

MTV 16 & Pregnant

Discussion and Resource Guide
16 & Pregnant: A Novel



Simon & Schuster

POWER
TO DECIDE

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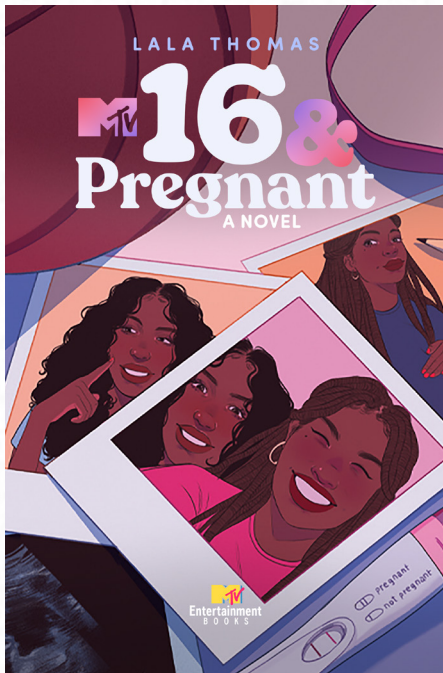
About the Book

The bond between two best friends is put to the test when one of them gets pregnant in this contemporary teen novel inspired by MTV's iconic reality show.

Erykah was looking forward to junior year at East Prep High. She has a cute boyfriend, gets good grades, and has the best bestie. Money is tight, though that's nothing new in her world. But everything changes when she gets pregnant. Having a baby at sixteen was definitely not part of the plan.

Kelly's plan was to dominate junior year—grade-wise and on the basketball court—and eventually get an athletic scholarship. It did not include helping her best friend through a pregnancy. But that's what best friends do, right? Besides, Kelly has every intention of being a good auntie.

As the two girls navigate the pregnancy, they'll learn some harsh realities about the world and be forced to make some huge decisions. They'll also discover a deep reserve of strength and compassion...for each other and themselves.

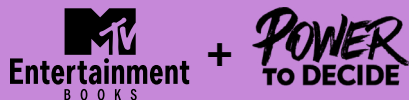


16 & Pregnant: A Novel

honestly and openly explores pregnancy through the eyes of two Black teens in modern-day Nevada. Debut author LaLa Thomas combines personal insights, heartfelt dialogue, and authentic emotions in this powerful portrait of American teen life.

* Art by Bex Glendining (C) Viacom International Inc.

About the Partnership & Resource Guide



[Power to Decide](#) is a non-partisan non-profit working to ensure that everyone—no matter who they are or where they live—has control over their bodies and has the power to decide if, when and under what circumstances to get pregnant and have a child. Our mission is to advance sexual and reproductive well-being for all. We honor the [history, culture, and reality](#) that inform the way each young person defines and pursues their dreams. We respect the decisions they make about their futures. When all people have the power to decide, their opportunities increase—in work, life, education, and health.

Power to Decide and MTV have been working in partnership for 25 years to help ensure that all young people have the support they need to make informed decisions and to talk openly about sex, love, relationships, and the power to decide their futures. By sparking important conversations, our collaboration on MTV's iconic series [Teen Mom and 16 & Pregnant](#) contributed to historic declines in teen pregnancy and birth rates.

We are proud to work together on this next chapter! Learn more at our resource page powertodecide.org/16andPregnantNovel

Tell us what you think about the book!
@MTVBooks and @PowerToDecide. #TalkingIsPower

Did You Know?

