

# **What My Mother Doesn't Know Study Guide**

**What My Mother Doesn't Know by Sonya Sones**

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# Contents

|  |                    |
|--|--------------------|
| <a href="#">What My Mother Doesn't Know Study Guide.....</a> | <a href="#">1</a>  |
| <a href="#">Contents.....</a>                                | <a href="#">2</a>  |
| <a href="#">Plot Summary.....</a>                            | <a href="#">3</a>  |
| <a href="#">Pages 1 - 53.....</a>                            | <a href="#">4</a>  |
| <a href="#">Pages 54 - 109.....</a>                          | <a href="#">8</a>  |
| <a href="#">Pages 110 - 153.....</a>                         | <a href="#">11</a> |
| <a href="#">Pages 154 - 203.....</a>                         | <a href="#">14</a> |
| <a href="#">Pages 204 - 259.....</a>                         | <a href="#">17</a> |
| <a href="#">Characters.....</a>                              | <a href="#">21</a> |
| <a href="#">Symbols and Symbolism.....</a>                   | <a href="#">24</a> |
| <a href="#">Settings.....</a>                                | <a href="#">25</a> |
| <a href="#">Themes and Motifs.....</a>                       | <a href="#">26</a> |
| <a href="#">Styles.....</a>                                  | <a href="#">28</a> |
| <a href="#">Quotes.....</a>                                  | <a href="#">29</a> |



## Plot Summary

"What My Mother Doesn't Know" is a young adult novel written by Sonya Sones and published in 2001. It details the experiences of fourteen year-old freshman Sophie Stein as she attempts to find not only a boyfriend, but also her self-discovery in the process.

When the novel begins, Sophie is hopelessly in love with Dylan, and can't get enough of him. The attraction is very physical, and Sophie, very insecure, attempts to conform to all of Dylan's wishes. But slowly, their relationship begins to flicker out, and Sophie finds herself drawn to an unknown male online named Chaz, with whom she connects on a very emotional basis. At the same time, she is oddly attracted to an ugly, skinny, loner named Murphy, who is an incredible artist. Ultimately, Sophie breaks up with Dylan.

Ultimately, Chaz turns out to be a sexual pervert, and Sophie breaks things off with him immediately. In the meantime, she grows closer to Murphy, with whom she connects on a personal and emotional level. They grow closer and closer, until they come to fall for each other. Love ultimately blooms, and Sophie decides that Murphy is the one she wants, because he knows who she really is, and he loves her for that. She, likewise, sees wonderful things in Murphy that no one else does. And the novel ends with them staying together, no matter what anyone else in school thinks.



# Pages 1 - 53

## Summary

Sophie explains to the reader that she has a variety of nicknames. Zak and Danny enjoy calling Sophie “Couch” or “Syphilis”. Sophie’s parent call her “Sophie Dophie” and “Soso”. Rachel and Grace call her “Fifi” or “Fee”. But above all is Dylan, who calls Sophie “Sapphire” because of her eyes, and Sophie absolutely loves this. She says it is the secret password to her heart. Sophie first meets Dylan at one of Zak’s parties, on Labor Day. Rachel’s older sister gives Sophie and her friends a ride home. Sophie has to sit on Rachel’s sister’s friend’s brother’s lap, which was Dylan. Sophie’s body feels electric against Dylan. At one point, she thinks she feels Dylan almost squeeze her waist. When Sophie gets dropped off at her house, she and Dylan smile at one another, and Sophie remembers the smile.

Every moment with Dylan is special, from their first kiss to holding hands with their little fingers in between classes in the halls. Even eating lunch with Dylan, Sophie cannot focus on her food, just the way it feels to be with Dylan, and the way that he looks. Across the cafeteria, Rachel and Grace hold up a sign and grin. The sign says, “Remember us?” Later, in the girl’s bathroom, Sophie tells Rachel and Grace that Dylan’s kisses are unbelievable. Sophie remembers how the only boy she’s ever made out with, Lou, doesn’t even compare to Dylan.

