussion and Essay Questions

What is a catalyst?

Who are the catalysts in this book? Why?

What is Kate running from? How did she get lost (literally and figuratively)?

Why does Kate hate English class? What are some of the myths surrounding the college application process? About high school? About kids like Kate? Kids like Teri?

Find the list of vocabulary words given out for homework in Kate's English class. The author deliberately chose them. What is their significance? Why do authors do things like that? Does this make you hate authors? (joke... just wanted to see if you're paying attention)

Discuss these image systems (symbols) found in the book:

- a. chemistry
- b. periodic table
- c. vision/sight
- d. movement vs. being stuck
- e. electricity

What examples of safety awareness and danger can you find? How are they connected to each other?

Make a list of all the elements and chemical terms used as chapter headings in the book. Explain how the chapters headings refer to the action with each chapter.

Find the hints of *Alice in Wonderland* in the book. How does the story of Alice's journey reflect Kate's?

Catalyst takes place in Merryweather High School, also the setting for *Speak*.

What connections link the two books?

How is food used in this book?

Why don't we learn more about the life of Teri Litch (hint: examine the book's POV)

How is Kate's relationship with her father? Why is it that way? Does it change over the course of the book. (Give examples for each answer.)

Discuss the role of religion in this book. What does Kate believe in? Teri? Mitchell? Can you say anything about the power of mythology within religious belief systems?

Are myths just stories from the past? What else can be read into them?

How and why does Kate's relationship with Teri change after Mikey's death?

Why are the three sections of the book labeled Solid, Liquid and Gas?

Who is the most important character in this book? Why?

How do the characters in *Catalyst* deal with defeat?

Activities:

Rewrite a chapter from a different character's POV

Write a prequel, sequel, or alternate ending.

Research where you would go to college if money was no object.

Research where you would go to college if you had to pay for the entire bill yourself.

Volunteer at Habitat for Humanity or similar program.