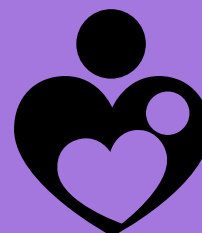
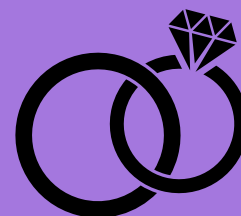
- One in four girls in the US will become pregnant at least once by age 20.
- Teen pregnancy and birth rates have dropped about 70% since the early 1990's. Declines have been in all 50 states and among all groups. Young people are waiting longer to have sex and are more likely to use contraception when they do.
- Still, inequities remain: young people of color are more likely to experience teen pregnancy and parenthood, and have more barriers to access to reproductive care. [In 2019, the birth rates](#) for Hispanic teens (25.3) and non-Hispanic Black teens (25.8) were more than two times higher than the rate for non-Hispanic White teens (11.4).
- [Young women living in foster care](#) are more than twice as likely to become pregnant than young women not in foster care.
- The average age of first sex in the US is 17.
- Nine in ten young people say they are not ready for a pregnancy right now; but 40% aren't using birth control consistently.
- Half of teens say they have never thought about how a pregnancy would affect their lives right now.
- If you have unprotected sex on a regular basis, you have an 85% chance of getting pregnant within a year. Thinking "it can't happen to me" doesn't count as protection.
- About half of all pregnancies in the US are unplanned, according to the pregnant people themselves.
- Most abortions are to people who already have children. More than half of abortions in the US are via medication.
- [More than half of young adults](#) worry that birth control will be harder to access in the future as a result of the Supreme Court's decision overturning *Roe v. Wade*.
- More than 19 million women in need live in [contraceptive deserts](#), without easy access to all methods of birth control.
- Black women are [three to four times](#) more likely to die from pregnancy-related complications and [face more barriers](#) to accessing abortion care than their non-Black peers.
- Daughters of teen mothers are more than three times as likely to become teen moms themselves.
- Pregnancy and birth are [significant contributors to high school dropout rates among girls](#). Only about 50% of teen mothers receive a high school diploma by 22 years of age, whereas approximately 90% of women who do not give birth during adolescence graduate from high school.
- 30% of teen girls who drop out of school cite pregnancy or parenthood as a reason, and less than 2% of young teen mothers get a college degree by age 30.
- All pregnancies at 16 are considered [high-risk](#), meaning there are more health risks for the person and their pregnancy. Extra care, support, rest and nutrition are key, even while everything is going fine with the pregnancy.
- Not knowing that you're pregnant in the first weeks of pregnancy can make things even riskier: if you don't know you're pregnant, you're less likely to be eating nutritious foods, getting enough rest, or getting medical care.

*Information courtesy of [Power to Decide](#)

Discussion Questions

Sex & Relationships:

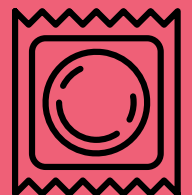
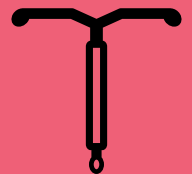
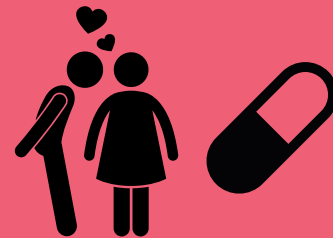
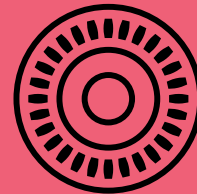
- What advice would you give Erykah about Miguel? What advice would you give Miguel about Erykah?
- What qualities are “must-haves” to make a relationship strong and healthy? How do you build good communication in a relationship?
- How does Miguel’s approach to Erykah affect her before the baby arrives? After? When you have a child together, even if your relationship doesn’t last, you can still be connected for life.
- Why does Kelly distance herself from Ray when she finds out she’s pregnant?
- Erykah’s and Kelly’s friendship unravels when they feel judged by each other for their pregnancy decisions. Why do you think that happened? When Kelly says to Erykah, “We are not the same,” what did she mean by that? What would you say to help them better support each other?
- Do you see yourself in Erykah or Kelly? What aspects of their personalities can you relate to the most?



