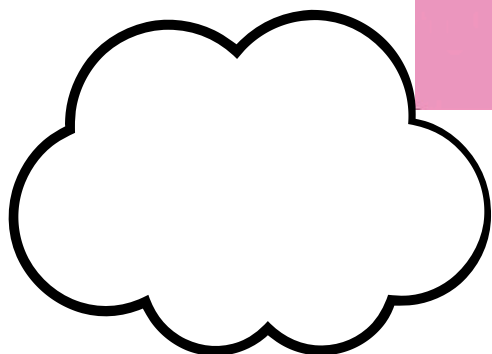
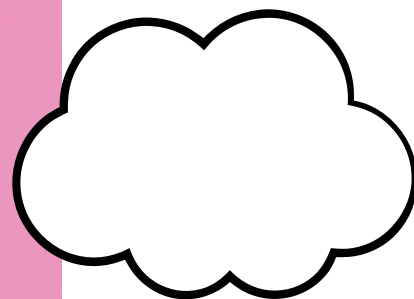
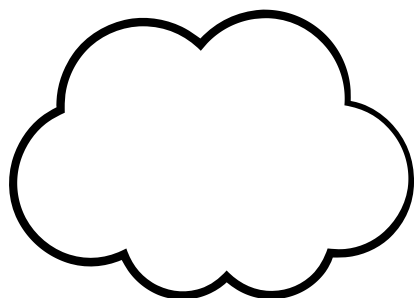
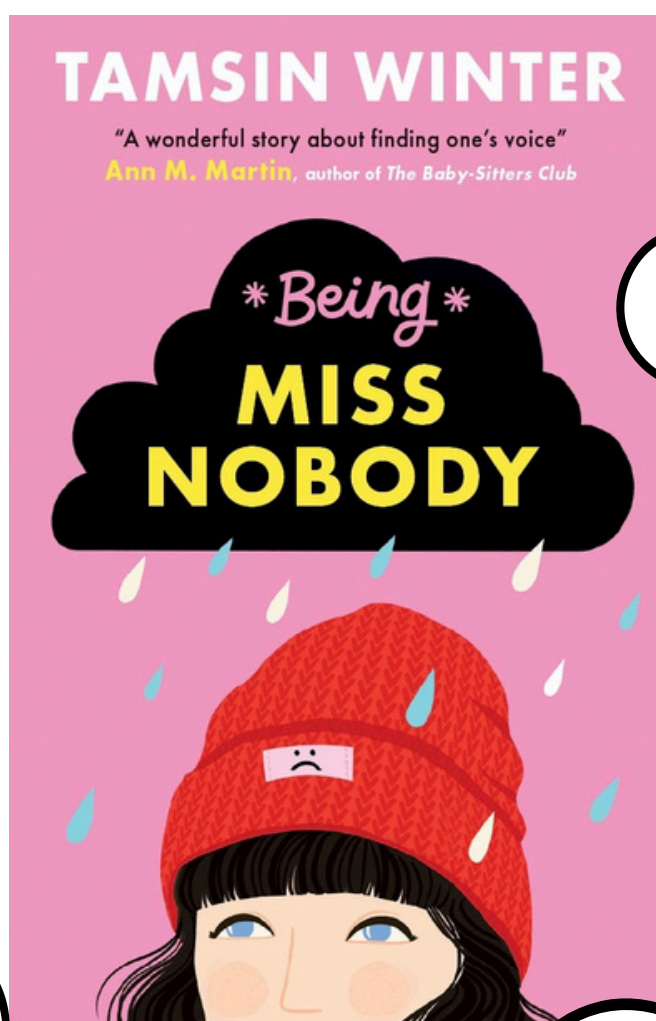
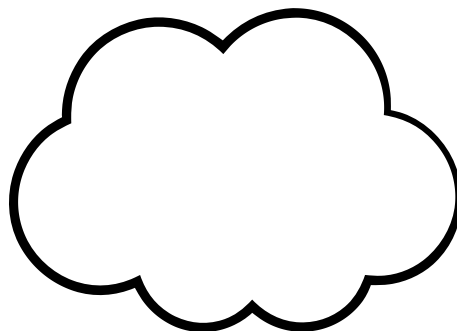
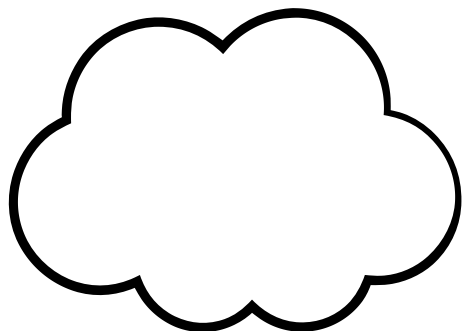


What do you find striking or noticeable about this cover?
What do you think the story will be about and which themes
might it contain? Fill in the clouds with your ideas.



