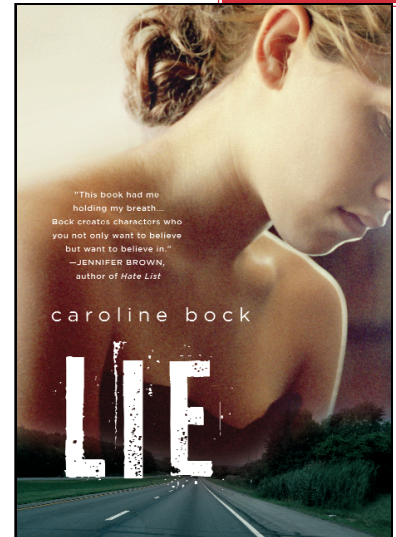


Accelerated  
Reader

# LIE

A Novel

by **Caroline Bock**



224 pages • 978-0-312-66832-7

“This is a strong, well-told, sorrowful story based on facts. *LIE* broke my heart.”—**Carol Lynch Williams**, author of *The Chosen One*



## PRAISE FOR LIE

“Bock’s first YA novel is a smart, topical story about a racially motivated hate crime, its far-ranging consequences, and the community determined to keep it under wraps. Skylar Thompson, a sensitive and complex loner, is deeply reliant on her boyfriend, Jimmy Seeger, a cocky, clean-cut jock. Shortly before their high school graduation, Jimmy and his best friend Sean are arrested for the vicious beating of Arturo Cortez, a young El Salvadoran mason, who subsequently dies of his injuries. Charismatic but cruel, Jimmy has been leading a gang that goes ‘beaner-hopping’ on Saturday nights, assaulting Latinos for sick thrills. Skylar, who witnessed Jimmy’s unprovoked attack on Arturo, suffers a crisis of conscience over whether to cover for her boyfriend; the lies Skylar and others are pressured to tell cut through the town like the Long Island Expressway the title plays on. Avoiding preachiness, Bock handles the novel’s multiple viewpoints exceptionally well, rotating among the painfully believable voices of high school students and adults. Her characters may keep the truth inside, but their story reads like a confessional.”—*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

“By portraying, simply and without comment, the reactions of the various characters, the author conveys the horror of the crime and the devastating effects on all involved, including those responsible. Sean, Jimmy’s best friend and companion on the fateful night, can’t deal with his guilt but also knows he dare not tell the truth. Lisa Marie sticks by Jimmy with no doubts. Skylar never doubts her love for Jimmy but faces a difficult choice when it transpires that the truth must come from her, or it will not come out at all. Realistic and devastatingly insightful, this novel can serve as a springboard to classroom and family discussions. Unusual and important.”—*Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)

“Told in several voices, Bock creates a suspenseful, gripping, and powerful novel that will keep readers on their toes.”—*School Library Journal*

“*LIE* is a gripping exploration of right and wrong, truth and lie, and that ultimately when you search your soul, you’re not always prepared for what you find there. This book had me holding my breath . . . Bock creates characters who you not only want to believe but want to believe in, and real suck-in-your-breath moments that remind you what good storytelling is all about.”—**Jennifer Brown, author of *Hate List***

“An intensely moving, beautifully written novel . . . *LIE* is a pertinent novel for our times told with the same unflinching honesty and riveting intimacy that once made *To Kill a Mockingbird* such a classic.”—**Suzanne Weyn, author of *The Bar Code Tattoo***

“Eye-opening. Caroline Bock skillfully guides her story over society’s most jagged edge—a hate crime.”—**Paul Volponi, author of *Black and White, Rikers High, and Crossing Lines***

“Bock ratchets up the tension in this tightly wound story of racism, power, and one very compelling lie.”—**Barbara Moon, youth services consultant, Suffolk County Library System**

## OVERVIEW

Inspired by real events, *LIE* is a gripping and powerful novel about teens and a hate crime. *LIE* is also story about choices, about peer and community pressure, about bullying and stereotypes in our society, about making the decisions to lie—or tell the truth—and the consequences.

Everybody knows, nobody’s talking . . .

Seventeen-year-old Skylar Thompson is being questioned by the police. Her boyfriend, Jimmy, stands accused of brutally assaulting two brothers of El Salvadoran descent from a neighboring town, and she’s the prime witness. Skylar is keeping quiet about what she’s seen, but how long can she keep it up?

**SAMPLE LESSON  
PLAN OVERVIEW**

But Jimmy was her savior . . .

When her mother died, he was the only person who made her feel safe, protected from the world. But when she begins to appreciate the enormity of what has happened, especially when Carlos Cortez, one of the victims, steps up to demand justice, she starts to have second thoughts about protecting Jimmy. Jimmy's accomplice, Sean, is facing his own moral quandary. He's out on bail and has been offered a plea in exchange for testifying against Jimmy.

The truth must be told . . .

Sean must decide whether or not to turn on his friend in order to save himself. But most important, both he and Skylar need to figure out why they would follow someone like Jimmy in the first place.

**CLASSROOM  
SETUP**

**Grade Level:** Grade 7 and above

**Materials Required:** Novel, paper, pencil, and graphic organizer

**Activity Time:** 1-2 class periods

**Concepts Taught:** Character development, conflict, plot

**Objective:** A close reading of the main characters in novel and an analysis of the development of character within a multi-character structure with an option for a creative free-writing project.

