**TRUST ME, I’M LYING – Mary Elizabeth Summer**

**Curriculum Guide**

Julep starts her narration with the following quote, “The truth is, conscience exists because everyone has something in their past they’re not proud of. And if you’re smart enough to use that to your advantage, you can stay one step ahead of the consequences. Any good con man with the right kind of rope can hang an entire mob” (1). After finishing the novel, discuss in detail how it relates to the story. Cite specific examples to support your analysis.

When Julep reflects on the time her dad disappeared, she says that, “…everything changed after that. Or rather, I changed. I no longer wanted my father’s life” (16). Based off of what we learn about her father in the book, how is Julep still like her father? How is she not like him?

Both Sam and Tyler care about Julep. Compare and contrast each character, citing specific examples from the text to support your view.

In an early conversation with Tyler, Julep remarks, “I’m intrigued. He seems to have a knack for the tale. I try to place why his style strikes me as familiar, and then I remember seeing his dad on TV. I’d never thought to equate politics to grifting before, but the comparison seems apt. Especially now, watching the way Tyler is playing the dean” (54). Do you agree with this assessment? How could grifting be like politics? Use examples both from the book and from real life to support your view.

Do you think Julep made the right decision not to call the police after finding her dad had disappeared? Why or why not? What are the benefits of telling someone else? What are the downfalls?

When Julep reflects on why Tyler might be helping her, she says, “You don’t get something for nothing. Not in life, and certainly not in this business. Tyler seems content to just be along for the ride. But Sam’s question, though insulting, raised a fair point: if Tyler doesn’t want my services, what *does* he want” (60)? What did Tyler want? Cite specific examples that foreshadow his true motives.

Tyler tells Julep that she’s, “different. Somehow less breakable” (61). Do you agree with this assessment of her? Why or why not? In what ways is she less breakable? In what ways is she breakable? Support your responses by citing specific examples from the novel.

When Tyler asks Julep to tell him her real name, she says, “No one knows it but me and my dad…Well, and my mom. Wherever she is” (147). Why do you think Julep hides her name from everyone?

Although Julep's real name is never officially revealed in the story, there are several hints hidden in the text. A close reading of the book would easily give away what her real name is. Did you figure it out? What clues gave it away?

When Julep first meets Tyler’s dad, she notes, “The two are clearly cut from the same Star-Spangled Banner. Which is why I’m a bit puzzled by the slight hardening in Tyler’s eyes when they touch on his father. I didn’t realize how much I’d assumed Tyler leads a charmed life, but now I wonder if that’s really the case. I suppose it could be your average parent angst, but the brittleness in Tyler’s smile seems more disdainful than resentful” (143).

* What did this assessment of Tyler foreshadow?
* Do you agree with Julep that Tyler didn’t lead a charmed life? Why or why not?
* Why did his smile seem disdainful?
* Do you believe Tyler and his dad were alike or different? Cite specific examples to support your view.

When Tyler asks Julep what she wants to be, she says, “I guess I want to be ordinary…Actually, I want to be extraordinary. But in an ordinary way” (147). What does she mean by this? Why do you think this is who she chooses to be?

After Julep finds the girls who are being held as slaves, Tyler tells her that they need to rescue them, but she argues that they can’t help them. He calls her heartless, but she says, “I’m not being heartless, I’m being realistic. We can’t rescue them—not without help” (228). Who do you believe is right? Is Julep heartless or is she realistic?

What clues does Sam give along the way to show how he feels more than friendship for Julep? Cite specific examples from the novel that give indications into his true feelings for her.

When Julep was younger, her dad told her, “People don’t generally believe themselves to be evil. Just strong…And they think that the world owes them something” (238). Do you agree with this sentiment? Why or why not? Use examples from the book or real life to support your view.

Julep’s dad tells her, “Power is like the fish that swallows Geppetto. People become trapped by it. They’re afraid without it, they’ll drown in the sea of mediocrity with the rest of us” (238). What does he mean by this? Where do we see examples of this in the novel?

There are *Pinocchio* allusions throughout the novel. Find and cite these allusions. What major theme of the book do these references relate to?

Julep’s dad tells her that he doesn’t want power, because he has his salvation in her. What does he mean by that? Do you believe it’s true? How does that relate to the statement he made above?

