



## LOOKING FOR TRUE

by Tricia Springstubb

*A Horn Book Fanfare Title*

★ “The writing is fresh, sharp, and authentic. . . .  
It’s *Because of Winn-Dixie* for a new generation.”

—*The Horn Book*, Starred Review

### ABOUT THE BOOK

**When two unlikely friends bond over shared compassion for a bereft but lovable dog, they learn what it truly means to find a sense of belonging and identity.**

Eleven-year-olds Gladys and Jude are definitely not friends. Gladys is a tiny, eccentric, walking dictionary who doesn’t hesitate to express herself, while Jude likes to keep to himself. But they both agree that a new dog in the neighborhood is being mistreated by its owner. When the dog (who Gladys names True Blue) disappears, they hatch a plan to find her, then must hide her because they can’t bring her home. As their ties to the dog—and to one another—deepen, so does the impossibility of keeping such a big secret.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Describe the main characters in the novel. How are their personalities revealed in alternating chapters? In what ways are they alike?
- Who are the antagonists in Jude’s life? Who are Gladys’s antagonists? Identify other antagonists in the novel. At what point do Jude and Gladys unite for one cause?
- What is the conflict of this novel? When is the conflict revealed? How is it resolved?
- True Blue’s real name is Pookie. Why does Gladys think that this name is humiliating? How do Gladys and Jude know that True Blue is mistreated? At what point does True Blue begin trusting them? Explain what Gladys means when she says that calling True Blue by her real name would give her “false hope.”
- Explain why the words “usual” and “rotten” are used to describe Jude at the beginning of the novel. What words might best describe him at the end? Why does Diamond call him “mister”? At what point does Gladys know that Jude has a gentle side? What does he think might happen if he revealed this side of himself?
- How does Gladys get a glimpse of Jude’s gentle side at the end of the novel? The school counselor once asked Jude to imagine something peaceful. Discuss why Jude imagined a forest. What does this reveal about his homelife? Point out times in the novel when Jude most needs the forest.
- How might Jude describe Gladys? What makes her so unusual? How are people amazed and annoyed by her vocabulary?

- Gladys is prone to bad dreams. What is the source of these dreams? Explain why Gladys tells Jude that she is adopted. Debate whether she thinks this will change the way Jude sees her. Discuss why she regrets telling him.
- Discuss the adult responsibilities that Diamond places on Jude. In what ways is he too young to perform the tasks given to him? How did Silas get the nickname Spider? What is significant about his request to be called by his real name at the end of the novel?
- At one time, Spider attended a daycare near Diamond's work. Explain what the daycare teacher meant when she told Diamond that Spider had "poor impulse control." Cite scenes in the novel that reveal the teacher was correct. How do Gladys and Ms. Suza react when Jude smacks Spider on the foot? How does Ms. Suza have a calming effect on Spider?
- Describe Gladys's relationship with her best friend, Chickie. At what point does their friendship change? How does Gladys react when Chickie finds another best friend? Describe Jabari, Jude's best friend. What challenges Jude and Jabari's friendship? Think about your own friendships. What challenges have you experienced with your best friend/s and others?
- Debate whether Jabari is leading Jude down a wrong path. How does losing their best friends cause Gladys and Jude to feel rejected? Discuss how Gladys and Jude react when they each see their best friend at the end of the novel.
- Discuss Gladys and Jude's relationship with their mothers. Contrast Diamond, Jude's mother, with Ms. Suza, Gladys's mother. Why does Gladys say that her mother is a "doormat"? Jude says that his mother is always mad about something. What in her past life has contributed to her anger?
- Discuss the way Diamond and Ms. Suza express their love for their children. Explain Jude's rudeness toward Ms. Suza. Why does he think she is a bully? What might he learn from Ms. Suza?
- There is a \$500 reward for finding True. When does Gladys learn that Jude is planning to find True and return her to the "witch lady," her owner? How does she view this as a betrayal? What is Diamond's reaction when she learns of Jude's plan?
- Looking for True is the title of the novel. How do Gladys and Jude create a home for True? Identify the moment in the novel when Jude believes that True actually belongs to them. What else are Jude and Gladys looking for? Debate whether they find it.

## EXTRA CREDIT!

### For Classroom Conversation

Divide readers into two teams, each taking a different side. Have them debate the pros and cons of whether to return True Blue to her rightful owner and collect the reward.

## ABOUT THE CREATOR



**Tricia Springstubb** has written many well-reviewed books for young readers, including, *Looking for True*, *The Most Perfect Thing in the Universe*, and *What Happened on Fox Street*, which was an Indie Pick. She also wrote *Every Single Second*, which received starred reviews from *Publishers Weekly* and *Kirkus Reviews*. She lives in Cleveland Heights, Ohio.