Sophie recalls her friendship with Rachel and Grace, beginning in third grade. On the way to Sage Market for Haagen-Dazs bars, they are surrounded by four older girls on bikes, who ask them what churches they go to. Rachel and Grace are Christian, while Sophie is Jewish. Mary Beth Butler, the biggest girl surrounding them, tells them they shouldn’t play with anyone who doesn’t go to church. Rachel kicks Mary Beth’s shin, and the three friends race back to Rachel’s house. In fourth grade, when Rachel’s dog is put to sleep, the three friends have a funeral for the dog. In sixth grade, when Grace’s parents divorce, the three friends have a three-night sleepover, do nails, cover Grace with henna tattoos, watch “Saved by the Bell” and eat six pounds of Oreo cookies. The previous June, when Lou dumps Sophie for Alison Creely, the three friends make a voodoo doll of Lou and poke him with a hundred pins. They write him a mean letter, but then burn it and the doll, and go to see a movie.

But during art class, something happens. Sophie finds herself thinking about Murphy, who is homely and ugly, that he isn’t even worth making fun of. Yet, she wants to kiss him, and wants to kiss away the dark circles under his eyes. She can see that his thin arms are aching to hold someone. She wants it to be her. She wants to kiss light back into his eyes. And then Sophie catches herself, because she can’t believe she is having a fantasy about Murphy when she is with Dylan. Dylan later gives Sophie a note which tells her that she is the coolest girl in all the world, and on Mars, and she should meet him by the hole in the fence after school.



After school, Dylan goes through the hole in the fence, telling Sophie to wait three minutes to follow him into the woods. Then she does, and Dylan wraps her up in his arms. When Sophie gets home, all the televisions are on in the house, so her mom won't miss anything as she goes dusting and cleaning from one room to the next. By the time Sophie gets home, her mother is always in bed watching television. Sophie switches off all the other televisions, and wishes her mother would pay attention to her life. Sophie's mother says her soap operas keep her company, but Sophie feels lonely because of it. She remembers being left in the car while her mother did errands, always being afraid that she would be abandoned, or the car would roll away.

Sophie thinks that her father loves her, though he hasn't kissed or hugged her so long as she can remember. When Sophie hugs him, he doesn't hug her back. She wishes he would just hold her. She reflects on how he might just not be the affectionate type, and that his parents are the same way. Indeed, Sophie's father isn't even very affectionate with his wife. Sophie wonders if she'll have the same problem, but seeing how hard it is to keep her hands off Dylan, she doubts it. In art class, Sophie is so into her found-art sculpture project that she doesn't even realize she hasn't thought about Dylan once in the entire forty-eight minutes. When Sophie goes into her parents' bedroom closet for a belt, she notices a small shelf above the door with paperback books of a dirty nature. She begins to read them when her parents go out.

Sophie knows that when her parents were first married, they were in love. She sees it in home movies. But now, all they do is fight and yell, and it hurts Sophie horribly to see and hear it. She wonders what her neighbors must think. When Sophie cries, she can't stop, and when she finishes, her eyes swell up badly, so she has to wear sunglasses. Lately, Sophie's dad is going on more and more business trips. When he is home, the family watches the news at dinner, though Sophie longs for a regular dinner conversation, like they have at Rachel or Grace's house. Any conversation that occurs is disinterested and obligatory. So Sophie concentrates on Dylan at dinner, thinking about going to Miss Mae's Diner, to their favorite booth, where Dylan strokes Sophie's knee under the table.

One day at the mall, Dylan and Sophie bump into Dylan's ex-girlfriend, who calls him "Pickle" (like Dill Pickle, as in Dylan), which makes Dylan blush and grin. Sophie feels helpless. Dylan's ex, Ivy, is petite and blonde, while Sophie is tall and a brunette. When Ivy leaves, Dylan wonders aloud how he could have ever gone out with her, because Ivy looks more like a baby sister to him than anything else. It makes Sophie feel better. In English, the class reads "The Grapes of Wrath", but Sophie is looking at a photo of Dylan on the beach, with his blonde curls tossed in the wind. In French, Sophie is forced to conjugate verbs while sitting across from Lou. She wonders how she could ever have kissed Lou. It makes her sick to think his tongue was in her mouth.

