

## *Topics of discussion*

### **Shyness and introversion**

Is Dot one or the other? What do you think the difference is between the two? Our society tends to celebrate the outgoing among us but there is a need for more introspective people too. What value does Dot's quiet nature bring to her work?

### **Animal cruelty**

There are many forms of cruelty from neglect to outright violence. The book doesn't shy away from these topics as they're important to acknowledge if we're going to make changes. How did it make you feel? What would you have done differently than the characters in the book?

### **Code**

Dot uses Morse code. Why? Do you think it helps or hinders her?

### **Shelter**

The book's working title was *No Shelter*. It's a theme that runs throughout Dot's story. Can you pick out the different forms of shelter in the book? Is it always a positive thing?

### **The human-animal bond**

People have lived alongside animals for thousands of years. Not all humans view animals as worthy of compassion. It varies from culture to culture, family to family, individual to individual. What is it that makes some people feel so connected to animals? What are the benefits of that bond to an animal or the person? What might be the downfalls?

### **Expectations**

Some people know just what they want to be when they grow up and move in a direct line toward that goal. Most of us don't. Or maybe we think we know but discover it's not the right path. It's a source of anxiety for Dot as it is many people. Is it reasonable to have a clear idea about what you want to do with the rest of your life at Dot's age? If you could write Dot's story ten or twenty years down the road as a content, fulfilled person, what would she be doing? And what about you?

### **Crows**

There are many animals in the book and Dot loves and protects them all. Yet, her relationship with Toby is different. Why is he particularly significant to her? How does his story mirror her own?

