

2010 One Book for Nebraska Teens  
Discussion questions for *Unwind* by Neal Shusterman

1. How would you feel if you discovered you were going to be unwound? What would you do? If you didn't want to go along with it but couldn't run away like Connor and the others in the novel, what other options might you have?
2. How would you feel if you were in an accident, or had a rare disease, and you could be cured only if your damaged organs were replaced by parts taken from unwound teens? What would you choose to do? What if you were certain to die if you refused the parts? What if it wasn't you, but someone you loved (a parent, a sibling) who was in an accident? Would your answer be different?
3. You just found out the person sitting next to you is going to be unwound. Come up with ten good reasons why they should NOT be. Remember, their life may depend on it!
4. When do you think the story takes place? The book never reveals the year. How many years in the future might it be? What clues hint at how much time has passed? What companies or products are named? What societal norms can you point to that have changed or remained the same? What are the similarities between the world of *Unwind* and our own world? What are the differences?
5. Which of the three main characters, Connor, Risa, or Lev, do you most identify with? Why? What traits do you have in common? Which of their traits work for them, and which make their lives harder? Which of your own traits would you like to give up? Which would you want to keep?
6. In the course of the book, Connor and Risa get separated from Lev, who travels for a time with another character. Why do you think the author chose to split the narrative into two distinct threads? What do you think this achieves? How does this affect the evolution of the characters?
7. Compare the similarities and differences of Lev's journey with Cyrus to Joplin, Missouri, in *Unwind* to Huck's travel with Jim down the Mississippi River in the novel *Huckleberry Finn*.
8. While being transported to possible safety, some of the kids on the run wonder, "Would it be better to die or be unwound?" If given the choice, which would you choose? Why?
9. Another question the kids in the book discuss is, "If every part of you is still alive but inside someone else, are you alive or are you dead?" They also wonder if consciousness can exist even if it's spread out, and if the soul remains intact. What do you think?
10. Which adults in the story are depicted sympathetically? Which do you feel are not sympathetic? Do any shift from one to the other? How did the author describe these characters to make you feel one way or the other about them?

11. Risa is assigned to play in a band at a Harvest Camp, performing upbeat tunes while teens are marched to their unwinding. Risa is conflicted: She knows playing in the band will keep her alive longer, but it's at the expense of others, and her joy at having her fingers on a piano is matched by the horror of knowing what's going on around her. How would you feel in this situation? Would you accept the position? Are there any situations in history similar to this?