

All the Truth that's in Me

Julie Berry

Book Summary

Reminiscent of *The Crucible* and *The Scarlet Letter*, this startlingly brilliant book will fill you with Judith's passion and longing, and its mysteries will keep you feverishly turning the pages until the very last one.

Themes

Belonging
Isolation
Persecution and Fear
Abuse of Power
Non-traditional Societies

Curriculum areas and key learning outcomes

All the Truth that's in Me is an excellent resource for **English, literacy and language** for senior secondary students

It could be used to achieve the following learning outcomes:

ACELA 1565, 1567, 1569

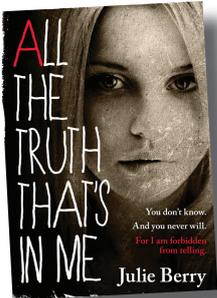
ACELT 1639, 1642, 1643, 1812, 1815

ACELY 1749, 1752, 1753, 1754, 1776

Appropriate ages:

13+

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Notes By Rachel Ford



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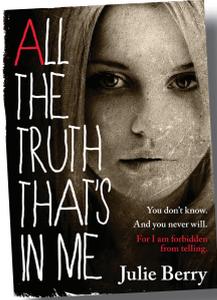
- English
- Literacy and Language

Themes

- Belonging
- Isolation
- Persecution and Fear
- Abuse of Power
- Non-traditional Societies

Questions for Reading and Discussion About the Author of the Notes

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All the Truth that's in Me

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Introduction

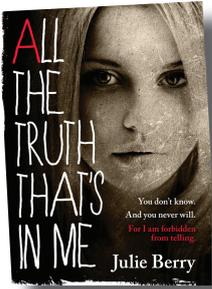
All the Truth that's in Me tells the story of Judith, a young woman set in a world that feels very much like early Colonial America, though the details of place and time are deliberately kept non-specific. Judith has suffered a trauma that left her unable to speak. Years prior to the story's beginning, she and her best friend went missing from their small village of Roswell Station. A few days later, the friend's body washed up in a river, so Judith was also presumed dead. When she returns years later, she can't speak. Because of the suspicious circumstances, and her inability to tell what's happened, she's assumed to bear moral guilt; she's tarnished. As damaged goods, she becomes an outcast in her repressive, Puritanical community, unmarriageable and unwanted. She floats around the periphery of her village, treated sometimes as invisible, sometimes as a halfwit.

All her life she's been in love with a young man the community whose name is Lucas, but he's beyond her reach forever, now. That doesn't stop her wanting him.

The whole book is written as an address to him – not as a letter, but as an outpouring of all her thoughts to him – as though she's telling him all that she would, if she could.

When the book begins, we soon learn that Lucas has become engaged to the village belle, Maria. Soon after, the community faces a threat of invasion, and Lucas and everyone she ever held dear is certain to die. Judith faces a heartbreaking dilemma: there's a slim chance she can save them, but only by returning to her nightmare, and finding a way to tell what has happened to her, which would only widen the gulf between her and Lucas.

What readers most often respond to in *All the Truth that's in Me* is Judith's unique voice, which is ironic since, of course, hers is a story about losing (and ultimately reclaiming) one's voice. Judith's desire and longing are palpable, and her status as victim and outcast has given her acute sensibilities and lush, poetic language. Her outer life may be a torment but her interior life is rich.



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About the Author

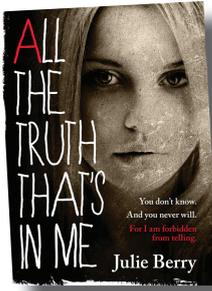
Julie Berry grew up in western New York and now lives in Massachusetts with her husband and four sons. She holds a BS from Rensselaer and an MFA from Vermont College of the Fine Arts. *The Amaranth Enchantment* (2009, Bloomsbury) was her first book, followed by *Secondhand Charm* (2010) and *The Splurch Academy for Disruptive Boys* series of comic/graphic novels (2010-11 Penguin). Her upcoming YA novel, *All the Truth that's in Me*, will be published in October 2013 by HarperCollins Australia.

