

# A Reading and Discussion Guide

## Young Adult Literature Winner – 19th Annual Minnesota Book Awards

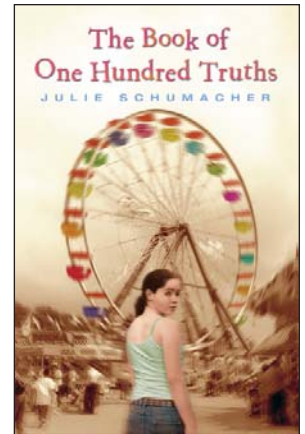
### ***The Book of One Hundred Truths* by Julie Schumacher**

Delacorte Press, 2006

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#### **SUMMARY:**

At the end of chapter one, *The Book of One Hundred Truths*' young protagonist reveals an important truth: "I should probably mention something right now, before this story goes any further: my name is Theodora Grumman, and I am a liar." Thea's mother gives her a notebook and instructs her to write four truths in it each day, something which is hard to do, especially when her grandparents' house on the Jersey Shore where she's visiting for the summer is even more packed with relatives than usual. To top it off, Thea's seven-year-old nosy cousin, Jocelyn keeps trying to figure out what's in the notebook. The summer gets even more interesting when Thea discovers that she isn't the only family member who doesn't always tell the truth.



#### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. In what ways is Thea a typical child? What strikes you as unusual about Thea?
  2. Which of the characters in the novel should the reader trust, and why?
  3. How and why does spending time with Jocelyn change Thea?
  4. Discuss Thea's relationship with each of these family members: her mother, father, grandmother, aunts Ellen and Celia, and cousins Liam and Austin. In what ways do these relationships present conflict, and what positive impact do they have on Thea?
  5. How and when does Thea's maturity show, and when is she the naïve or immature child?
  6. In what ways is Thea, an only child, changed by her reaction to the chaos of her extended family?
  7. What impact has Thea's relationship with Gwen had on her, and what is significant about the way in which the author reveals the nature of the relationship?
  8. How would you describe Thea's summer?
  9. What is the significance of the author introducing other liars into the story?
  10. What benefits does Thea receive from her practice of writing down truths? Is Thea likely to write more than 100 truths?
  11. What, ultimately, is the author's message about the practice of lying?
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## A CONVERSATION WITH JULIE SCHUMACHER:

### Q. What inspired you to write *The Book of One Hundred Truths*?

I write books for younger readers in just the same way that I write for adults: I don't begin by asking, "What should my readers learn?" but by asking, "What am I interested in?" As C.S. Lewis wrote, "We can be sure that what does not concern us deeply will not deeply interest our readers, whatever their age." In the case of *The Book of One Hundred Truths*, I was interested in liars and the various reasons that people tell lies.

### Q. What research did you undertake in writing this book?

I rode a bicycle on the boardwalk in Ocean City, New Jersey. Like my protagonist Thea, I grew up in a family of eccentrics and told a lot of tall tales as a child.

### Q. How long did it take you to write the book?

I spent about six months writing *The Book of One Hundred Truths* and a year and a half on revisions.

### Q. What do you like most about the book?

I love boardwalks and I love the ocean, so I enjoyed writing about them. I also became very fond of the characters, particularly Jocelyn. I'm always drawn to books because of the lives of the characters within them. When I write, I become attached to my own characters in a very similar way.

### Q. How and when did you decide to become a writer?

I've always written things down in order to better understand them. Writing is my way of fully experiencing the things I'm thinking and doing. When something bothers me, makes me curious, or sticks in my craw – I write it down.

### Q. What are you currently writing?

I'm working on two novels for older teenagers. Both are a bit "darker" and more intimidating than my other books for younger readers.

## ABOUT JULIE SCHUMACHER:

Julie Schumacher was born in Wilmington, Delaware, the fifth of five daughters. Before becoming a writer, she worked as an ice cream store clerk (she was fired for not knowing how to make a banana split), a legal secretary, and an associate editor for medical magazines.

Schumacher's first published story, "Reunion," was included in *The Best American Short Stories 1983*. Since then, she has published several short stories and books and writes for both adult and younger audiences.

Schumacher is an associate professor of English at the University of Minnesota. She lives in Saint Paul with her husband and their two daughters. Prior to *The Book of One Hundred Truths*, Schumacher published these books for younger readers:



*The Chain Letter*, 2005

*Grass Angel*, 2004

For additional information about the author and her work, visit [www.julieschumacher.com](http://www.julieschumacher.com).



The Minnesota Book Awards is a statewide outreach program of The Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library in partnership with the Office of the Mayor of Saint Paul and the Saint Paul Public Library. Visit us online at [www.thefriends.org](http://www.thefriends.org).

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