On the way home, Grace complains about how horny she is, while Rachel complains that her boyfriend, Danny, has been grounded again so they can't go out on Saturday night. Sophie sees Murphy as they walk, and he is very alone, making Sophie want to run up to him and fill up the void inside him. At home, Sophie's parents fight. Her dad leaves in the car, and her mother says he is selfish and doesn't care about her feelings.



Sophie's breasts, meanwhile, grow very fast, and she sees Dylan sneaking peeks frequently. Sophie even presses her breasts against the cold windows to watch her nipples get hard. Sophie also is unhappy that she gets her period when she wears her brand new white satin panties. Sophie recalls her first period two years before, which startled and unnerved her mother. Sophie also recalls having to buy her first box of tampons at Drugtown, and Rachel's cousin, Perry, on whom Sophie has a massive crush, is at the register. She doesn't buy the tampons, but instead gets a pack of Juicy Fruit and leaves.

Sophie's mom has never had a sex talk, though she hovers whenever Sophie gets ready for a date with Dylan. Though Dylan wants to do more, Sophie won't let him. When Dylan picks her up, as soon as they are behind the Sweeney's lilac hedge, beyond the gaze of Sophie's mother, they begin kissing.

## Analysis

At the beginning of Sophie's story, Sophie informs the reader about her nicknames, and her love of Dylan. This is all that seems to make up Sophie's existence at the beginning of the novel, is Dylan. Around him, everything else revolves, from Sophie's two best friends, Rachel and Grace, to her parents. Interestingly enough, Sophie also reveals precious little about herself to the reader at first, choosing to focus on Dylan, and the other people who exist around her, rather than focusing on herself. Indeed, the only thing about Sophie that she does reveal about herself early on is that she is in love with Dylan, but does have fantasies about Murphy.

Sophie's decision to reveal more about others than about herself, speaks greatly to her own search -not just for the right boy, but who she is as a person. So far in the relationship with Dylan, she conforms to what he wants. Indeed, she finds herself wishing she was more like Dylan's ex, Ivy, though Dylan later says that she is just fine the way that she is, which Sophie is happy about. So in many respects, Sophie's search for the perfect boy, indicative of why her mind wanders to Murphy, is in a sense, a metaphorical and literal search for herself. Her insecurities stem from childhood, from fears of abandonment by her mother, to the lack of affection from her father. By being what Dylan wants her to be, rather than who Sophie actually is (which she is discovering as she goes), there is a less likely chance that Dylan will dump Sophie for someone else the way that Lou did before Dylan.

## Discussion Question 1

Describe the character of Sophie through the first fifth of the novel. What is Sophie like? What are her interests and her hobbies, the things she likes, and the things she loves? Does she say a lot, or a little about herself? Why?



## Discussion Question 2

What is the significance of Dylan's nickname for Sophie, both in meaning, and in what it means to Sophie? What does this reveal about Sophie's character?

## Discussion Question 3

Discuss Sophie's family situation. What is Sophie's family like? How does she wish it was different? Do you believe that Sophie may have turned out differently for the start of the novel if her parents had been different people emotionally? Explain.

## Vocabulary

obliterated, downright, sidling, hereditary, functional, intimate, paralyzed, mousy, infinitely, terminally, conjugate, perpetually, rebooting, rummaged, surreptitiously, singe



## Pages 54 - 109

### Summary

Sophie and Dylan go and see a movie, but she doesn't pay attention to the movie, because all she can focus on is Dylan. Sophie thinks about Dylan late into the night, wondering if he will ever see her glow-in-the-dark stars. When Dylan isn't around, Sophie kisses her knee, and pretends it is him. One afternoon, Sophie, Rachel, and Grace go get ice cream in raincoats, with nothing else on underneath. When Sophie watches Rachel and Grace later, popping zits on each other's backs, and Sophie wishes she had some too, so she wouldn't feel left out.