"A beautifully crafted and very important novel."
Lucy Strange, author of *The Secret of Nightingale Wood*

ROSALIND HATES HER NEW SECONDARY SCHOOL

She's the weird girl who doesn't talk. The Mute-ant.
And it's easy to pick on someone who can't fight back.
So Rosalind starts a blog – Miss Nobody; a place
to speak up, a place where she has a voice.
But there's a problem...

IS MISS NOBODY BECOMING A BULLY HERSELF?



"Will appeal to fans of Jacqueline Wilson and
Cathy Cassidy" **Catherine Bruton**
author of *No Ballet Shoes in Syria*



What do you find out from the blurb?
Which parts do you find intriguing?



Before I start, here are some things you should know about me:

1. I have not been a very nice person. You are probably not going to like me very much.
2. I have done some bad things. Some really bad things.
3. I have lied to a lot of people I know. In fact, everyone I know.
4. All of the above I have done pretty much deliberately.
5. I am Miss Nobody.



How does this prologue hook in the reader?

What do we find out?



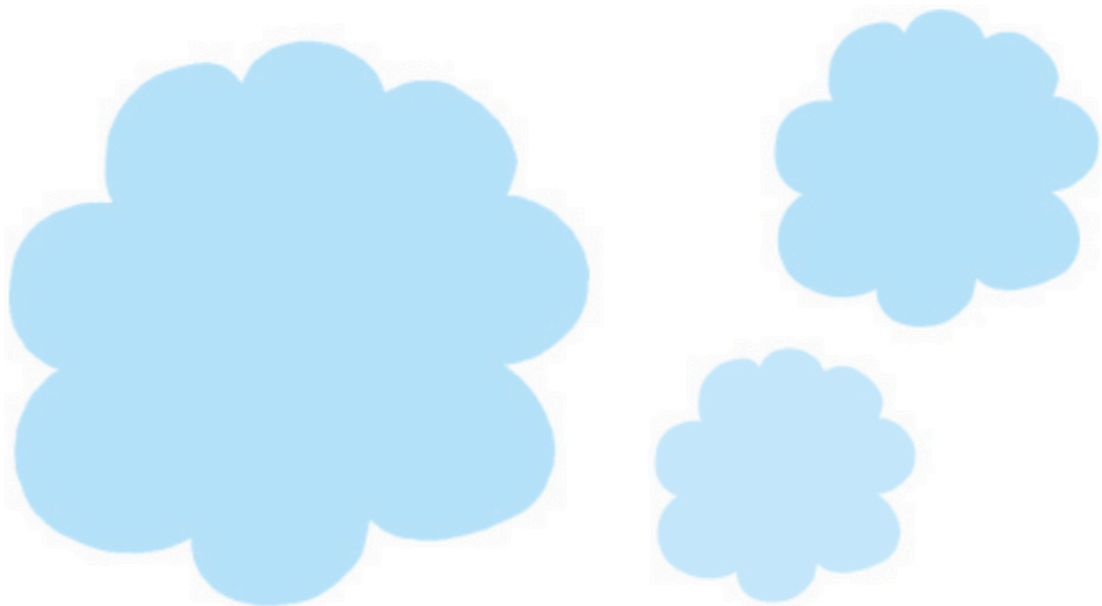
What information does the author withhold?

Do you like the list format? Why/why not?

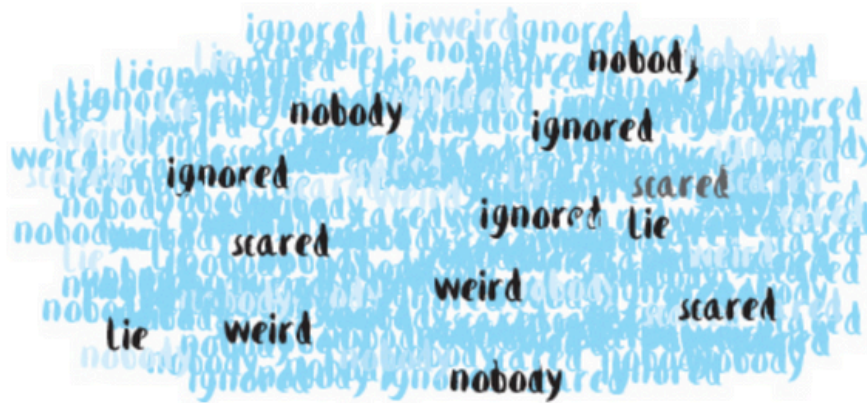


I was first diagnosed as Officially Weird two years ago, when I was nine years old. But actually, I had been Unofficially Weird for a long time before that. My parents must have suspected it too, because we were all in Dr Langley's surgery and everyone was staring at me. Dr Langley said, "I would just like you to say your name," which I thought was extremely weird considering she had been our family doctor since like for ever, and if she didn't know my name by now then who did she think it was showing up to my appointments?

