

Shades of Truth

Discussion Guide



About the Book:

Sadie thought she'd have a perfect fresh start when she moved to Owl Creek, Michigan, but finding her place in her new school proves harder than she expected. In this divided town, Sadie's father's job mediating between bear hunters and researchers doesn't help her social life. Sadie's art instructor encourages her to explore her beliefs and express herself through her sketchbook, and things improve after Sadie befriends a kind girl from school and a researcher's son---but she can't stop worrying about the bears. As everything swirls around her, Sadie must learn what it means to have faith when you don't have all the answers.

To Discuss:

1. If you had \$10 mad money to spend in a general store, what would you buy?
2. Do you have a favorite item of clothing that makes you feel like you, the way Sadie's shoes make her feel like herself?
3. Can you remember the first time you realized that people around you thought really differently about an issue than you did? For Sadie, it's hunting. How did you react to those differences? Did you learn anything through the experience?
4. If you had to describe yourself using three symbols, the way Sadie did on the first day of school, what symbols would you use?
5. Sadie thinks a lot about prayer. She wonders if there's a difference between a prayer and a wish, what she should pray about, and if there are any topics that are off limits for prayer. She even wonders how she should pray—using someone else's words or her own—or even if she can pray in her own way such as through drawing. What type of prayer have you tried personally? What kind of prayer would you like to try? One young reader pointed out, "Prayer doesn't change God, it changes you." Do you see prayer changing Sadie in the story? Do you think prayer has the potential to change you?
6. In chapter 11, Doug says, "People yearn for something beyond what they know. The exact experience is hard to put into words, but when God reaches out to touch you there's a startling moment when you see both the present moment and feel something beyond—You feel God." Have you ever felt God show up in your life? What triggered the moment for you?
7. Do you have a character you relate to most in this book? Why?
8. There was a lot of debate about the title of this book. Do you think *Shades of Truth* is a fitting title for the book? Why or why not?

Naomi Kinsman

Extension Activities:

Draw What You See:

In Sadie's first art lesson, Vivian gives her a pencil and tells her to draw a bunch of grapes, saying, "If you really look at any object, you'll see it's made of very basic shapes. A circle, oval, square, rectangle or a triangle. Maybe it is a combination. Drawing isn't about your hand and a pencil. Drawing is about seeing."

After Sadie finishes her drawing, Vivian says, "The first step is learning to see. Most people go through their whole lives seeing exactly what they expect, for instance that grapes are little ovals. But when you look carefully, you see that each grape is a unique oval, slightly different from every other."

Did you know that one of the ways our brain matures is to learn to simplify things into symbols? We learn that an apple is round and red, and our brain turns it into one specific shape. We learn that a flower has round petals, and that's what we see. We do this with people, too. We stop noticing the unique particulars about people and objects, and we simplify them. Of course, this simplification is helpful for our brains in many ways. It saves us thinking time if we know every red fruit with a stem and a round apple shape is an apple. We don't have to figure it out each time. Still, we lose something in this process, and that is why learning to draw is such a gift. We are given the chance to slow down, to over-ride our brain's simplification process and really see something.

So that's the challenge. Find something ordinary and draw it. Draw a pumpkin, or a flower, or your dog's face. Draw your favorite book, or a banana or a box of crayons. Notice all the particulars, and see what thoughts this new type of seeing inspires. It's not just about the crayons. It might make you think about a friend, a situation, a problem, in a totally new light.

What's Your Word?

Sadie's teacher gives her class the task of choosing a word to explore. They are supposed to look for quotes, various definitions, and other materials that relate to the word. I decided to give Sadie this task because I did a similar project in seventh grade, and it is one of the school projects I most remember. I loved exploring my word and dreaming up a creative presentation. My word was love. If I had to do it again now, I'd choose the word hope, imagine, create, or play.

What word would you choose? Find a quote that uses your word and illustrate it with a drawing, painting or collage.



About the Author:

Author of the *From Sadie's Sketchbook* series and *Spilled Ink*, the award winning Inklings Writer's Notebook, Naomi is passionate about sharing her love of writing and creativity with young writers. Naomi's background in improvisational and story theatre as well as her arts education work has convinced her that creative play is a doorway through which learners can find inspiration and transformative learning experiences. Naomi loves to play in many ways, but some of her favorites are tap-dancing, sketching, experimenting in the kitchen and tag with her Portuguese Water Dog, Turley. Naomi has a BA in Theatre Arts from Seattle Pacific University and has studied theatre with the Piven Theatre Workshop and ACT. She also has a Masters in Writing for Children and Young Adults from Hamline University.

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