Dylan gets a buzz cut after that, making Sophie unhappy that she can't run her fingers through it anymore. It causes a fight, with Dylan telling her that he doesn't need her permission to get his hair cut. Dylan ends up storming out of the house. Sophie kicks the door so hard her father has to ice her toe. She doesn't talk to Dylan all weekend. She doesn't see him in school on Monday. Finally, they run into each other, and they both apologize immediately, and give make-up kisses. When Dylan falls asleep studying, she ends up sketching him as he sleeps. Dylan is not overly impressed with the picture, but Sophie figures that Dylan doesn't have to get art, because he is art.

At school, the word "Murphy" becomes derogative, synonymous with "jerk". When Danny breaks a beaker on the floor in science, Zak tells him not to be such a Murphy, and everyone laughs. Sophie wonders if Murphy has any idea. In art class, simultaneous portraits must be done. Sophie chooses Murphy because she knows that no one else will. As they draw, Sophie notices his eyes are smiling at her, so she lets her eyes smile at his. Rachel and Grace are humored that Sophie has chosen to draw Murphy.

When Sophie goes to meet Dylan's mother, Dylan tells Sophie not to mention she is Jewish. It reminds Sophie of the time that someone stole their parking space, and called them "kikes". Sophie wonders if she and her family look that Jewish that others can just tell. Dylan's mother is having a yard sale, and she says she is thrilled to meet Sophie. She says that people have been trying to Jew her down on prices all morning, and Dylan replies that that is just how people are. Sophie doesn't know what is worse –what his mother said, or that it didn't even affect Dylan.

At school, Grace has a crush on a boy named Henry who has an English accent. She loves whenever she winks at her, she tells Sophie and Rachel. Grace says she is dying for Henry to ask her out. Rachel tells Sophie that hearing about Henry makes it seem like her relationship with Danny is somehow inferior or substandard. For example, she can't remember talking on the phone with Danny for more than twenty minutes at a time, where Grace spends hours on the phone with Henry. Sophie's heart sinks because she feels the same way about her and Dylan. She realizes she and Dylan have a lot of things they don't have in common. It shows at the county fair, and Sophie





suddenly wishes she had come with Rachel and Grace instead of Dylan. Sophie takes a magazine compatibility test, which tells her she and Dylan are not. Things about Dylan begin to annoy Sophie, such as the way his sneakers squeak.

Sophie meets a boy named Chaz online. They have long talks into the night. They have no idea what the other looks like, but she likes it that way, because they connect on a soul level. Sophie confesses she is talking to Chaz, to Rachel and Grace. Rachel says no one person can completely fill anyone's needs a hundred percent, but that if all that is going on is chatting, it is not cheating. Grace says she could never think of talking to anyone more than Henry, but if Sophie can think that way of someone more than Dylan, it is a bad sign. And Sophie cannot wait to talk to Chaz online. Sophie realizes that if she had met Dylan online, she would have liked him a lot less. When Sophie, Dylan, Grace, and Henry go on a double date, Henry and Grace cannot stop touching each other, while Sophie and Dylan attempt only to make small talk. At the movies, Dylan and Sophie hold hands, but Dylan is more focused on the movie than her.

On the way home, in the Starbucks window, Sophie sees a reflection of her and Dylan, and it looks like she is taller. She feels as if she is literally outgrowing the relationship. Saying good night, she feels like Dylan is a little boy. Talking to Chaz online, Chaz tells Sophie she is his girlfriend. Sophie begins thinking more and more about Chaz, and begins feeling guilty because of Dylan. Sophie feels as if she has become glued to Dylan, and is unhappy because he keeps pushing to go further and further with her. She begins to wonder if she loves him, or if she ever loved him at all. When Dylan confesses his love for Sophie, she feels like crying. And she thinks about Murphy, and whether or not any girl has ever told him she loves him.

Chaz begins to wonder what Sophie looks like. Sophie wonders what it would be like to kiss Chaz. Sophie realizes that if she could marry a font, she would marry the font that Chaz uses –Litterbox ICG. In the shower, Sophie enjoys the feeling of the hot water against her skin, and wishes Chaz was with her. Chaz suggests meeting in person. As time goes on, Dylan begins to feel more and more like a friend to Sophie than anything else. And she feels as if things are over with him. They end up breaking up, and they both cry. Dylan isn't mad, but Sophie still feels very low. They avoid each other when they can, and are very formal when they see each other in person.