Find Julie online at www.julieberrybooks.com, or www.twitter.com/julieberrybooks.

Author Inspiration

Julie says:

“The unusual format for *All the Truth that's in Me* came about organically. The story simply wanted to be written that way, if that makes any sense. Judith, the main character, has a compressed kind of intensity in the way she sees her world. Her observations are as fractured, as her existence has been. As an outcast in her community, and as a person who cannot speak, she endures long periods of silence, of boredom, drudgery, and loneliness – times of ‘no story.’ But she survives this with the company of her own poignant, sometimes poetic thoughts. And so the narrative seemed to want to unfold in this granular manner, stitching observation to observation and event to event. The choice to employ second person was a deliberate decision, an experiment at the very start, that begot the germ of the idea. But the form, ie, the short chapters, came about naturally, not deliberately. I loved how Judith seemed in charge of her story from the very beginning. She’s the most powerful heroine I’ve ever come to know through my own writing.’



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'As for how I came to write this piece, it all began with a spontaneous, self-assigned writing exercise. I'd been reading a chapter in a craft book about point of view, and it discussed the reasons why second person was so rarely used. I sat there wondering if I could employ second person in a novel, so I opened my computer and gave it a try. I thought of the words, **You didn't come** and wrote them down. They seemed like a promising start. I let that first short section write itself, and it did, appearing fully formed almost word for word as it appears now in the book.

At the time of writing it, I didn't know anything about Judith's backstory, nor why she loved Lucas so much, nor she was forbidden from telling him so. I had to figure it all out as I went. Fortunately for me, Judith knew all of it, and so writing the book came to feel mainly like an exercise in listening.'

Notes on Themes and Curriculum Topics

Pre-reading and reading strategies

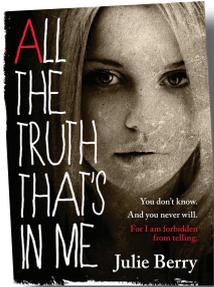
Students can find working with literary fiction difficult at times. By providing the student support through pre-reading and reading strategies, students are better able to engage and work with literary texts.

The following strategies use **prediction** to help students connect the text with their prior ideas as well as engage with the new knowledge and information they will gain from the text.

The novel is called *All the Truth that's in Me* and the cover features a young woman with scratches over her face. What do you think this tells the reader about the novel before they begin? Why do you think the designer has chosen a limited colour palette? What sense does the sparing use of red on the letter **A** and in the endpapers give you? What about the handwritten font? What does the full cover scene tell you about the setting of the novel?

The novel is broken in four sections: **Before**; **Book One**; **Book Two**; **Book Three** and **Now**. Each section is a self-contained story as well as part of the bigger picture.

Activity: Create a summary of each book as students read. The summary should focus on the main action, characters and information in each section. Use a



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structured overview [see blackline masters]
to summarise what has happened

Literacy and Language

All the Truth that's in Me is an example of **literary fiction**. Literary fiction is not necessarily a genre, but there are characteristics which books of this type share.

Second person narrative

Second person narrative intimately includes the reader in the story. The use of second person is very difficult as when it is done poorly the reader is often alienated from the narrative. *All the Truth in Me* is technically **first person** as Judith is addressing another character in the novel, rather than the reader. As Julie Berry explains:

One note to add is that I realised soon into the project that I wasn't writing pure second person, since the 'you' in Judith's voice is, in fact, Lucas, a character in the story, as opposed to the abstract reader. This means the novel is essentially a first-person address. People often describe the book as second person, and I don't mind that, but I want the purists to know that I do understand the difference.

However the use of 'you' in *All the Truth that's in Me* is used to create an intimacy and empathy, which is why the second person is most prevalent in speeches and songs as the 'you' draws in the listener so they feel part of the experience.

