

## Everything I Never Told You by Celeste Ng

Wow, talk about a book you start thinking is one thing but totally surprises you with the twist. In the beginning, we automatically think this book is only about Lydia dying and who did it, but the plot thickens as we move towards a motive for her death. There are so many details in this short little book and each one of them is devastatingly important to Lydia.

We are introduced to a pushy mother who is living out her dreams through her oldest daughter. We have a father living out his social ineptitude through his oldest daughter. And we have two siblings who are forgotten and ignored, yet are fulfilling the parent's desires without notice. The pressures placed on Lydia by both of her parents are the undoing of this family. I think this story truly provides reflection on how our individual actions affect others around us. In this case, we have two selfish adults (the parents) who are clearly so self-involved with their own angst and self-pity that they have projected their insecurities onto a child. We all want our children to do better than ourselves, but at what cost? It seems that the parents have convinced themselves that for their one child to succeed, she must do everything they always wanted to do but couldn't.

This book touches on racial divides, gender expectations and suicide. It is so easy to see the domino effect of our actions and our choices. This book has the actual end result of projecting our desires onto our children. A very well written story with so much detail and dysfunction to make us all question our true motives with our children and the potential effects it will have on them. Lydia states on page 225 that "For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction." For every push towards something, there is a pull away from it. And Lydia's mother finally concedes that after seeing everything in Lydia's room and knowing everything that she had wanted for Lydia, that it "had dragged Lydia underwater at last" (page 247). A very solemn conclusion but a final realization of what they had done to her.

What was your first thought about Lydia's death? What are your initial thoughts about Lydia's parents?

Who is responsible for Lydia's death? Is 16 too young to make your own decisions? What age makes you responsible versus blaming actions on your parents?

What is your final assessment of Lydia's parents? Do you believe the parents will change knowing what truly happened to Lydia? Why do you think that they both chose Lydia as their symbol of success and not Nath or Hannah?

How do you think their relationships with Nath will change? How will it change with Hannah?

If you are a parent, how did this story affect you? Did you reflect on your own relationship with your child/children? Where do you draw the line with your kids on pushing them to do better?

What do you think of the title of the book?