



# THE REST OF THE STORY

by Sarah Dessen

## Booktalk

For most of her life, it's just been Emma Saylor and her dad—her mom wasn't really around, even before she died five years ago. Emma knows her mom grew up at North Lake, but aside from one visit long ago, Emma's never been back—until this summer, when she unexpectedly has to stay with her grandmother for three weeks. Suddenly, Emma has the chance to find out what the lake really meant to her mother, and to reconnect with a family she can barely remember. With the help of Roo—the boy who never forgot her after her first visit to the lake—Emma slowly begins to uncover the rest of her mother's story, and her own.

## Questions for Group Discussion

**Identity.** Roo explains to Emma that each summer, “everyone has to condense their bio down to the main ideas...five sentences” (p. 74). What do Roo's and Emma's chosen sentences reveal about them? Do you think that five sentences are enough to convey a person's identity? How do you think Emma's five sentences might change by the next time she returns to the lake? If you had to introduce yourself in five sentences, what would they be?

**Story.** Emma reassures Gordon, “There is always the rest of the story, right? Even if you don't know right now what it is” (p. 260). What is the “rest of the story” that Emma is seeking, and do you think she finds it by the end of the novel? What is the significance of stories—the ones her mother told her and the ones she learns from Roo and the Calvanders—to Emma's life? How would you answer Roo's question: “What's the rest of your story?” (pg. 383). What does the book's title mean to you?

**Anxiety.** Throughout the novel, Emma reveals her struggle with anxiety. What are some of the coping skills Emma uses to manage her feelings? How does Emma's anxiety affect her life in positive or negative ways? Can you relate to any of Emma's worries or fears? How do you manage those feelings?

**Privilege.** After she begins working with Trinity, Emma observes, “Things were different here” (p. 99). What do you think she means by this statement? What are the differences you see between Emma's life in Lakeview, versus life for “lake kids” or the “yacht club” boys? What are the privileges and opportunities that each group experiences? How does privilege, or the lack of it, shape the worldview of different characters in the novel? If you had to choose between North Lake and Lake North, which would you choose, and why?

**Friends.** After spending time apart from Ryan and Bridget, Emma realizes that she has made assumptions about her friends and wonders, “What kind of a friend did that?” (p. 316). How would you respond to Emma's question? Has there been a time when you realized you made an assumption, or had a friend make one about you? Can you identify examples of both positive and negative friendships in the novel? What does Emma learn about friendships, both old and new, during her time at North Lake?

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