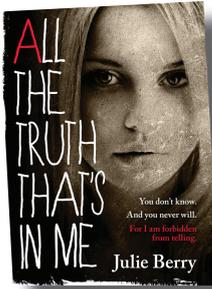
Activity: Students choose a speech or song, in the second person, and describe how the use of second person narrative affects them as an audience.

Activity: Choose one section of the narrative and rewrite it in first or third person. Using a **think, pair, share** strategy, identify the ways the narrative has changed and how this changes the interpretation of the narrative.

Archetype

Archetype refers to a character or concept that represents an idea that has been used repeatedly. The Reverend Fry is the archetype of the over-zealous protector of his flock who is blinded to the truth. Goody Pruett is the archetype of crazy old lady who, like a fairy godmother, watches over the unknowing protagonist. By using archetypal characters in the novel, Berry has connected the reader to existing ideas and conventions enabling the reader to draw deeper conclusion about the characters and to predict what may happen in the novel.

Activity: Choose two characters from the novel and describe the archetype they represent. Analyse how this archetype adds additional meaning and clues for a reader.



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Detonation

Denotation is the use of plain, clear language. As Judith tells her story, she often uses denotation. Especially in relation to descriptions and observations of other characters:

You miss your mother. The loss made you older overnight, and the lines have never left your face. (p 17)

Denouement

Denouement is the final resolution of a usually intricate plot. It is the end result of the dramatic action that has taken place. A denouement can be quite dramatic and leave the reader feeling extremely satisfied in relation to the text.

Activity: Identify the denouement in Book One, Book Two and Book Three. Using one of these, create a multi-modal text that shows the resolution of the action.

Euphemism

Euphemism is the use of softer language to reveal a difficult concept or idea.

"As for the other accusations," I say, and I make no effort to hide my anger, "they are false. I am a maiden still..." (p 264)

The use of the term 'maiden' refers to Judith's virginity.

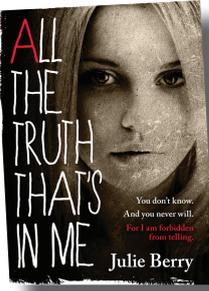
Activity: Re-read one book and list all the uses of euphemism, listing the quote and identifying what the concept or ideas are.

Activity: Rewrite a section of text eliminating the euphemism. Discuss how these changes the perception of the narrative for the reader, as well as any other changes this may have on the narrative.

Flashback

Flashback is a device where the protagonist or narrator thinks back on a key event that occurred in the past, usually one that has an effect on the present. Judith uses flashbacks to show key events from her past that now influence the present or the future.

Activity: Choose one of Judith's flashbacks and identify what the flashback tells the reader about the past and how it is linked to the present and/or future.



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Intertextuality

Intertextuality is the use of other narratives within a text. Intertextuality adds another layer of meaning to a novel or work. *All the Truth that's in Me* uses passages from The Bible in the text. This adds to the religious overtones of the novel as well as provides a guide to the reader, a precursor of the events to unfold.

The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom: but the forward tongue shall be cut out
Proverbs 10:31 (p xi)

In the forward, Berry is giving the reader a clue as to what is going to happen the novel. We can predict that at some stage in the novel, presumably around the **denouement** that a character will reveal the truth. This also ties to the title of the novel *All the Truth that's in Me* indicating that the protagonist holds the truth, but is unable to reveal it.

Activity: Identify another use of intertextuality in the novel. Analyse the use of the text and describe its purpose as well as what it reveals to the reader.

Irony

Irony refers to play on words in a novel or text. The title *All The Truth that's in Me* is ironic for most of the novel as the protagonist is physically, and emotionally unable to reveal the truth that she holds.

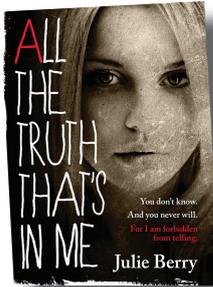
Foreshadowing

Foreshadowing indicates to the reader what is going to happen in the story. It is used as a hook to keep the reader engaged. Judith uses foreshadowing to make analogies between the past, present and future. She also uses foreshadowing to warn Lucas about potential threats to himself, physically and psychologically.