## Analysis

As things begin to head south with Dylan, Sophie finds herself wondering about Murphy more, and even talking to someone named Chaz online. Sophie's attraction to Dylan, which has mostly been physical, seems to be fading quickly as she discovers the emotional and personal side of Chaz before his looks, or anything else. This is very endearing and very attractive to Sophie. Indeed, the image of Dylan is shattered irreparably by Dylan's decision to shave his head to get a buzz cut, and him telling Sophie he doesn't need her permission to do anything he wants to do. This hurts Sophie deeply, because she has attempted to conform to everything that Dylan wants.



Sophie's talks ultimately become more and more elaborate, while her relationship with Dylan seems more and more like a friendship as time goes on. The physical nature of the relationship with Dylan becomes more and more apparent as Dylan keeps pushing Sophie to go further and further, but Sophie continually denies him this. Grace's relationship with Henry, meanwhile, casts doubt on Dylan's relationship with Sophie, and Danny's relationship with Rachel, leaving both girls wondering if, perhaps, they are missing out on something. This also continues to drive a wedge between Sophie and Dylan, as Sophie feels more and more thereon in as if Dylan is suffocating her.

## Discussion Question 1

Describe the continuing evolution of Sophie's character as it relates to her experiences with Dylan and Chaz. In what ways does Chaz differ from Dylan? Why is Sophie so intrigued by Chaz? How has Sophie's character thus evolved? Is this for the better or the worst? Explain.

## Discussion Question 2

Compare and contrast the relationships of Grace and Henry to Sophie and Dylan, and Rachel and Danny. Which relationship appears to be the strongest? Why? What does this do to the others?

## Discussion Question 3

Describe the encounter between Dylan's mother and Sophie. What is the consequence of this meeting? What impact does it have on Sophie and Dylan?

## Vocabulary

nonchalantly, contours, bliss, synonymous, faze, inferior, compatible, deceitful, despicable, triumphant



## Pages 110 - 153

### Summary

Talking to Chaz online, Chaz tells Sophie his favorite thing to do is to jerk off in libraries. When he says he isn't kidding, she deletes him and changes her e-mail address. Sophie realizes she has dodged a bullet, and when Rachel and Grace hear what has happened, they are glad Sophie is okay. And they hug her and take her to the movies. While the three girls want to go trick-or-treating for Halloween, they decide to go to the Halloween dance instead. Sophie goes dress shopping with her mom. Sophie wants a small, tight, black dress, while her mom wants her to get a dress that resembles a rose bush. It cause Sophie's mom to begin crying, so Sophie gets the rose bush dress. Sophie decides to do extra babysitting and save up lunch money to buy the black dress. She calls the store and asks them to put it on hold. In art class, everyone is talking about the dance, except Murphy, who is painting a gray road and a single tree.

In two weeks, Sophie has saved enough money for the black dress. Sophie comes across a mockingbird on a wire, singing borrowed songs, hoping to attract the girl of his dreams. Sophie feels like the mockingbird, trying on different voices to see which is best. Three hours before the dance, no matter what Sophie does to her hair, it still looks pathetic to her. After several failed attempts at eyeliner, Sophie goes for lip gel instead. Sophie is dropped off by her mom at Rachel's, where she will change into the black dress. She feels a little guilty about it, but not enough not to do it. The girls get dressed. Grace is going as Juliet, while Rachel is going as Bert. Sophie is going as a beatnik in the black dress. In the black dress, Sophie just knows something is going to happen.

Sophie is very glad to be at the dance. But some guy wearing an evil mask begins making his way across the dance floor, and Sophie is worried that Chaz has stalked her. But when Rachel tells him to get out of the way, and calls him by his name, Fletcher, Sophie is relieved. She sees Dylan, dressed in scrubs with spiked hair, and suddenly finds him hot. She wants to run over and kiss him. But then Angela Pierson puts her hands over his eyes. She is dressed up like a nurse.

