

# THE COMFORT OF LIES

by Randy Susan Meyers

## Questions and Topics for Discussion

1. Discuss the epigraph of the novel, and whether you agree with this statement. Over the course of the novel, are lies shown to be a comfort to the person *telling* them or to the person *hearing* them? In general, do you think that there are situations in which telling the truth provides more comfort to the person delivering it, rather than the person hearing it?
2. Of the three female protagonists, which did you most identify with, and why?
3. As you were reading, did you feel compelled to take sides between Juliette or Tia? Did you empathize more with one or the other?
4. On page 82, Caroline describes her experience of her father's love, saying, "*No one in the family resented that his deepest energies were saved for his work. They didn't confuse his love and his energy.*" Do you think the same kind of parenting style can be as effortlessly achieved by a mother? Must one parent be "stay-at-home" for this to work?
5. As a group, read aloud Juliette and Nathan's argument on p. 129-130. Who did you identify with more in this scene? How is the way that each character handles confrontation illustrative of their personality?
6. Discuss the role of religion in the novel. How does it affect Tia and Nathan, in particular?
7. Compare and contrast Juliette's relationship with her mother and her parents' marriage with what we know about Tia's mother and father. How does each woman's model of a romantic partnership affect what they seek in men?
8. Why, in his own words, does Nathan cheat? (You might turn to p. 219 and 252-253.) Do you believe that women cheat for the same reasons as men? Consider Caroline's relationship with Jonah. Why do you think she stops herself when she does – and did she still cross a boundary she should not have?
9. Do you think that "emotional cheating" is ultimately different from physical cheating? What about lying versus "lying by omission"?

10. How does each woman respond to stress? Look at specific examples in the text. Who did you most relate to in this way?
11. Forgiveness is an undercurrent throughout the novel. Who is seeking forgiveness from whom?
12. Consider Nathan's assessment on p. 252 that, "*Juliette never let go of the why, which seemed to bother her more than the actuality. She searched for a reason that would put his infidelity into a paradigm she could understand and thus prevent from happening ever again. As though if he revealed the truth, she'd then understand how to prevent him from straying.*" Do you think that understanding *why* something happened is necessary to fully forgive *what* actually happened?
13. Turn to Caroline and Peter's conversation on p. 262. Does the fact that Savannah is adopted affect how Caroline thinks about being a mother – does it make it seem more like a daily choice she must make, rather than a state of being?
14. Legality aside, do you believe that Tia should have had any right to claim custody of Honor/Savannah? Does Juliette have a right to know Savannah?
15. Consider where Tia, Juliette, and Caroline are at the novel's close. Do they seem somehow better off than they were at the novel's beginning? Does the old saying, "The truth will set you free" apply to these three women?

### **Enhance Your Reading Group**

1. Consider reading Randy Susan Meyers' first novel, *The Murderer's Daughters*, as a group. Compare and contrast the ways that Meyers tackles the issues of guilt and forgiveness in this novel, as well as in *The Comfort of Lies*. In each book, how does she illustrate the ways that a single action can have repercussions across multiple years and lives?
2. For some brief moments in the novel, we hear Nathan's point of view. Which of the other male characters' perspectives would you have wanted to read? For example, what do you imagine Peter would say after his conversation with Caroline on p. 226-227?
3. Pretend you're casting the movie version of *The Comfort of Lies*. Who would play each protagonist? Who would you cast as Nathan?