You are not like him.
No matter what anyone says. (p 11)

Activity: As students read the novel, have them identify moments of foreshadowing in the chart [see blackline masters]. Students should predict what they think will happen and then compare their predictions with the action in the novel.

Activity: Choose one incident in Book Three and create a narrative, in Judith's voice, that foreshadows this event. Students choose where they would put this event, justifying their choice in terms of narrative progression and keeping the reader hooked into the novel.



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Imagery and Evocative Language

Imagery and Evocative Language help to paint a picture for the reader. Evocative language creates an emotional connection to the content rather than relying on factual language. Imagery helps to create a strong visual picture for the reader. Imagery and evocative language are often linked to setting, but can also be connected to a character's thoughts and feelings.

Only one person knows a reason to fear him.
And she has no daggers in her tongue for you.
(p 22)

In these two sentences, Berry has painted a picture of a person capable of causing great harm with their words, but chooses not to.

Activity: Choose three examples of imagery and evocative language. Evaluate the use of imagery and describe the picture it has created for the reader

Setting

Setting is not only the time and place of a narrative, but can also be about the mood and the interaction between place and mood. When Judith is outside her mood is very different to when she is indoors and around people. The seasons also affect Judith, for example she is more determined in winter, clinging onto her convictions as the snow builds up around her.

Activity: Choose two different settings and identify the ways that the setting affects Judith and two other characters.

Stream of Consciousness

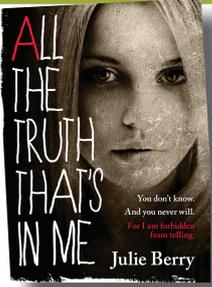
Stream of consciousness is where the narrator tells the narrative from their thoughts, uninterrupted by external thoughts. It is a narrative that relies less heavily on dialogue or description.

Activity: Students choose one section of the novel that they identify strongly with and rewrite it as another genre for example newspaper article or play script. Evaluate the way the change in genre and use of literary device has affected the student as a reader.

Tragedy

Tragedy is a series of unfortunate events. The use of tragedy can create empathy in a reader, creating an increased desire for the protagonist to succeed. Judith, Lucas and several of the characters experience deep tragedy and their eventual triumph is more satisfying because of it.

Activity: Create a chart that follows the tragedy that faces one character and the ways the character overcomes each tragedy. Annotate the chart with the language features that are used in association with the tragedy, for example irony.



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Verisimilitude

Verisimilitude is the quality of truth that is given to a character, event or concept in novel. Judith is the epitome of verisimilitude in the novel. At the start of the novel, no one believes in Judith or her story, especially herself. This is made evident through the ways people address her as 'worm' and 'you' as well as the fact that those around her ignore her. As the novel progresses and more of the 'truth' in Judith is revealed, she attains a greater sense of authenticity.

Themes

Belonging and Isolation

A sense of belonging and the opposite emotion, being isolated, are motivating factors for all of the characters in the novel. Belonging to a culture, a family or group is important to most human beings.

Judith feels isolated from her family and her community following her return.

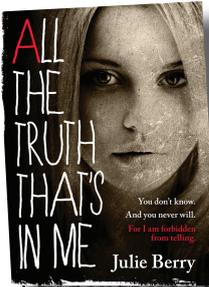
The environment and setting also provide a sense of belonging as well as a sense of isolation"

I feel closest to my father when my arms are caked with good brown earth. And so I stay to help my mother, as he would want me to.
(p 19)

Despite how isolated Judith feels from her family and society she feels connected to her father through the land. This juxtaposition of emotions ties Judith to Roswell Station.

Activity: Identify examples of isolation that each of the main character experiences.

Discussion Point: Evaluate the importance of belonging to each of the main characters and describe the way that each character shows this. Students should think of a time when they have felt isolated, lacking a sense of belonging.



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Students use this to create a narrative on loss. Write it in second person, using some of the same literary techniques as the novel. Use the narrative to create a multi-modal text about the power of belonging.