A masked man begins dancing with Sophie, and their bodies melt into each other. Sophie has no idea who it is, but she wants to keep dancing with him, and kiss him. The masked man presses Sophie's hand to his heart, and disappears in the crowd. No matter what she does, Sophie cannot find him. She hates herself for not asking his name or taking off his mask. Waiting for her mom outside, some tenth grade boys make a raucous. One of them grabs Sophie's breasts, and tells the other that he owes him five bucks, because he breasts are real. She is shocked and enraged. She punches the boy in the face, and he and his friends take off. When she hops into her mother's car, she realizes she is still wearing her black dress.

Sophie and her mom fight. Her mom rips her dress into pieces. Sophie begins crying up a storm. She hates her mother for being so controlling, yet disinterested. She wishes



her mom were more like Rachel's mom or Grace's mom. Yet Sophie also hates hating her mother. Sophie's mother, meanwhile, eats Hershey's Kisses, chain-smokes, and watches soaps on a mattress in the basement. Her mother has only come up to cook meals. And Sophie feels guilty about the dress. She thinks that her masked man would be able to look into her eyes and just know the guilt, and would know that Sophie needs to be held and kissed and cared for.

## Analysis

Horrifyingly, Chaz turns out to be a sexual pervert, and Sophie ends the relationship with Chaz immediately. Thankfully, her best friends are there to pick her up and make her feel better. Despite the horrid ending with Chaz, the relationship does prove something very important about Sophie: she is capable of being in a relationship for something more than merely what a boy looks like, and this is very telling in Chaz, because what was originally appealing about Chaz was the chance to connect with him on a personal level. Here, the reader discovers that Sophie is a very deep, and very complex emotional character, beyond the typical pain of rejection from distant parents so prevalent among many teens.

The strained relationship between Sophie and her parents, meanwhile, becomes worsened by Sophie's decision to wear the dress that her mother told her not to, to the Halloween Dance. The night has its ups and downs, between dancing with a masked man, and having a tenth grade boy grab her large breasts to see if they are real. This comes on the heels of her breakup with Dylan, whom she almost begins to miss during the dance, had it not been for the timely arrival of the masked man. It is now the masked man that she seeks out. The most endearing thing to Sophie about him are his eyes -a physical trait, yes, but windows to the soul as well. These eyes penetrate her soul, she believes, and she has to know who they belong to.

## Discussion Question 1

Describe Sophie's encounter with the masked man. Why is Sophie so attracted to the masked man, despite the mask? What does this say about the evolution of her character?

## Discussion Question 2

Why does Sophie decide to wear the black dress even though her mother tells her not to? What are the consequences of this? What is the effect on the relationship between Sophie and her mother? Is this a good or a bad thing? Explain.



## Discussion Question 3

Does it occur to you that the mask that covers the mystery man's face may actually be a symbolic reflection of Sophie, that she has also been hiding behind a mask? Explain.

## Vocabulary

degenerates, silhouetted, botanic, emollients, supple, radiant, manageability, deliriously, ballistic, melodramatic



## Pages 154 - 203

### Summary

Sophie leaves her mom a note to apologize. Either the note, or her mom getting tired of being miserable, compelled her mom to return to the real world. She even begins smiling at Sophie again. Sophie, meanwhile, become obsessed with forearms, and trying to identify her masked man by his forearms. Sophie also attempts to find her masked man by his eyes, since she did see those through the mask. She feels as if her soul has connected to his through the eyes. She also wishes she could put an ad in the school paper, seeking him out. Grace doesn't get why Sophie is so into a masked man, but Rachel says it is deep because she is in love with more than the masked man's face.

Sophie begins to wonder more and more about the masked man. She wonders if he is a freshman, if he will ever reveal himself to her, if he has a girlfriend, and so on. The gray winter comes on, and Sophie knows it will be a long, gray winter. Sophie wonders if maybe the masked man is some rich, pretentious, stuck-up jerk. Zak randomly asks Sophie out on a date. They go out, but Sophie lets him down easily, telling him that he is a brother to her, and she is very happy with that. Zak takes it very well.