Discussion Questions

Pregnancy, Parenthood, Birth Control, Abortion:

- Erykah and Kelly both get pregnant unexpectedly. They are both aware of birth control and do their best to use it. What advice would you give them about birth control?
- Do Erykah’s and Kelly’s stories get you thinking about how a pregnancy would affect your life right now? How would your daily routines change? How would your relationships change?
- How do you feel about the way that the joys and the challenges of pregnancy were portrayed in the book? Is this different from how you’re used to seeing teen pregnancy in the media? Why/Why not?
- What steps should you take if you’re not ready for pregnancy and parenthood? How might these change over time?
- Can you name all the birth control methods mentioned in the book? Which ones do you think are most effective? Did you learn anything new about any methods?
- Young parents need all the support they can get for themselves, their babies, and their futures—including access to the right birth control methods to help them plan and space future pregnancies. What messages do you think young moms get about early pregnancy and parenthood? What about young fathers? What would you change?
- Did you learn anything new about abortion from this book? If so, what? Any surprises?
- What did you think of Nurse Jill and Dr. Taheri? How did the way they talked with Erykah affect the way she felt?



Discussion Questions

Talking is Power

Communication and trust are the keys to a successful relationship at any age. Conversations about sex, relationships, pregnancy, and birth control can be awkward, but they are always worthwhile, and can be life-changing. Being honest—even if it’s hard—allows the people you love to be there for you when you need them the most.

- Looking back, Erykah wishes she had been more open with her mom about her pregnancy. What advice would you give to a teen who is sexually active but doesn’t feel like they can talk to their parents or guardians?
- Do you have adults in your life (aside from parents) whom you consider to be your “champions”? Who are they and why do you feel this way about them?
- What can parents/adults do to be more “askable” about sex and relationships? What do you think teens need most from the adults in their lives when it comes to making decisions about sex?
- Teens say that parents and champions are the most influential people on their decisions about sex, but adults don’t realize how powerful they are. Why do you think that is?
- Imagine you’re Erykah’s mom: how would you feel when you found out she lied about her abortion?

- Imagine you’re Kelly’s parents: how would you feel when you found out she was pregnant?



- Do you think abortion is hard to talk about with your friends? Family? Partners? Why or why not? What do you think would happen if there were conversations about abortion?



- Do you think birth control is hard to talk about with your friends? Family? Partners? Why or why not? What do you think would happen if there were conversations about birth control?



- What ideas did you get from the book about how you would support someone in your life who’s dealing with an unplanned pregnancy?



Food for Thought

The best time to figure out how you'll handle a sexual situation is before you're in it.

Talking openly with young people about birth control encourages them be safer when they are ready to have sex (it doesn't encourage them to start having sex).

Ensuring that all young people have quality information and access to reproductive care is one of the best strategies to help them finish school.

Having goals for the future and a plan to get there is important; having a network of support to help you get there is key.

Restrictions on abortion hurt everyone, even in states where abortion is legal. They disproportionately harm those who are already less likely to have access to reproductive care, including people of color, rural communities, and those who are struggling financially.

You're more powerful than you think: by getting informed, opening up honest conversations, and sharing resources about reproductive health, you can help more people have the power to decide their futures.

Resources



Pregnancy, Parenthood, Birth Control, Abortion Resources

- [Pregnancy 101](#)
- [Can I get pregnant if...?](#)
- [Bedsider Method Explorer](#) find the method that's right for you
 - [Find a Clinic](#)
 - [Get birth control online](#)
 - [Emergency contraception is not the same as abortion](#)
- [AbortionFinder.org](#) is the nation's most comprehensive network of verified abortion providers. Get up to date information in every state about laws and support services
 - [Types of abortion](#) - what to expect
 - [Track the changing landscape of abortion access with interactive maps](#)
- [Parenting](#): Everything young people need to know
- [Pregnancy loss](#): you're not alone and it's not your fault
- [How to be an empowered patient](#)

Healthy Relationships and Open Conversations

- [#TalkingIsPower: Resources to have Open, Honest Conversations](#)
- [What a Healthy Relationship Looks Like](#)
- [By and for Teens: The Talk Everyone Should Have With their Partner](#)
- [From a Sex Educator: 5 Ways Parents Can Discuss Sex, Love, and Relationships](#)