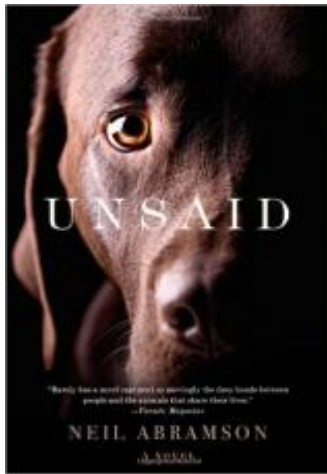


# Unsaid

by Neil Abramson

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## About the Book

Does love transcend all boundaries --- including those of death, time and memory? Is the connection between humans and animals stronger and more real than we've ever imagined? In **Unsaid**, now available in trade paperback, Neil Abramson skillfully weaves these questions through a moving story that will touch the heart while stimulating reflection and debate. Upon its publication in hardcover, **Unsaid** garnered outstanding reviews from readers, booksellers and critics alike, and film rights have been optioned to Nick Wechsler (*The Road*, *The Time Traveler's Wife*) by The Gotham Group on behalf of Jeff Kleinman at Folio Literary Management.

**Unsaid** is told from the perspective of Helena Colden, a veterinarian who has just died of breast cancer. Helena is forced to witness the rapid emotional deterioration of the beloved husband she has left behind. With Helena's passing, David, a successful Manhattan attorney, loses the only connection that made his life full. He tries to carry on the life that Helena had created for them, but he is too grief-stricken, too angry, and too quickly reabsorbed into the demands of his career. Helena's animals likewise struggle with the loss of their understanding and compassionate human companion. Because of Helena, David becomes involved in a court case to save the life of a chimpanzee that may hold the key to unlocking the mysteries of animal consciousness. Through this case, all the threads of Helena's life entwine and explode --- unexpectedly, painfully, beautifully.

An evocative first novel about the healing power of animals, **Unsaid** will resonate with anyone who has experienced loss, has loved a pet, or has pondered the meaning of those things that remain 'unsaid' in life --- but mean so much.

## Discussion Guide

1. UNSAID is about the healing power of animals. Have you had any personal experiences where an animal has helped

you heal? Physically? Emotionally? Spiritually?

2. In the novel, one of the characters points out that there is a distinction between "unspoken" and "unsaid". Do you think there is a difference? What is it?

3. What characters in the book have left things "unsaid" when we first meet them? What remains "unsaid" by the end of the novel?

4. In the novel, Helena is unable to move on after she dies. Do you believe that her continued presence is voluntary or involuntary? In what way? What is the mechanism for her final release?

5. The novel ends with the word "Amen." Why do you think the author chose that word?

6. The novel points out an ever-present tension between specie-ism and anthropomorphism. Is anti-specieism always anthropomorphic? Is anti-anthropomorphism always speciest?

7. Is there an ethical way to use animals in invasive science research? What if the research causes the death of the animal?

8. Which characters in the novel are motivated by rejection? Which are motivated by the fear of rejection?

9. Cindy is limited in her ability to communicate with humans. In what ways are the human characters limited in their ability to communicate? What has caused these limitations?

10. Does Clifford's communication impairment result in his understanding more or less than the other characters? What does your answer lead you to conclude about the relationship between speech and understanding?

11. At the end of the novel, David insists that he be the one to inject the euthanasia solution that ends his dog's life. Have you ever made that request? Would you consider doing so?

12. Many of the human characters in the book experience grief. Do you believe that animals experience grief? Have you ever witnessed an animal displaying grief?

13. One of the themes of the book is that meaning only comes from juxtaposition and dissonance. If you could choose, would you "live small" in a numb and painless existence or seek meaning and purpose even though that price of that understanding is pain?

14. How would the story have been different if narrated by Clifford? If narrated by David?

## Author Bio

Neil Abramson was born in the Bronx in 1964. He graduated from the Cornell School of Industrial and Labor Relations and received his law degree from Northwestern University. He is a partner in a large Manhattan law firm, where he has

the opportunity to work on animal rights and animal welfare issues on a pro bono basis. He has been active in animal rights/animal welfare circles for over two decades, having served on the Board of Directors of the Animal Legal Defense Fund and been recognized for his animal legal work by the ASPCA.

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio recently appointed Neil to be his designee Board Member to the Board of Directors of the Animal Care Centers of New York, the entity responsible for running the City's animal shelters and adoption centers and one of the largest animal welfare organizations in the country.

JUST LIFE is Neil's second novel. His first, the widely acclaimed and bestselling UNSAID, was published in 2011.

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