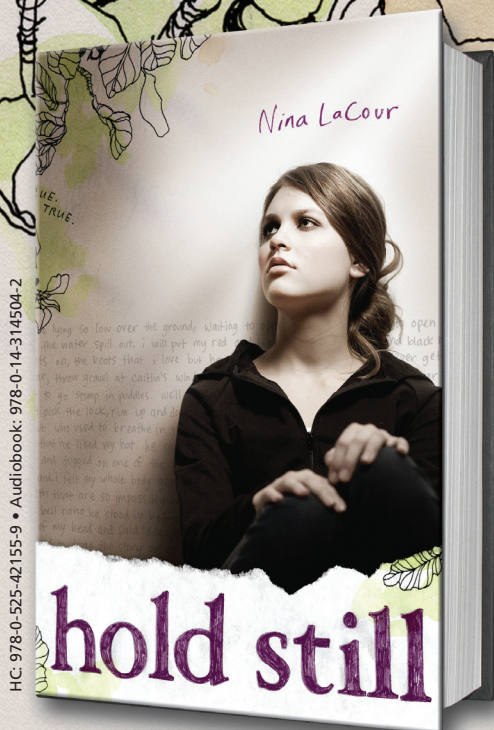


about the book

DEAR CAITLIN,
there are so many things
that i want so badly to tell you
but i just can't.



HOLD STILL
by Nina LaCour

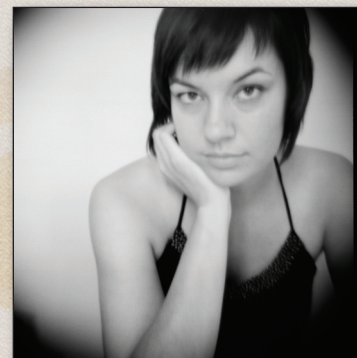
That night Ingrid told Caitlin, *I'll go wherever you go*, but by dawn Ingrid, and her promise, were gone, and Caitlin was alone. Ingrid's suicide immobilizes Caitlin, leaving her unsure of her place in a new life she hardly recognizes. A life without the art, the laughter, and the joy she shared with her best friend.

But Ingrid left more than a memory behind. Devastating, hopeful, hopeless, playful . . . in words and illustrations, Ingrid left behind a painful farewell in her journal for Caitlin. Now Caitlin must learn how to live without her best friend, and with new friendships, photography, and time, she ultimately finds meaning and renewed hope.

about the author

Nina LaCour is a high school English teacher and former bookseller. Her stories and interviews have appeared in various journals and magazines, including *580 Split* and *Juxtapoz*. Her first screenplay, *If It Isn't Perfect*, was made into a short film. A San Francisco Bay Area native, Nina lives in Oakland, California. This is her first novel.

Visit her online at www.ninalacour.com.



Q&A with Nina LaCour

Q: When you started writing *Hold Still*, did you have a clear idea of what your novel would be about?

A: I knew that it would be about grief. When I was in ninth grade, one of my classmates took his life. Even though this story is not autobiographical, I felt compelled to write about something that I wrestled with in my own teenage years—the journey to finding oneself again in the wake of a great loss.

Q: What were your other inspirations?

A: Before I wrote the first pages of *Hold Still*, I visited my mom's high school photography classroom to look at her students' work. One image still haunts me. It is a black-and-white, dramatically lit photograph of a girl with the words *ugly, fat, stupid* carved into her stomach. The photograph was heartbreaking, but also beautiful. The girl in the image inspired the character of Ingrid, and the act of photographing became one of Caitlin's passions. Throughout the book, even as Caitlin is struggling, she is finding joy in creating art.

Q: Did you do research when writing this book?

A: Initially, I did quite a bit of research on depression and suicide. And though I'm sure that some of what I learned found its way into the book, I realized later that it was more important that I understand Ingrid as a character than know how to diagnose her. What both Ingrid and Caitlin love is photography, so I learned to develop black-and-white film and make prints in a darkroom. It's thrilling.



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discussion questions

- In the immediate aftermath of Ingrid's suicide, how does Caitlin deal with her grief? In what ways do her methods of dealing with this grief change as the year progresses? What prompts those changes?
- Describe the relationship between Caitlin and her parents. How do they help her in the process of recovering from Ingrid's death? Could they have been more helpful? If so, how?
- What are different people's reactions to Ingrid's suicide and how do they express their feelings? How does coming back to school affect Caitlin and how do her interactions with others affect her?
- Who does Caitlin try to connect with as she tries to find her place in school without Ingrid? How do each of these people contribute to her recovery?
- How is it difficult sometimes to do the right thing and be a good friend? How is Caitlin a good friend? How are others good friends to Caitlin?
- Why is the old movie theater Caitlin's favorite part of Los Cerros? What meaning does the movie theater have for her? Why does she decide to share it with Dylan and Jayson and how does this make her feel? How does Caitlin feel when it's torn down?
- How do crushes and romantic relationships play into this story? Think about Caitlin's crush on Taylor and how it compares to Ingrid's crush on Jayson or Dylan's relationship with Maddy. Do Caitlin's relationships with these characters develop because of or in spite of what happened with Ingrid?
- Why does Caitlin decide to build a treehouse? What does it mean to her? To others?
- In what ways is reading Ingrid's journal helpful to Caitlin and in what ways does it make it more difficult for her to move on? Why do you think Ingrid left Caitlin her journal? How does Caitlin use the journal to understand Ingrid better? How does the journal change her perception of Ingrid and her death?
- How do Ingrid's journal pages and sketches help to enhance the story? Do they change how you feel about and understood Ingrid as a person?
- What leads Caitlin to her decision to share the journal with others? Why does she choose to share the portions that she does?
- What were some of the signs that Ingrid might have been depressed? Does Caitlin feel any responsibility for what happened? Was there anything Caitlin could have done to help Ingrid? Was there anything that anyone could have done?
- After Ingrid's suicide, what happens to the relationship between Caitlin and Ms. Delani? Do you think Ms. Delani is justified in acting the way she does? What happens when Caitlin and Ms. Delani finally talk to each other about what happened?
- How does the inclusion of photography in the story change how you view Ingrid and Caitlin's world? What do the characters' ideas about beauty and art show about themselves? How does photography help Caitlin? How did it help Ingrid?
- Why do you think the book is titled *Hold Still*? What is the meaning of holding still for Caitlin? For Ingrid?

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point of view

A program for young adult novels

The Point of View program is designed to raise the profile of literary books with strong themes. The goal of this program is to connect those readers who loved titles like *Thirteen Reasons Why* and *Wintergirls* to new books with the same appeal.

These novels fill the silence that surrounds difficult topics.

Hold Still is one of the Fall 2009 books that teens will want to talk about . . .



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