So Dr Langley was staring at me and my parents were staring at me too and even though I can speak, something always happens to the words in my head in Certain Situations Like This One, which is sometimes they Disappear Completely, so what I can say is this:



Or too many words come into my head at once and they get into a Massive Muddle so I can't say any of them, like this:



Or sometimes I know exactly what I want to say, but the words get stuck somewhere and I can't get them out, like this:



And when it's Really Bad, it feels like my lips have actually been superglued together.

So when these things happen (and they happen a lot) I can't speak. Not even one word.

Rosalind has a condition called Selective Mutism. This means she can speak perfectly normally at home, but in front of anyone else, she can't say anything at all. How do you think this might affect her life?

A blank, lined notebook page with a spiral binding at the top. The page is white with light blue horizontal ruling. The spiral binding is black and consists of seven loops. The page is otherwise empty, with no text or markings.

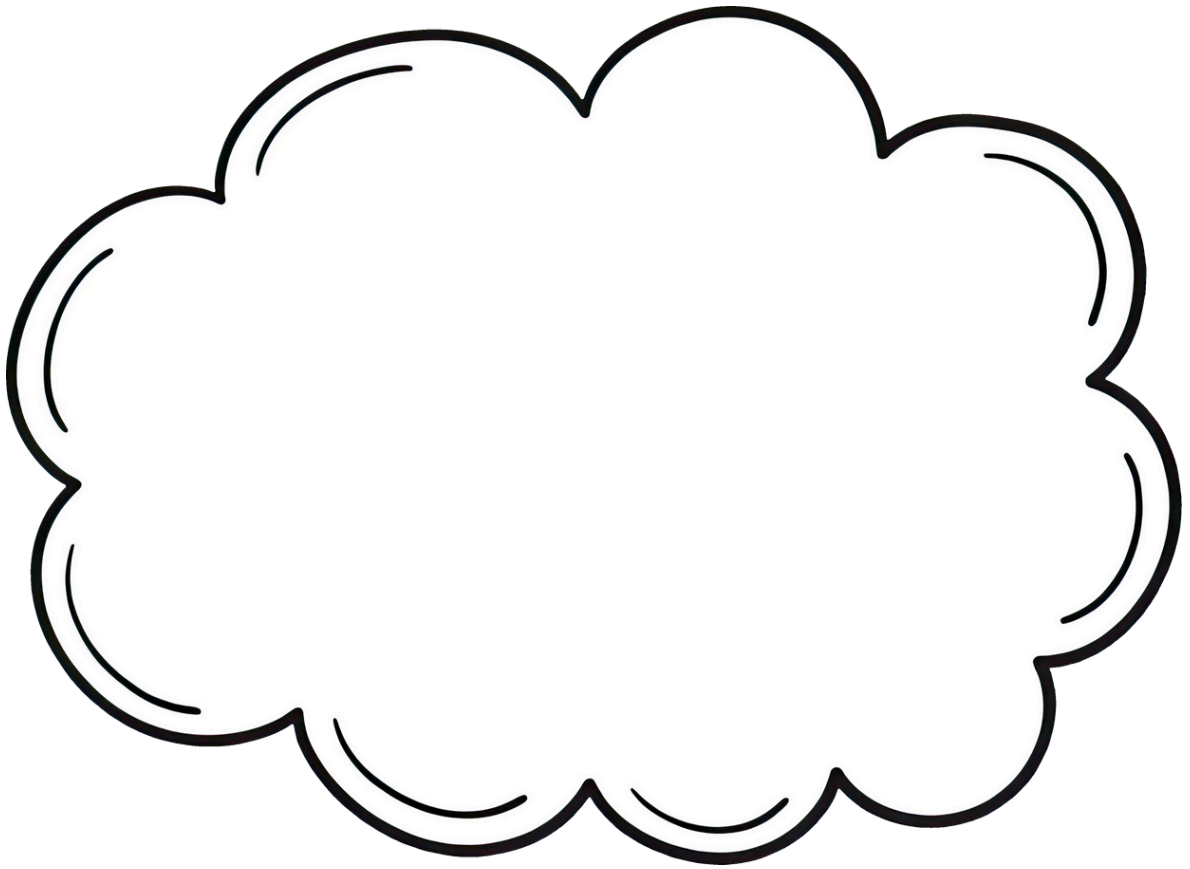
And that's what happened in the doctor's with everybody staring at me, but also it happens when I'm around people I don't know (and a lot of the people I *do* know) even if they aren't all staring at me. And up until this appointment with Dr Langley, my parents thought I was just Painfully Shy and would grow out of it. In fact, that's what everyone thought.

(Apart from me.)

