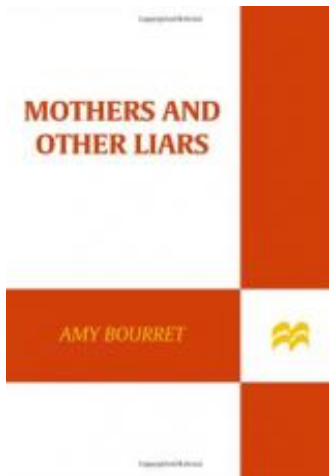


# Mothers and Other Liars

by Amy Bourret

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## About the Book

Ten years ago, Ruby Leander was a scared, runaway 19-year-old who found a baby in an Oklahoma rest stop trash can. Overwhelmed by memories of her own abandonment years earlier, she made a split-second decision to put the baby in her car and keep driving.

Over the years, Ruby and her daughter Lark made a home for themselves in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Lark has grown into a precocious, animal-loving imp, and Ruby has built a family for them around supportive friends and her boyfriend of three years.

Then, when Ruby reads a magazine article about an infant kidnapped by car-jackers, the lie that she created about Lark's origins is shattered. Ruby never dreamed that she had done anything wrong by rescuing an abandoned infant, but now she is forced to make a decision that will change her life, and Lark's, forever.

## Discussion Guide

1. People seem to feel very strongly about Ruby's choices. What would you have done in her situation? Do you think her acts were selfish or a selfless?
2. The theme of nature versus nurture is woven through this novel. Ruby believes Lark is the person she is more because of their shared experiences than because of Lark's biological heritage. Which do you think is the stronger component of a person? Which parts of your own character do you think are based on nurture and which come from nature?
3. The theme of water also "runs" through the story. What do you think about the contradiction in how Ruby sets out to find a piece of her mother on an ocean shore, yet she builds her life with Lark in the arid high desert of Santa Fe? In which parts of the story do the river themes resonate strongest for you? Where do you find your own peace, in river, an

ocean, a mountain, a person?

4. Chaz has strong ties to his family, yet he leaves not only Ruby but his entire family behind. Why do you think he did not return for his own child's baptism? Do you think that someday he and Ruby will have their fairy-tale ending? How is his leaving similar to and different from Ruby leaving her "second life" in Iowa?

5. Speaking of family, after her grandmother's death and until the end of the book, Ruby's own "family" is comprised entirely of people to whom she is not related. How do you think her story would have unfolded if she had not met Margaret in that parking lot?

6. Ruby talks about how every person has a pivotal moment that changes the direction of her life. Ruby identifies two, finding Lark at the rest stop and then putting into motion her plan to give up her biological child in exchange for Lark. Both of these moments, though, also drastically changed the course of others' lives. What moments can you identify as pivotal in your own life. Looking back, how do you think those moments impacted others?

7. Do you think Ruby's grandmother had some idea that she was dying when she sent Ruby to town? How do you think Ruby's own choices would have been different if, say, her grandmother had died after a lingering illness, with Ruby at her side?

8. Why do you think the author chose to tell the story from Ruby's point of view rather than from an omniscient or alternating points of view? What aspects would have changed with different perspectives?

9. How do you feel about the choices of Darla, the "other" mother? In what ways does she exemplify the distinction between what we want --- and what we think we want?

10. Okay, go ahead and confess. What is the biggest lie you have ever told?

## Author Bio

Amy Bourret is a Yale Law School graduate and former partner in a national law firm. In school and in her practice, she did pro bono work for child advocacy organizations, where the passion that fuels **Mothers and Other Liars** was born. She splits her time between Dallas and Aspen, where she's currently at work on her next novel. Visit her online at [www.amybourret.com](http://www.amybourret.com).

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