

BookTalk

A Discussion Guide for Teachers, Parents, and Others

THEMATIC CONNECTIONS

Home
Grief and Healing
Family
Success
Decisions

Grades 4-9

About the Book

Clair realizes that true friendship and trust are the answer to overcoming grief in this timeless and unforgettable novel.

Thirteen-year-old Clair Lothrop's world is falling apart. Her mother has died, and her father spends his evenings shut in his study. In a desperate attempt to get her father's attention, Clair stops talking.

Clair's vow of silence gets her father's attention, but not in the way she hoped. He resigns from his position as the pastor of a large metropolitan church to begin a mission in the remote woods of northern Michigan.

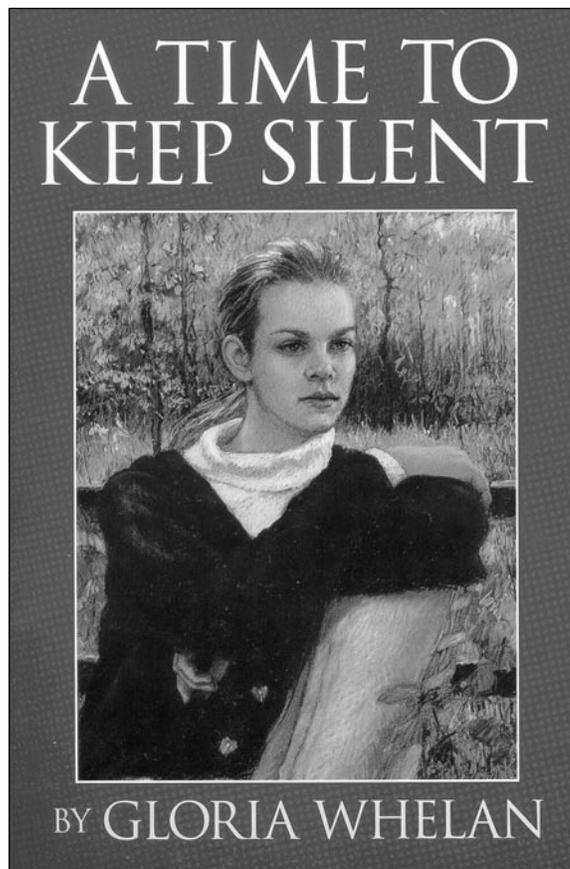
Clair is furious at having to leave her friends. The woods are frightening, and her new house is a tumbledown shack where raccoons and mice have made their home. But everything changes when Clair meets Dorrie who lives alone in the woods to avoid her alcoholic father. Through this surprising friendship, Clair finds strength and courage she didn't know she had.

Fiction • Ages 9-14

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“Dorrie, Clair and Clair’s father are all wonderful characters and their story is strong and life affirming.”

— Kliatt



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In the

Classroom . . .

A Time to Keep Silent is a story that will appeal to young readers for many reasons. Students will explore the meaning of home and success as they walk with Clair through her time of grief and healing. And they will see how decisions they make now might affect their lives later.



ABOUT *the Author*

Gloria Whelan, who was named 1998 Michigan Author of the Year, has won numerous awards for her children's books. She often sets her stories in Michigan where she grew up. Whelan says, "one of the perks of being a writer is that all the while you are writing a book, you can be anyone and anyplace you wish." She says that, like Clair in *A Time to Keep Silent*, she had to make the transition from city living to living in the woods. And while the characters in her novels are imagined, the places are real. These places are where she stands and where her readers might find themselves one day—living in a cabin in remote woods, building a hideaway near a swamp, or hunting for treasures in the dump. Life is full of wonders and Whelan's stories will help you discover some of them.

Born

November 23 in Detroit, Michigan

Currently lives

Mancelona, Michigan

Previous job

University instructor in American Literature

Hobbies

Walking in the woods

HOME — What do you call home? When Clair and her father move up north, what does she think of the countryside? How does Clair start to turn the stone house into their home? Describe the house that Dorrie lives in. What is Dorrie's dream for her house? Could you live in Dorrie's house? Explain.

GRIEF AND HEALING — Why did Clair stop talking? Have you ever tried to get someone's attention by doing something out of the ordinary? Explain. How did the people around Clair react to her silence? What eventually got Clair to talk again? Make a list of ways in which Clair dealt with her grief in this story. How did she finally find healing?

FAMILY — How does Clair's relationship with her father change throughout the story? Why is Dorrie so uncomfortable with Clair and her father when she goes to stay with them?

SUCCESS — What is Aunt Marcia's idea of success? What is Clair's father's idea of success? How does Clair view these two worlds? What would it take to make you feel successful?

DECISIONS — Do you think Clair should have allowed her father to think Dorrie was living with her grandmother? Explain. Why did Clair change her mind about her father spending some of the station wagon money? Why doesn't Clair want to go back to Westville Heights? Do you think she made the right decision? Explain.