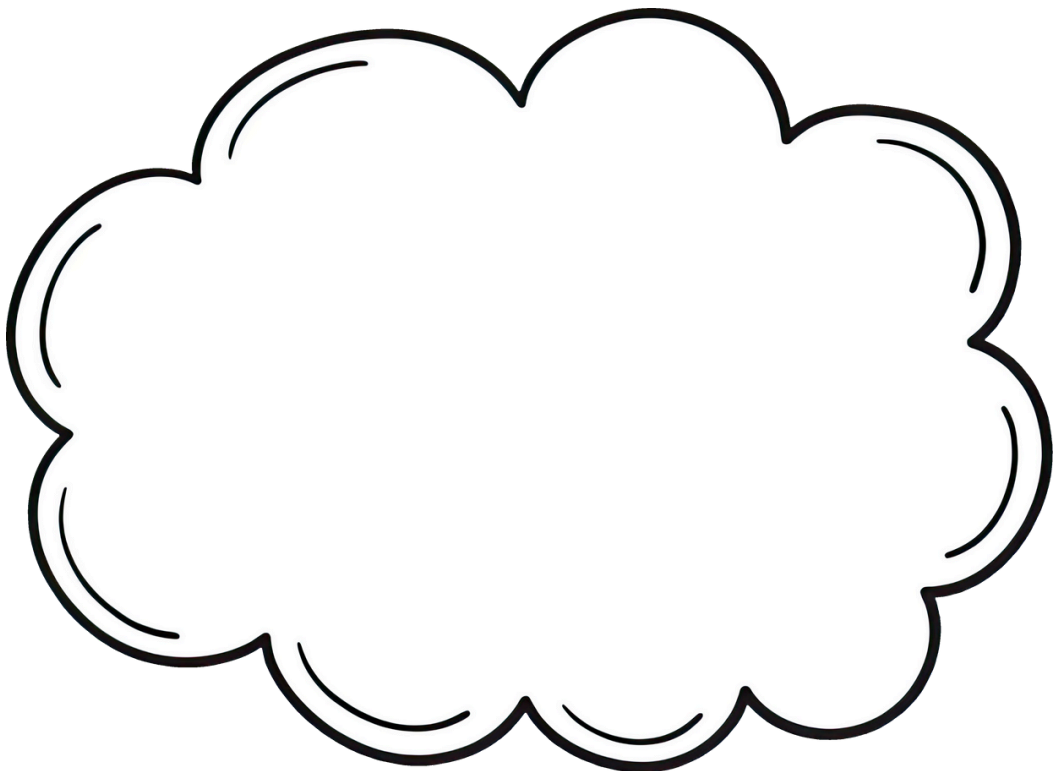
Because I had known for a long time – pretty much my whole life actually – that if I can only speak normally to about four people in the whole entire world, that's not being Painfully Shy, that's being Something Else.

So there I was, nine years old, feeling like I must be from another planet or something because I wanted to tell Dr Langley everything, but I couldn't say even one word. And everything I wanted to tell her got stuck inside my head. Like how I'd never spoken normally in front of anyone apart from my parents and my little brother and our next-door neighbour Mrs Quinney. And how much I hated school because I couldn't speak to anyone, apart from sometimes very quietly to the teaching assistant Mrs Palmer (but only if no one else was there). And how my teacher Mrs Long used to roll her eyes whenever I couldn't get my words out. And how she would put a big list of questions on the board and go round the class one by one, and before she even said my name a massive ball of panic would rise up from my tummy to my throat to inside my head. How she would point at me and say, "What's the answer to number three, please?" And even though I knew the answer, I could never say it because it was like someone had taken a pair of scissors from the wooden block on the window sill and chopped my voice out. So I would sit there, petrified, looking at the floor, with Mrs Long repeating my name and clicking her fingers saying, "*I know* you know the answer! Just say it!" And I wished there was some way for me to disappear like Alice down the rabbit hole. But classrooms don't have rabbit holes, so I had to sit there with the ball of panic inside my head, wondering why I can't be like everybody else and Just Say It.

How Rosalind feels



How Rosalind was treated by her teacher Mrs Long



Whenever my parents went into school, all my teachers would say the exact same thing: “I’m afraid she is just so *Painfully Shy!*” But then Mrs Long retired and we got Miss Castillo. On her first day she took the register, and when she called my name Phillip Day shouted out, “She doesn’t speak, Miss,” like it was The Most Normal Weird Thing in our class ever. Only clearly Miss Castillo didn’t think so, because she called my parents in for a special meeting. And after that they took me to see Dr Langley.

So that’s why I was sitting in her room not able to say anything, not even an easy thing like my own name. (Which is Rosalind, by the way, but obviously everyone already knew that.) And my little brother, Seb, kept wandering around pulling his pants down and up (which I thought was a much weirder thing to do in front of people than not speak). But Mum said nothing about that and said, “Why is she so shy, doctor? Why won’t she speak to people?”

And everyone stared at me again, puzzled, like they were sharing the room with some kind of alien species. I just went bright red and stared at my shoes. (I do this a lot.)

