

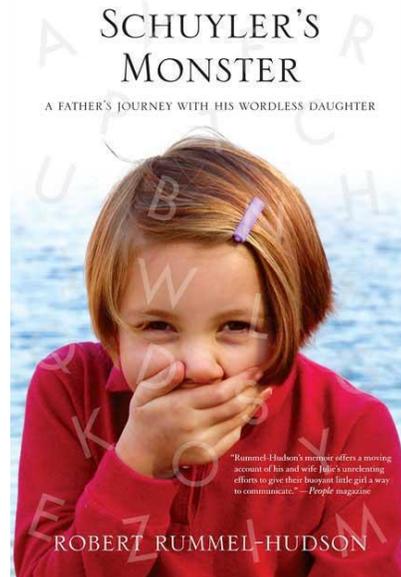
# READING GROUP GUIDE

## Schuyler's Monster

By Robert Rummel-Hudson

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### About this Guide

The following author biography and list of questions about *Schuyler's Monster* are intended as resources to aid individual readers and book groups who would like to learn more about the author and this book. We hope that this guide will provide you a starting place for discussion, and suggest a variety of perspectives from which you might approach *Schuyler's Monster*.

### About the Book

When Schuyler Rummel-Hudson was eighteen months old, a question about her lack of speech by her pediatrician set in motion a journey that continues today. When she was diagnosed with bilateral perisylvian polymicrogyria (an extremely rare neurological disorder), her parents were given a name for the monster that had been stalking them from doctor to doctor, and from despair to hope, and back again.

Once they knew why Schuyler couldn't speak, they needed to determine how to help her learn. They took on educators and society to give their beautiful daughter a voice, and in the process learned a thing or two about fearlessness, tenacity, and joy.

More than a memoir of a parent dealing with his child's disability, *Schuyler's Monster* is a tale of a little girl who silently teaches a man filled with self-doubt how to be the father she needs.



# READING GROUP GUIDE

## About the Author

Robert Rummel-Hudson has been writing online since 1995. His work has been recognized by the Diarist Awards at diarist.net, including citations for Best Writing, Best Overall Journal, Best Account of a Public or News Event, Best Dramatic Entry, and the Legacy Hall of Fame Award.

He has served three times as a featured panelist at JournalCon, an annual conference for online writers. His online writing has been featured in articles in the *Austin Chronicle*, the *Irish Times* and the *New Haven Register*. Robert and his family currently live in Plano, Texas.

## Discussion Questions

In the central metaphor of the book, the author refers to Schuyler's condition, polymicrogyria, as a "monster" to be fought. Why is this an appropriate metaphor? What other metaphors might the author have chosen?

According to the author, Schuyler also has an affinity for monsters as her friends and allies. What does this tell you about Schuyler?

The author talks about language of special-needs parenting as being "sugar-coated terminology" that functions as a "distraction and a false comfort." He prefers to refer to Schuyler as "broken." Why does he use this term? Do you agree or disagree with his decision?

The story is broken into three acts, each with an underlying stylistic difference. What are those differences, and what do you think is the rationale behind this structure?

Some have read Schuyler's Monster as a "prodigal son returns" exploration of faith, and others have read it as a progression through different degrees of skepticism. What do you think about the author's evolving relationship with God? What role do you think God plays in Schuyler's story?

The author talks about the role of the "internet village" in Schuyler's story. If you agree that "it takes a village to raise a child," do you agree that this village can be virtual? How would you or could you participate in this village?

Schuyler's condition is unique, placing her in a middle ground between a mainstream classroom for neurotypical students and a classroom serving more severely disabled children. What approach do you think the public school system should take when it comes to Schuyler, and other children like her?

Robert and Julie deal with infidelity on both sides of their marriage, and ultimately decide to stay together. What explanation does the author give for the infidelity, and what are the reasons for their ultimate decision? Do you agree or disagree with this outcome?



# READING GROUP GUIDE

The author makes a case for maintaining an open mind when it comes to people with disabilities. What is your reaction upon seeing or interacting with a disabled person? Does this change if their disability is not immediately apparent? Why do you think these types of interactions typically make people uncomfortable? Is this discomfort necessarily a bad thing?

The book ends shortly after Schuyler's seventh birthday with her future options wide open, thanks to her new school and her "big box of words." What do you think her future holds? If she were to write a sequel to this book in twenty years, what do you think Schuyler might have to say, both about her father and her life before and after the events in the book?

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