At the end of the novel, Sam tells Julep that he needs to leave because, “…so much of who I am is wrapped up in us. I don’t know who I am without you. I need to find that out before I have anything to offer you” (304). What does he mean by this? Do you agree with this way of thinking? Why or why not?

Right before Mike arrests Julep, he asks her if she’s all right. She shakes her head and thinks, “I’m so tired of lying. But I’m not any happier telling the truth” (305). What does she mean by this? Why would she feel this way?

While Julep talks with Sister Rasmussen, the Sister tells Julep that she heard the judge went easy on her. Julep says that it’s probably because she’s suffered enough, but Sister Rasmussen says, “Or perhaps that your extreme efforts toward rescuing others showed a redemption of character he wanted to encourage” (312). Which do you think it was? Why?

There's dramatic irony in the fact that Julep is a con artist with a deep vein of compassion marring her grifter soul. How does this compassion influence Julep's decisions? Does it ruin her life or save it? How does it affect her sense of identity by the end of the novel? Julep considers her propensity toward compassion a weakness. Do you think it's a weakness? Why or why not?

Julep prides herself on being a good grifter, but it seems as if her marks aren’t the only ones getting conned. In what ways was she conned in the novel? How did other people fool her? Cite specific examples from the novel to support your view.

Sister Rasmussen tells Julep, “Ms. Dupree, you have been blessed with a very special skill set, and a brain and a heart to use it to benefit others. Promise me you won’t squander it” (315). Do you believe Julep will use it to benefit others, or will she fall back into her ways of conning others? Explain your view.

Who do you think it was that paid for Julep’s tuition? Explain your view in detail.

Why do you think Mike agreed to take Julep into his house as a foster child? Explain your view and use specific examples from the novel to support it.

Julep tells Heather that she should come clean and tell her mom about the scam they pulled on her. She says, “…I do know a thing or two about losing parents. Trust me when I say that keeping secrets will drive you apart” (319). What does she mean by this? How does it relate to what has happened in the novel?

One major theme of the novel is father-figure relationships. Which characters have significant father-figure relationships highlighted in the novel? How do each of these relationships compare/contrast?

Additional Question: Can you think of any other stories, poems, movies, or songs that have this same theme? Describe them.

Identify another theme or central idea in the book. Where do we see examples of it? How does this theme develop throughout the book and how does it affect the outcome? Cite specific textual examples to support your responses.

There are several ethnicities/nationalities represented by the characters in the book. What ethnicity/nationality is each of the major players, and how does it affect their identity and their actions? What is stereotypical about these characters, and what is surprising? How did language play a role?

Julep straddles the line between what she calls the "haves and have-nots"--she and her father live in a low-income neighborhood, but she goes to a wealthy private school. Which social class does she identify with more? What does she learn by observing kids from a more privileged background? Do you think Julep is actually representative of people from a low-income background? If not, what is it that differentiates her from most other low-income people?

The title of the novel is *Trust Me, I’m Lying*. Analyze and explain the meaning of this title. Why is it important in the story? Cite specific textual evidence to support your analysis.

Do you believe Tyler’s feelings for Julep were true? Why or why not?

Julep seems fearless. Describe specific events in the book where we see examples of this. Where do we see examples of fear ruling her? What do you think these examples indicate is her greatest fear?

Setting is very important to the novel. Each of the locations mentioned in the novel is either a real place in Chicago or inspired by a real place in Chicago. Why do you think the author chose the locations she did for each major scene? And why did she choose to set the novel in Chicago in the first place?

Who are the secondary characters in the novel? Explain how each of these secondary characters is important and what they contribute to the novel.

Do you believe that people can escape their pasts? Why or why not?

Mary Elizabeth Summer examines the thought that even when people are gone/out of your lives, they can still be present. Where do we see examples of this in Julep’s life?

How are people hiding things in this novel? Discuss specific characters and what they are hiding and why. Are they successful in hiding these things? Why or why not?

We read books for enjoyment, but sometimes we discover that books can teach us things. What has *Trust Me, I’m Lying* taught you? Describe in detail.

*Trust Me, I’m Lying* is written in first person POV. Select a scene in the book and re-write it in a different POV. How does this change the novel? What POV do you like better? Explain your view.

**This guide aligns with Common Core Standards ELA-Literacy.Rl.9-10 1, 2, 3, 6, 9, 10.**