



FLATIRON  
BOOKS  
NEW YORK

# *Sometimes I Lie*

## Reading Group Guide

Welcome to the Reading Group Guide for *Sometimes I Lie*. Please note: In order to provide reading groups with the most informed and thought-provoking questions possible, it is necessary to reveal important aspects of the plot of this novel—as well as the ending. If you have not finished reading *Sometimes I Lie*, we respectfully suggest that you may want to wait before reviewing this guide.

1. “Sometimes I lie.” Amber lies to so many people throughout the novel—her husband, her sister, her colleagues, even herself. Do you think she always knew when she was lying? Don’t we all tell lies from time to time? Is it just human nature to tweak the truth?
2. “It took a lot of love to hate her the way I do.” Amber spent over 20 years believing that Claire was keeping her safe, but does she love her? In Claire’s mind, the way she isolates and controls Amber is love—she genuinely thinks she’s being protective. But is it love or fear that destroys their relationship in the end?
3. Who is the real villain of this story? Madeline? Edward? Claire? Or Amber?
4. “I stand in front of the large range oven with my arms bent at the elbows. My fingers form the familiar shape: the index and middle finger finding the thumb on each hand. I whisper quietly to myself, whilst visually checking that everything is switched off, my fingernails clicking together. I do it again. I do it a third time.” Amber’s OCD started after the fire in 1992. What other displays of OCD can you remember from the novel? How successful is Amber at hiding it from those around her?
5. What was your favorite twist in the novel?
6. “People say there’s nothing like a mother’s love, take that away and you’ll find there is nothing like a daughter’s hate.” How much are the parents of both girls to blame for who their daughters grew up to become? Did you get the impression that Claire’s parents knew what she was capable of in the childhood diaries? Can Amber’s mother be forgiven for taking Claire in and wanting to save her despite how it made Amber feel? “I am the daughter they always had.”
7. The color red is mentioned over 60 times in the novel (stolen red pens, red studio lights, red toothbrush, lipstick, traffic lights, wine, blood, and the robin’s red breast are just some examples). What other themes did you spot?

8. “For today’s phone-in, we’re inviting you to get in touch on the subject of imaginary friends . . .” Were you surprised to discover that Jo was an imaginary friend? When Jo leaves the hospital shortly before Amber wakes up, we never see her again. Why was Amber finally able to let her go at this point in her life?
9. “I can do ‘Amber the friend,’ or ‘Amber the wife,’ but right now it’s time for ‘Amber from Coffee Morning.” Don’t we all play different roles in life? Do you behave differently with your family/friends/colleagues? Do you feel able to be yourself with everyone you know?
10. “His success broke him and his failure broke us.” Paul and Amber’s marriage is in trouble at the start of the novel—his struggles with his writing, her losing her TV reporter job, and their inability to have a child all seem to play a part. Why are they happier at the end? What “fixes” them?
11. Did you enjoy the nursery rhymes in the book?
12. “I hate hospitals. They are the home of death and regrets that missed their slots.” What regrets do you think Amber is referring to when she says this? Do you think any other characters in the novel have regrets?
13. Let’s talk about that ending!

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