



## Twins

By Marcy Dermansky  
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### Introduction

*Twins* introduces two new unforgettable heroines on the verge. The obsessively defiant Sue, four minutes younger, resents and idolizes her seemingly perfect twin, Chloe. All Chloe wants, however, is to please her sister and—only if Sue will allow it—find a friend of her own. Neglected by their wealthy parents and cynical older brother and bewildered by a complex social universe they somehow don't fit into, Chloe and Sue are left to fend for themselves.

Over the course of five years, Chloe and Sue overcome breakups, unhappy Hawaiian vacations, unicycle lessons, eating disorders, pill abuse, and their first painful explorations of love and sex. They seek comfort in unusual places, choosing inappropriate friends and lovers, including the daring Lisa Markman, an aspiring fashion model; her famous father, Rodney, a retired professional basketball player; and a young writer named Smita. Navigating this world of adolescent angst, where the line

between hatred and love is constantly blurred, the twins must overcome their pride to rescue each other from suburban despair.

### Questions for Discussion

1. How would you characterize the differences and similarities between Chloe and Sue at the start of *Twins*, and how do they compare by the middle and end of the novel? Who do you like better?
2. What do Sue and Chloe's tattoos reveal about the nature of their relationship, and what does Sue's incessant repetition of the phrase, "We are identical twins," and her constant touching of her tattoo, suggest about her feelings for Chloe?
3. To what extent do you think the increasing absence of Chloe and Sue's parents plays a role in their family's dysfunction?
4. How typical is the twins' adolescence in terms of their sexual experimentation, eating disorders, jealousy, drug use, apathy, and general hostility toward their parents?
5. How does Chloe and Sue's alternating narration impact your appreciation of their individual experiences? Did you find yourself drawn to either twin's story in particular?
6. How would you describe the world of suburbia portrayed in *Twins*? Why do you think the author chose to set this novel in New Jersey?
7. What explains Sue's connections with women like Yumiko, Smita, and Lisa? What do these friendships offer her that her relationship with her sister does not supply?
8. How significant are Lisa and Rodney Markman to the psychological and physical development of Chloe and Sue, and how is Chloe's connection with Mr. Markman related to her falling out with Lisa?
9. To what extent did Chloe and Sue's behavior in *Twins* reinforce or alter your impressions or assumptions of how identical twins interact?
10. How does the final scene of the novel reflect on the changes that Chloe and Sue have undergone, and what does it suggest about their future as siblings?

### About the Author

Marcy Dermansky is a MacDowell fellow and the winner of the 2002 Smallmouth Press Andre Dubus Novella Award and the 1999 Story Magazine Carson McCullers short story prize. Her stories have been published in numerous literary journals, including *McSweeney's*, *The Alaska Quarterly Review*, and *The Indiana Review*. She is a film critic for About.com. Dermansky lives in Astoria, New York.