Sixteen-year-old cheerleader Cassidy “Sid” Murphy ends up on a ski lift next to a handsome college boy. She’s thrilled—but he isn’t all that he seems. What happens—and what follows that—is a surprising, devastating, but ultimately triumphant journey for an indelible and sharp young woman who loses almost everything after a night she can’t remember.

Debut author Colleen Clayton’s *What Happens Next* is filled with sharp and incisive moments, recalling the best of Sarah Dessen and Laurie Halse Anderson. With brutal honesty and a compassion-filled light touch, *What Happens Next* deftly navigates issues including date rape, eating disorders, financial difficulties, and living in a single-parent household. Sid makes new friends, falls in love, and discovers that becoming whole again will depend on her willingness to take ownership of not only what happened already, but also what will happen to her next.

*What Happens Next* will speak to the experiences of young women everywhere as they discover the challenges associated with being female in a modern world where their bodies and self-images are under both emotional and physical assault from without and within.

**About the Book**

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**Talk About It**

*Topics to share when discussing *What Happens Next* with teens.*

- What is Sid’s primary desire? What does she want more than anything? Identify the conflict of the story (meaning the main obstacle that is keeping Sid from getting what she wants.) Identify Sid’s secondary desires and the minor obstacles she must face.

- What five words would you use to characterize Sid? How about her mother, Katherine? Her boyfriend, Corey?

- When Sid went to meet Dax, what was your reaction?

*More discussion questions on next page!*
Choose to Read Ohio

About the Author
Colleen Clayton grew up in a small suburban town just outside of Cleveland. After graduating from Kent State University, she worked as a social worker in residential treatment centers for troubled teens and as Program Supervisor for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Mahoning Valley. She lives in Ohio with her family, and recently received her MFA in fiction writing from the Northeast Ohio Consortium (NEOMFA). She teaches fiction writing and composition at Youngstown State University. What Happens Next is her first novel.

Author Resources
Colleen Clayton’s Official Website
http://colleenclayton.com/

Interview with Colleen Clayton from Jenny Magazine (Youngstown State University)
http://www.jennymag.org/fall-12-issue/colleen-clayton

Colleen Clayton’s Dear Teen Me Letter
http://dearteenme.com/?p=4042

For publicity and speaking engagement inquiries:
To set up an author visit with Colleen Clayton, please complete the online form on the Little, Brown Books for Young Readers website:
http://littlebrownlibrary.com/set-up-an-author-visit/

You may also contact Colleen Clayton through her fan mail page:
http://colleenclayton.com/contact/

Talk About It (continued)
“I need more time. You’d think seven months and four days would be enough time, right? Enough time to work up the nerve to just open my mouth and tell them. But it’s not.”

Did you find the ending to be realistic? Discuss how the ambiguity of what happens next for Sid makes you feel as a reader. Was there a sense of resolution?

What do you think happens next for Sid and Corey? What do you think becomes of Dax/Tom? Is he caught, or does he get away?

Can the way that Kirsten and Paige acted towards Sid after the ski trip be justified? What should they have done differently, or was their behavior understandable?

Who would you cast in a movie adaptation of What Happens Next?

Some discussion questions courtesy Colleen Clayton; used with permission.
Go Further
Ideas for extending the experience of reading *What Happens Next*.

Educators: Every CTRO book may be used to support Ohio’s New Learning Standards (Common Core) English Language Arts reading, writing, and speaking and listening standards. Examples are listed below; other standards also apply. *What Happens Next* may also support standards in Social Studies (American Government: Civic Involvement; American Government: Public Policy; Contemporary World Issues: Civil and Human Rights).

Librarians, parents, and others: These activities are also for library programs, family activities, and other projects. Learning Standards define what students should know and be able to do at each grade. They are included for teachers who want to use this book in school. For more information, see the Ohio Dept. of Education website, http://education.ohio.gov. Click on “Ohio’s New Learning Standards” in the Teacher Resources section.

*What Happens Next* is written as a first person narrative. Discuss reasons why you believe Clayton chose to write from this perspective. Is this perspective effective and fitting for the story? Select and rewrite scenes from *What Happens Next* using other perspectives or points of view such as objective point of view, third person point of view, first person point of view, omniscient or limited omniscient points of view.

For more information on types of points of view visit: http://www.learner.org/interactives/literature/read/pov2.html. [RL.9-12.3; RL.9-12.5; W.9-12.3]

The issue of legalization of medical marijuana, in Ohio specifically, is discussed in the book. Research the current issue of legalization of medical marijuana. What process needs to be followed in order to pass a law to legalize medical marijuana? What other states have gone through the process, and has it been successful? Divide into teams to engage in an organized debate about the positive and negative aspects of legalization of medical marijuana. What implications would legalizing marijuana have on all aspects of society? [SL.9-12.1; Social Studies: High School – American Government: Role of the People, Public Policy]

Throughout the book, Sid has trouble telling anyone about what actually happened to her during the class ski trip. Are you aware of any resources that are available to people who have been victimized by date rape? Research your community or region to identify supportive organizations, and create a flyer or handout that could be used as a resource for people who have been victimized by date rape or other sexual violence, and who are unaware of where they can turn to for help recovering. [W.9-12.4; W.9-12.7]

Although Sid and Corey attend the same high school, they belong to different social circles. When they first began working together in the AV room at their high school they believed they knew each other already based on stereotypes. However, throughout the book they were able to get to know each other, learn more about each other and themselves, and develop a close relationship. Discuss what Sid and Corey were able to learn from each other as well as about themselves while overcoming stereotypes.

Host a [Mix it Up at Lunch Day](http://www.tolerance.org/mix-it-up/what-is-mix), at which students are encouraged to sit with students that they normally do not sit with for one day at lunch, in order to learn tolerance. For more information about Mix it Up at Lunch Day visit http://www.tolerance.org/mix-it-up/what-is-mix. [RL.9-12.1; RL.9-10.3]
Check It Out

Companion texts and documentaries for What Happens Next.

“Why Kids Bully: Because They’re Popular” By Belinda Luscombe
This article on a Time Magazine blog provides insight into reasons why kids bully.

Bully (2011), a documentary film, is an unflinching look at how bullying has touched five kids and their families, revealing a problem that transcends geographic, racial, and ethnic borders.
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1682181/

Teen novels with similar themes to What Happens Next include:
Speak by Laurie Halse Anderson
Wintergirls by Laurie Halse Anderson
The Perks of Being a Wallflower by Stephen Chbosky
Don’t Breathe a Word by Holly Cupala
Just Listen by Sarah Dessen
Panic by Sharon Draper
Faking Normal by Courtney S. Stevens

Explore More

Additional ideas and resources to use with What Happens Next.

What Happens Next: A Guide
http://colleenclayton.com/what-happens-next-a-guide/
Colleen Clayton’s readers’ guide to What Happens Next features an author interview, literary analysis, discussion questions, and article citations and web links for further exploration of the issues raised in the book.

For more information about bullying:
Pacer’s National Bullying Prevention Center
http://www.pacer.org/bullying/
The National Bullying Prevention Center provides resources, activities and educators’ toolkits that can be used to engage students in ways to understand and prevent bullying.

For more information about victim blaming:
Victim Blaming
http://www.crcvc.ca/docs/victim_blaming.pdf
Published by the Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime, this report defines victim blaming and discusses ways that victim blaming can be overcome.

For more information about eating disorders:
National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA)
http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/
The National Eating Disorders Association website offers a wide variety of information and helpful resources about eating disorders.