The author, Caroline Bock, has the following quote above her work desk. It speaks to the importance, the centrality, to her and other writers, about character. The quote is from John Gardner, the well-regarded novelist (*Grendel*) and critic (*The Art of Fiction: Notes on Craft for Young Writers*). He writes in the latter book that:

Character is the very life of fiction. Setting exists so that the character has someplace to stand, something than help define him, something he can pick up and throw, if necessary, or eat, or give his girlfriend. Plot exists so the character can discover for himself (and in the process reveal to the reader) what he, the character is really like: plot forces the character to choice and action, transforms him from a static construct to a lifelike human being making choices and paying for them or reaping the rewards. And theme exists only to make the character be somebody: theme is elevated critical language for what the character's main problem is . . .”

1) Outline on board and have students follow along with their graphic organizer to create a list of all the characters in *LIE*.

2) Outline the ten characters each with first person accounts in *LIE*. The character list is thus:

Skylar Thompson  
Sean Mayer  
Lisa Marie Murano  
Tommy Thompson  
Principal (Plotinsky)  
Officer Healey  
Gloria Cortez  
Carlos Cortez  
Coach Martinez  
James Seeger, Sr.

1. Why do you think she chooses to write them all in first person? What effect does that have on the reader?

Now, taking a step back, probe the students on what is the major question posed in the book to all of the characters? What choices and actions are these 'first person' characters faced with? In doing so the major problems of each character (their internal and external conflicts) should be discussed in broad terms (see homework assignment).

2. **Special Note:** You may want to take particular time with the character of Sean Mayer. He makes a drastic and dramatic decision toward the end of the novel (Spoiler Alert: he hangs himself after grappling with decision to tell truth about the hate crime or not). Discuss why suicide is not ever an answer to life's dilemmas (his father and Skylar are devastated). Though, his action does influence another. How does his action influence others? Ultimately, it does propel Skylar Thompson toward her decision and action (to come forward in the very last scene of the novel).

3) **Key Thematic Point:** What essential characters are not included in first person accounts?

There are two essential characters, but only seen through the eyes of the other characters: Jimmy Seeger and Arturo Cortez.

1. Why does the writer choose not to give these two characters their own first person accounts? First, Jimmy?

[**Note:** Author's Insight: I chose not to include Jimmy Seeger as a first person character because he has already made his choice. He chose to be a bully and a hater, and in many ways it is now up to others to decide his fate. In addition, I was more interested in the effect of his actions on others, why do people like Skylar, Sean, and Lisa Marie choose to follow him? What are the consequences?]

2. Why does the writer choose not to give Arturo Cortez his own first person account?

[**Note:** Author's Insight: I felt it was more powerful to see the incident through the eyes of his brother, Carlos Cortez, who is an American citizen, but witnesses what happens to his brother, Arturo Cortez, who is undocumented. The irony inherent in this hate crime is that Jimmy Seeger and Sean Mayer do not know which brother is in the United States with legal documentation and which one is. They are making assumptions on racist stereotypes. In the end, vigilante justice, where one takes justice into one's own hands, is wrong.

Admittedly, while the conversation could continue towards one about immigration policies in the United States, the intention of the author was to explore the idea of community and peer pressure. How do we make our own choices in life in light of overwhelming pressure to follow what our parents, peers, and community often thinks even when we understand, or come to understand as Skylar does, that we no longer agree with what everybody thinks?]

3. Do you agree or don't agree with the writer's decision to not include Jimmy Seeger or Arturo Cortez as first person characters?

4. Discuss the setting of the novel. What is the name of the town? (Trick question: the town, a middle class suburban town on Long Island in New York is never named). Why do you think the town is never named? What are the other key settings? When does the action takes place? The timing is present day, with the action taking place over a week, from a Monday morning after a hate crime has taken place on a Saturday night to the following Monday morning). How does the setting help define the characters?

**ACTIVITIES AND  
PROCEDURES,  
DAY 1**

Students may work alone, with partners or in small cooperative groups. Have them choose a character from the novel. Give them a T chart graphic organizer to fill out. Along with the title and author of the book they should write the character's name and age. On the right side, write evidence. Here they are to find and write down the passage number and passage that illustrates particular traits.

**Suggested homework assignment:**

Based on their character outlines, the students should make a two-sided chart all the choices facing their characters and the obstacles (internal or external conflicts) that are in play with these choices? One the left side, phrase the choices in terms of a question. For example, should Skylar come forward and tell what she knows, or should she not? On the right side, outline the character's main problem, his/her internal or external conflict? These questions can form the basis of a second day class discussion.

Team up the teams and the character profiles via a lottery or by assignment (for example, team up the group who wrote the Skylar Thompson profile with the Carlos Cortez profile).

Have the students write a two-page double spaced script with narration (setting: time and place) and dialogue imagining what would happen on Monday afternoon if these two characters, which they have been assigned, met. This dialogue should address the major dramatic and thematic questions the characters are grappling with (i.e. what they outlined for homework assignment) and the conflicts that they dealing within the novel.

After they completed the script assignment, follow up questions:

- 1) Analyze how their characters have changed from the beginning of the novel to their imagined end? Is this different from the way the author ended *LIE*? How and why?
- 2) What choices and actions have been resolved? What choices and actions are still pending?
- 3) What overall themes in the novel, and in their original scripts, are apparent?
- 4) If you (the student as him- or herself) were a character in a book, what would you have done? Who do you most relate to? Would you have followed Jimmy? Would have come forth? Why or why not?

ABOUT THE  
AUTHOR

More information about the author can be found at her website: [www.carolinebock.com](http://www.carolinebock.com). She welcomes feedback on *LIE* in the classroom.



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