So it was me who got the “I’m afraid there is Definitely Something Wrong With Her” diagnosis, and my little brother who got the *I’m Brave!* sticker. It turns out that if you can’t even say your own name in front of Dr Langley then you haven’t been brave enough to get a sticker, but repeatedly flashing your six-year-old bare bum at everyone seems to nail it. If Dr Langley had *I’m Weird!* stickers, she would probably have given me one of those. But considering I already felt like I’d been wearing one my whole life, I didn’t exactly need it.

How does the writer blend humour with sadness
here? Why do you think she does this?
Do you relate to Rosalind’s character? Do you find
her likeable?

She didn't say what was wrong with me, only that it wasn't Painful Shyness and if I was going to grow out of it I would have done it already. A bit like Seb always talking about dinosaurs and poo (which he's never grown out of actually, but Dad said that's more of a personality issue). My weirdness is more serious, apparently.

So we left Dr Langley's room that day in a Totally Awkward Silence, and maybe all a bit disappointed that she didn't have some kind of special medicine to make my voice appear whenever I wanted it to. But Dad held my hand, and I carried on staring at my shoes the whole way out.

In the car on the way home Seb was going on about the biggest-ever dinosaur fossil that had just been discovered in Argentina. It had a special name but I can't remember what it was. I was too busy worrying about other words I'd heard for the first time that morning that I didn't understand, like *disorder* and *hyper-sensitivity* and *psychologist* and *anxiety*. They flickered in my head as trees and houses and pavements scrolled past the window, and big raindrops ran down distorting everything. And I wondered, if I'm not Just Painfully Shy, or Totally Weird, or An Actual Alien –

What am I?

Did you enjoy this opening chapter?

How do you feel about Rosalind's character?

How does Rosalind feel about herself?

Do you like the writing style?

Rosalind asks this question at the end of the opening chapter. Create a mind map showing everything she is – what we learn about her character, her family, the difficulty she has speaking and how you see her as a reader.





A few weeks later, I had my first appointment with a psychologist. I didn't even know what a psychologist was, so when Dad told me it was a special doctor for your brain, I pictured someone chopping the top of my head off and peering inside, or poking a tiny camera into my ear hole, or searching for my voice somewhere inside my brain with a special microscope. And I was Totally Terrified about it.

Dad suggested looking up psychologist in the encyclopedia, which is like a way slower, really heavy, old-fashioned book version of Google that he's addicted to making us read. Like if you say you need to google something he points to it and says, "This was googling stuff before googling stuff was even invented!" or "This is Google without the adverts!" or something else that makes the *Encyclopedia Britannica* sound much better than Google, when actually it totally isn't. And no matter how many times I tell him not letting me just google something is So Weird And Annoying, he always says, "You will thank me later!" Which I definitely won't because looking anything up always takes so much longer than it's supposed to.

How does Rosalind feel about seeing a psychologist and why?

The encyclopedia said a psychologist is someone who studies the human mind and uses therapy to help people with their problems, which sounded okay, but when I looked up therapy and it said it involves people *talking* about their problems, I actually felt sick. I didn't tell Mum and Dad, but I knew therapy was something I wouldn't be able to do. Even the thought of it made my throat feel weird, like it does when no words will come out of it. So all the way there I prayed for God to make me temporarily disappear. And when we got there I felt like I kind of had.

The therapy room was like an office on one side, with a wooden desk and black leather chairs, but the other side looked like a mini version of this soft-play area called The Fun Zone (which I never liked going to when I was little because it was always too crowded and too noisy). There were red and yellow cushions on a big blue sofa, different toy boxes all stacked up, and black-framed pictures of jumbled up shapes. The only thing I liked was the big white rug on the floor in the shape of a cloud, which was good because I spent a lot of time staring at it.

When I first walked in the psychologist made this joke which was, "I'm Dr Peak, so don't ask me to play hide-and-seek!" Which I didn't understand at first because obviously I couldn't ask him to play hide-and-seek otherwise I wouldn't have been there in the first place. Then I realized he was making one of those jokes that adults make when they are trying to let you know they are Not Like Other Normal Adults because they are fun and understand kids, but to me it just made him seem Even More Scary And Weird. Plus it was a doubly stupid joke because his name was spelled Peak not Peek, but obviously I couldn't tell him that.

How does Rosalind feel when she meets Dr Peak? How does the writer use this to reveal Rosalind's character?

I sat down and he switched on this little grey box which he said was going to record everything. And that's when I knew for one hundred per cent sure I was going to say Nothing At All Ever to Dr Peak Not Peek. I was already scared of talking to him, but getting my voice recorded was A Million Times Worse than anything I had imagined. (I would have preferred having a camera poked in my ear.) I must have been staring at it because he said, "Oh, don't worry about that, just try to ignore it." Which for Someone Like Me is a bit like someone putting a hungry lion in your bedroom and saying, "Just try to ignore it!"

