##

## *DON’T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT*

## by Sarah Mlynowski

## Louisiana Teen Readers’ Choice Nominee 2017

**Grade 9-12**

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**Title:** *Don’t Even Think About It*

**Author:** Sarah Mlynowski

**Publisher:** Ember

**Pages:** 336

**SUMMARY**

Homeroom 10B of Bloomberg High School in Tribeca is filled with normal teenagers who have normal teenage worries. That is, until they get their flu shots. Each student has different feelings about inoculations; Olivia, a self-proclaimed hypochondriac, loves vaccines, but not in a creepy way, and Mackenzie, a preemie who doesn’t remember her many surgeries as a baby, is terrified of needles. Still, 10B, with all of their everyday problems of crushes, shyness, first kisses, and parents, are about to have a bigger concern: ESP. How are they supposed to keep their crushes a secret now?! And what will the second smartest girl in school, Pi, do to be and stay extraordinary? There’s no point in covering your paper or trying to hide your past—they always hear you. Even when they don’t want to.

This is a story about the meaning of staying friends even when your best friend thinks you could stand to lose five pounds, keeping your boyfriend after your entire homeroom tells him (telepathically, of course) that you hooked up with a senior while he was at camp, and other similar dilemmas. You think your life as a teen is bizarre? Imagine knowing what everyone is thinking except when you close your eyes. But don’t get caught napping for too long or you’ll get detention.

**AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY**

Born January 4, 1977 in Montreal, Canada, author Sarah Mlynowski is a novelist for children, teens, and adults. She earned a degree in English literature from McGill University and has written three book series and over a dozen novels. She lives in New York where she writes full time.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Author website [www.sarahm.com](http://www.sarahm.com)

**OTHER TITLES BY AUTHOR**

*Ten Things We Did (and Probably Shouldn’t Have)* (2011)

*See Jane Write* (2006, with Farrin Jacobs)

Magic in Manhattanseries (2005-2008)

*Milkrun* (2001)

# RELATED TITLES

*Blubber* by Judy Blume

*Matched* by Ally Condie

*The Beginning of Everything* by Robyn Schneider

*We Were Liars* by E. Lockhart

**CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS**

**Language Arts:**

* Discuss the author’s writing style, in particular her choice to use the points of view of many narrators to tell the story. Demonstrate the effects of this choice as a class or in small groups by telling a well-known story (such as a fairy tale or prior assigned reading) in the same way; assign each student to act as a different character and take turns telling the story.
* Write a research paper on a topic related to vaccines or societal views of vaccines.
* Write a paper that describes the kind of powers you would like to get from a fictitious vaccine. Describe what the power is, how it works, how you would use it, and whether or not you would keep it a secret. Teachers should place an emphasis on creativity in this assignment.

**Science:**

* Review the role that vaccinations play in the human body and how they work.
* Introduce medical terminology to students. This would be a great way to integrate any type of Allied Health program into other subjects as well.
* Teach students the history of vaccines and how they were developed. Use this opportunity to dispel any misconceptions that your students might have about vaccines.
* Why might the eyes of the students with powers have turned purple? Research the subject of side effects, focusing on reasons for their existence and connectedness to the main medicine or treatment. Ask each student to briefly share one aspect of the findings with the class in the form of a public service announcement.

**Social Studies:**

* In *Don’t Even Think About It*, a sweet sixteen party is a rite of passage for the students at BHS. As a class, research and discuss rites of passage in other cultures. How many rites of passage has each student experienced personally? Were they celebrated nationally, school-wide, or within a family? Do all rites of passage have positive implications?
* Examine modern perceptions of vaccines as opposed to past perceptions. Has there been a change? What caused it?
* Analyze the effects that sharing their powers played on the social dynamic of students in Homeroom 10B. Relate this to the real world by discussing how society would change if everyone in our society were to suddenly have ESP.
* Is it ethical for the students of 10B to use their powers? Do they violate privacy rights or gain an unfair advantage in any contexts by doing so? Does it matter that they didn’t ask for them, cannot control them, and have access only to an experimental antidote? Are there any compromises that would make their powers more acceptable? Hold a debate, assigning half of the students to each side of the issue. Ask them to consider existing laws and guidelines in the United States, such as those linked below, in forming their arguments, and be sure to repeat the exercise so students have the experience of supporting both sides. This might also be an opportunity to review your school’s code of ethics with the class, discussing where ESP could fit into the document.

-FERPA/SHERPA <http://ferpasherpa.org/>

-epic.org Student Privacy Bill of Rights <https://epic.org/privacy/student/bill-of-rights.html>

-Louisiana Department of Education policy <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/library/data-center/protecting-student-privacy>

**Art:**

* After reading the book, have students design a book cover individually or in a group. Display the possible covers in the library or the class room, and have a contest to see which person or group has the most popular cover. Showcase the winners in the school paper.
* Create a poster or pamphlet showcasing your view about vaccines. Include facts relevant to your support or opposition of vaccines, and make the project eye-catching. The purpose is to grab the attention of your audience and persuade them to agree with you; in a brief report, explain the aspects of your project that accomplish this. Discuss how art mediums can be used persuasively.

**Vocabulary:**

Conspiracy

Incredulous

Malheureusement

Precarious

Preened

Pharmaceutical

Vaccination

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Did the students in class 10B make a good decision in keeping their powers? What would you have done? Whose argument is the most compelling? Why?
2. What would happen if your homeroom suddenly had the powers that were described in this book? Would your class use their powers like the characters? Give specific examples from the book of behaviors that you think your class would exhibit, and explain why differences would arise.
3. Discuss the different reactions that the students showed upon learning that they had ESP. Are the concerns and behaviors that these characters show relevant to real teens? How? How not? Does the author successfully make her characters relatable to a teen audience?
4. Examine the use of pronouns in the opening sentence of the book, “We were not always freaks.” Remember that though this sentence appears at the beginning of the book, the speaker already knows how the story ends. How does this choice of words foreshadow the ending of the book? How does its form set the tone for the rest of the book and for potential sequels?

**RELATED WEBSITES**

**The History of Vaccines**

<http://www.historyofvaccines.org/>

An educational resource from The College of Physicians or Philadelphia, aimed at educators, parents, and students. Includes timelines, activities, lesson plans, articles, and a gallery.

**LSU Code of Student Conduct**

<http://students.lsu.edu/saa/students/code>

An example of a code of ethics, similar to those in place for many schools.

**A Rite of Passage (Metropolitan Museum of Art)**

<http://www.metmuseum.org/learn/for-educators/lesson-plans-and-pre-visit-guides/rite-of-passage>

A lesson plan tied to rites of passage in the Côte d’ Ivoire.

**7 Things You Don’t Know about Sarah Mlynowski**

<http://readergirlz.blogspot.com/2014/03/7-things-you-dont-know-about-sarah_11.html>

Fun facts about the author.