Activity: Belonging is a theme that is in many texts written in the second person: novels, speeches and songs. Students choose a text that is written in second person with which they identify. Students analyse the ways the chosen text deals with the theme of belonging through language and literary device. Students compare the chosen text to a section of the novel.

Persecution and Fear

Persecution and fear are powerful tools for controlling and manipulating people and communities. Judith fears further persecution from her family and community and so she keeps her truth inside.

As the novel progresses, the reader realises that persecution and fear is not as prevalent and established in the community as first imagined. For example, Goody Pruett stands up to the community to advocate for Judith, while Horace protects Judith and Lucas from further attacks from the children whilst they are in the stocks.

The community fears persecution from the outsiders. The invaders are an example of external persecution and a source of fear for the community.

Activity: Brainstorm all the examples of fear that are in the novel. Categorise these examples for example fear of rejection, fear of new ideas, fear of being exposed etc.

Activity: Persecution and fear of religious and other ideals still exists today. Choose an example of modern day religious or other persecution and conduct research using the internet and other tools. Use the research to create a text, in any genre, that uses the second person to tell the narrative.

Activity: Goody Pruett and Horace are not the only members of the community that rebel against the fear of persecution and stand up for themselves and Judith. Identify the other characters that do so and show how Berry reveals the change in these characters and their motivations.

Abuse of Power

A number of characters abuse the power that they have in order to further their own goals. The schoolmaster, Rupert Gillis abuses the power inherent in his position as teacher when he makes advances on Judith. Gillis abuses his power as an authority figure knowing that Judith would be unwilling to be with him under normal circumstances. Abuse of power does is not restricted to those with implied and inherent power. Abuse of power can be evident in any relationship Judith's mother abuses her power over Judith by calling her 'you' and treating her like a servant.

Discussion Point: Recount the ways power is abused in relation to social and familiar relationships.

Activity: Identify the ways those in authority abuse their power in their text. Next to each character describe what they are attempting to achieve when they abuse their power.

Activity: Abuse of power is a universal theme in many texts. Students should identify another text that they have studied or engaged with that explores the abuse of power. Students should compare and contrast the ways abuse of power is demonstrated in the text and how it compares with their other text. **[see blackline masters]**

Questions for Discussion

1. Create a character trait chart for each of the characters in the novel [see blackline masters]
2. As student's read the novel ask them to reflect on what *All The Truth that's in Me* means. After concluding the text, write several paragraphs starting with the sentence:
3. Judith Finch is the holder of many truths...

Choose one of the characters in the novel other than Judith and tell their narrative. It can be a narrative that goes over the whole novel or one key event. The narrative should be told in the second person and can include the same literary devices used in the novel such as foreshadowing, flashback and irony.

4. The box is full of words my mother can't bring herself to say (p 274).

Activity: Write a letter to Judith, as her mother, expressing the words you think she wants to say.

5. Each of the characters in the novel holds a truth that they struggle to reveal. Discuss.
6. The power of *All the Truth that's in Me* is in the use of second person narrative

Evaluate and discuss, with reference to Julie's earlier comment about the relationship of her work and the second person narrative.

Blackline Master Prediction Chart

| Chapter Title | Prediction Pre-Reading | Prediction Post-Reading | Summary |
|---------------|------------------------|-------------------------|---------|
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Foreshadowing Chart

| Trait | Evidence |
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Compare and Contrast Chart

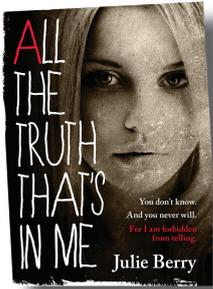
Text One _____ Text Two _____

How are the texts alike

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How are the texts different

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About the Author of the Notes

Rachel Ford began her professional career as teacher after completing a double degree in Arts and Teaching. Rachel also has a Master of Education and is currently studying a Master of Business Administration. Rachel has worked as a publisher in Melbourne and Sydney. She currently lives in Sydney where she works as a freelance writer and publisher.

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