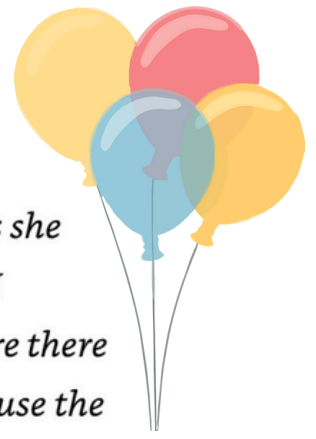
Dr Peak Not Peek told me to think of the first time I could remember not being able to speak. He gave me a yellow notebook with my name on, which was good because I like written projects, and I wrote about the first birthday party I ever went to when I was about five.

Do you think Dr Peak was right to record their therapy sessions considering Rosalind's condition? Why/why not?

What simile does Rosalind use to describe how she feels about being recorded? What does it suggest about her fears?

Why do you think Rosalind uses capital letters on certain words and phrases? What effect is created?

Lauren's Party



It was Lauren's birthday and she told everyone in our class she was having a magician. I really didn't want to go because I always feel very nervous and scared if I have to go anywhere there will be lots of people (like basically everywhere). Also because the day before my dad had told me that sometimes magicians chop people in half. I cried a lot when we got there so Mum said I could stay next to her. But when the magician got there we all had to go and sit down on the floor to watch the magic. He said, "HELLO, BOYS AND GIRLS! I'M MAGIC ANDY!" in the loudest voice ever. Then he made everyone shout "HELLO, MAGIC ANDY!" at him again and again, louder and louder, only I couldn't open my mouth to say anything so I couldn't join in. And then he told us to shout "ABRACADABRA!" at him. I can remember not wanting anyone to hear my voice.

Then Magic Andy said, "NOW, WHO WOULD LIKE TO BE MY SPECIAL MAGICAL ASSISTANT?" And straight away I thought, Not Me. I don't like standing up in front of people, I don't like anyone looking at me, and I had decided by then that I didn't like magicians very much either. So everyone put their hands up apart from me and this boy called Charlie Hooper, who at that exact moment had his fingers up his nostrils. And it was a bit like being in An Actual Nightmare because Magic Andy (which is a very un-magical sounding name anyway) did something I thought was against the law – he picked me to be his volunteer. The only person without their hand up who really did not want to be his volunteer. (I'm still not sure about Charlie because of the nose picking.)

Everyone turned and stared, and I felt like they were playing a trick on me or something, because I had accidentally volunteered myself by Definitely Not Volunteering. I felt hot and dizzy and I couldn't move my head to see if Mum was behind me. I was frozen to the spot but someone helped me up to the front and everyone was clapping.



I couldn't say my name when Magic Andy asked me, then I couldn't say the magic word and I looked for my mum but I couldn't see her. I started crying so Lauren's mum came up and put her arm around me and took me to sit in the kitchen and I heard Lauren's gran say, "It doesn't pay to be sensitive in this world!" Then Mum came in and took me home.

After that I didn't want to go to any more birthday parties in case it happened again. Dad would always try to make me, but I would get upset so Mum would say I didn't have to go. Then after a while people stopped inviting me anyway.

Write a letter to Rosalind reassuring her that being sensitive can be a great quality and that it's OK to ask for help. Describe a time when you have had similar feelings and how you dealt with it.



After I'd finished writing, Dr Peak Not Peek read it, then asked me some questions I couldn't answer because my words got in a Massive Muddle and my throat was closed up. Then he said, "Okay," and wrote down loads of stuff on his clipboard.

And that is what Dr Peak Not Peek's monthly therapy sessions were like. With the little grey box on his desk recording me not saying anything. Not even one word. Just long Awkward Silences where my voice should have been.

I wished it could record the Massive Muddle of words in my head, or the words stuck in my throat, or how hard I was trying, or how bad I felt about not answering his questions. Because then maybe he could have seen how much I wanted him to help me. But little grey boxes don't record stuff like that. So I spent every therapy session not answering his questions, writing about Other Awkward Silence Scenarios in my yellow notebook, looking down at the white cloud rug wishing it would turn into a real cloud and float me away.

The only thing I liked about Dr Peak Not Peek was that he told me the name for my condition, which is Selective Mutism (SM for short). And I liked having an Official Name for it, because it meant that clearly I wasn't The Only Person In The World who had this particular type of weirdness, even though it feels like that sometimes.

What is difficult about the therapy sessions for Rosalind?

What is the one thing she liked about Dr Peak?

Dad said out of all the Possible Weirdness Scenarios he rated it 7/10 weird, which to be honest I was completely disappointed with. I think it rates at least 9/10 just for the Awkward Silence factor alone. But Dad said he thought Tourette's syndrome was a worse thing to have and if I wanted my weirdness rating to be higher then I'd better hurry up and get something else because he suspected Seb might overtake me on the weirdness scale pretty soon. Anytime I get upset about it now he always says, "Rozzie, whatever weirdness you have, it is still one hundred per cent better than being Completely Normal." But that's my dad for you. And he wouldn't say that if he was the one who had to go to my school.

Because the main problem about having my type of weirdness is that for as long as I can remember, I have never had any friends. (Brothers don't count.) Some people (I see them all the time) can go up to someone and say "Hi!" then the other person says "Hi!" and they start talking and everything is just normal. But if you go up to people and say nothing most people will tell you to go away, or that speaking to you is like Speaking To A Brick Wall. And I have found that in general people do not want to be friends with a brick wall.

If you feel sorry for me at this point then you probably shouldn't. You see, it is all my own fault. It's like Mrs Long always used to say, "You can't expect to have any friends if you won't speak to people!" And unfortunately she was right. But to me, being in a situation where I'm expected to speak to someone is actually less appealing than sticking my head down the toilet. Even after Seb's done one of his "poosplosions".

What do you think it's like for Rosalind not having any friends? Why is making friends hard for her?

Anyway, it wasn't long after my first therapy session with Dr Peak Not Peek that we found out Seb had The Illness, so my parents kind of left me to it. And that was two years ago now. It turns out that if you're not exactly dying of something in my house, then you're not exactly The Main Priority. Even if sometimes maybe you wish you could be.

What is discovered about Seb that makes Rosalind no longer the priority?

How do you think she might feel about this?

Do you like her style of narration?

How do you feel about her as a main character?

ROSALIND BALVINS

Character Profile



Likes:

Adjectives to describe her:

Dislikes:

Family & Friends

Greatest wish:

Important quotes:

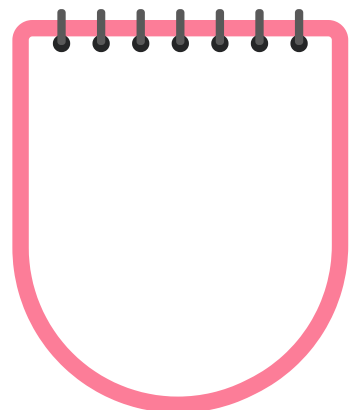
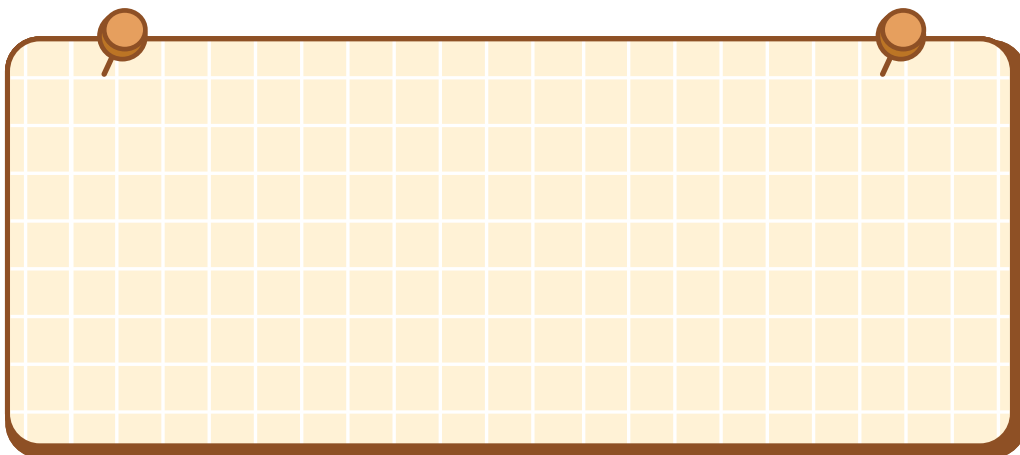
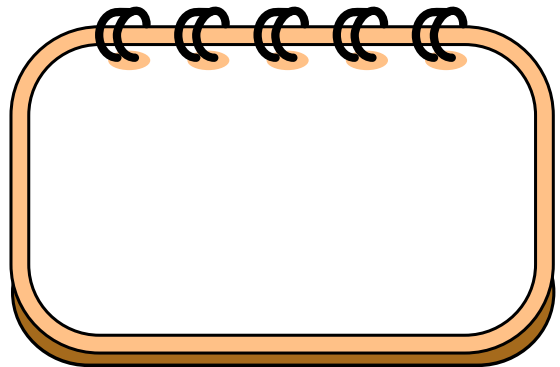
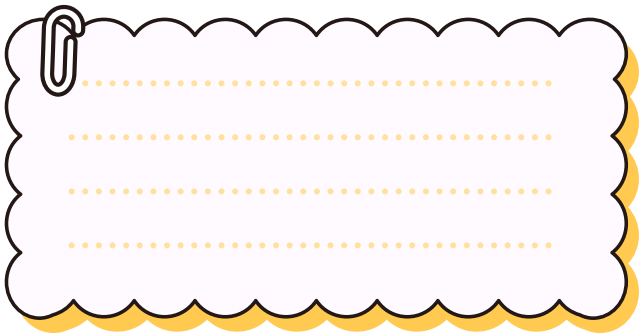
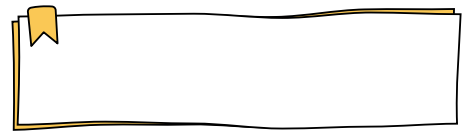
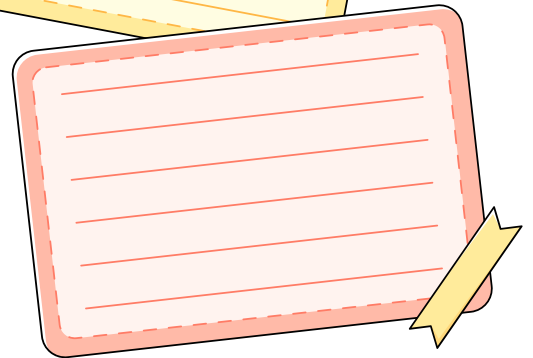
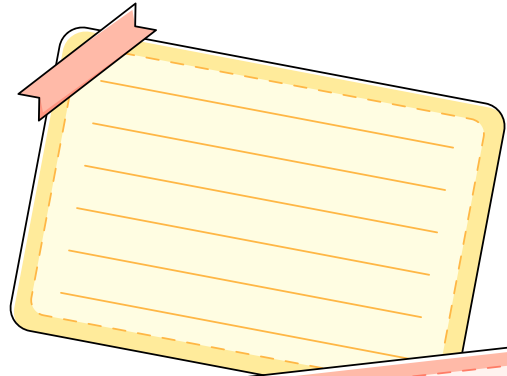
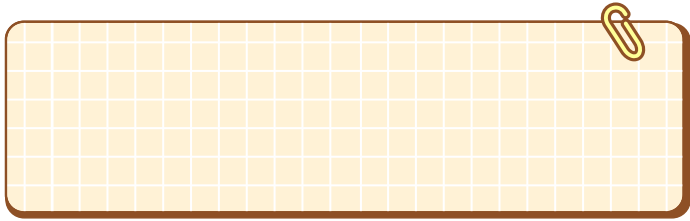
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WHAT PEOPLE
SHOULD KNOW
ABOUT SELECTIVE
MUTISM

Use what you've found out from
Being Miss Nobody and your own
research to complete this page.

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Writing Prompts

Silent Strength

Write a short story from the perspective of a character who can't speak out loud but finds a creative way to make their thoughts and feelings heard. How do others react? What does your character learn about themselves?

Blog of Truth

Imagine you start an anonymous blog called The Voice Inside. Write three blog posts: the first about something unfair happening at school, the second when your posts get more attention than you expected, and the third about the consequences your words have on others.

Behind the Screen

Social media can be powerful – for good and bad. Write a scene in which a post you made to help someone gets misunderstood and causes harm. How do you fix it?

The New Person

Describe a character starting at a new school and feeling invisible. What moments finally help them feel noticed? Where do they go and who do they meet?

Facing my Fear

Write a descriptive piece about a time (real or imagined) you faced something you found frightening or challenging.

Nobody is a Nobody

Write a speech to deliver to your classmates about how everyone is important and no one should be made to feel like they are nothing.

Book Club

Discussion Questions



1. Why do you think Rosalind chooses the name “Miss Nobody” for her blog? What does that name represent to her at different points in the story?
2. How does Rosalind’s SM shape the way she sees the world and how others treat her?
3. The blog gives Rosalind a voice, but it also creates problems. At what point do you think the blog starts to become dangerous, and why?
4. What role does fear play in Rosalind’s decisions? Which fear do you think is the hardest for her to face?
5. How are bullying and rumours presented in the novel? What message do you think the author is sending about their impact?
6. Some characters react kindly to Rosalind, while others don’t. Which character do you think shows the most empathy and kindness, and why?
7. How does the book explore the idea of responsibility when speaking out?
8. Were there moments when you agreed or disagreed with Rosalind’s choices?
9. How does Rosalind’s relationship with her family affect her confidence and recovery?
10. What do you think the book says about labels — like “quiet,” “weird,” or “nobody”? How do labels affect characters in the story?
11. How realistic did you find the portrayal of school life and social media? Did anything feel especially true to real life?
12. What did you learn about SM and anxiety from reading the book?
13. Which scene stayed with you the most after finishing the book, and why?
14. If you were recommending this book to someone else your age, what would you say it’s really about?
15. Did you find the book too sad at certain points? Did you find the ending satisfying?