By Thanksgiving, Sophie's passion for the masked man has begun to fade a little. Hanukkah and winter break roll around. Rachel and Grace's family skip out of Cambridge, Massachusetts, to go to Bermuda and Florida. At night, when the first snowfall comes, a white dove lands on Sophie's balcony, and coos, which makes her feel as if everything will be alright. She even dreams about the dove that night. She and the dove are flying over Boston. When Sophie wakes up, she decides to go on a vacation to Boston, even though she technically won't be going anywhere. And she wonders who needs parents. Sophie's mother tells her to be back before dark to avoid weirdos.

Sophie begins by getting a scone and a cup of Earl Gray tea at the Ritz-Carlton, and does some sketching. She then goes to Filene's Bargain Basement, and buys five pairs of green panties with squiggles on them that look like sperm, because she can. Sophie next goes to the Museum of Fine Arts, to the Impressionist Gallery, where she sees her favorite painting, by Renoir, "Le Bal a Bougival". She yearns to be the woman in the long white dress dancing in the hands and arms of the red bearded man. She wants to dance forever with the masked man.

Suddenly Murphy is there, and he says hello to her. She is shocked to see him, let alone to hear him speaking to her. She wants to get away as fast as she can. They tell each other that "Bal" is their favorite painting. And that Murphy has a book on Renoir which says the girl in the painting is seventeen year-old Marie-Clementine Valadon, dancing with one of Renoir's friends. She grows up to be a painter herself. And Murphy tells Sophie that she reminds him of Marie-Clementine. Sophie then asks Murphy to



have lunch with her. They go to Pizzeria Regina's for lunch. Sophie sits with her back to the door, so that if anyone they know comes in, they won't see her eating lunch with Murphy.

Murphy calls her Marie-Clementine, and she smiles. Murphy smiles back, and Sophie realizes he has a nice smile. While waiting for the pizza, they both begin sketching everything around them. They then go skating on the frog pond on Boston Common. A fast kid almost knocks Sophie over, but Murphy grabs her hand to steady her, and she wishes he wouldn't let go. Murphy offers to take her skating in a secret spot the following day. Sophie agrees to go. Murphy gives her his number on a little scrap of paper. It would be so easy to lose, Sophie thinks, and then she wouldn't have to go.

Rachel and Grace e-mail Sophie to tell her how tan they are getting, and how Grace misses Henry, and Rachel doesn't miss Danny at all. Sophie tells Rachel and Grace about her trip to Boston, leaving out Murphy. She thinks about kissing Murphy, not because she is physically attracted to him, but because she feels sorry for him. The next day, they go to Murphy's pond, deep in the woods by the reservoir. They decide to call it Valadon Pond. In the bathtub later, warming up, Sophie reflects on holding his hand, and hopes she hasn't given him the wrong idea. Sophie has also given Murphy her phone number, and freaks out every time the phone rings.

Sophie decides to go to Pearl's Art Supplies to pick up a handsome black leather-bound sketchbook, and some professional drawing pencils. Sophie buys a few for Murphy as a Christmas present. Murphy calls that night and asks Sophie to the movies. She considers telling him he is a brother, but then decides instead to tell him she just wants to be friends. Murphy says it works for him. They decide instead to go sketch some old people at the library at Copley Square in the afternoon. Sophie's mother wants to meet Murphy before this. Half of Sophie is angry at her for being so nosy, and the other half is glad her mother cares. Murphy is so lacking in the looks department that Sophie's mother is overly kind to him. At the library, while sketching, Murphy smiles at Sophie and tells her she is a real artist. This makes Sophie feel like a whole new part of her has been born. On the bus ride home, Murphy convinces Sophie to go with him to the Museum of Bad Art.

## Analysis

Ultimately, Sophie and her mother bridge the gap that has further divided them, if not entirely. As winter break arrives, Rachel and Grace leave on vacations with their families, while Sophie is forced to stay behind in Cambridge. There, Sophie decides that a day vacation to Boston will be a good idea, and there, at the Museum of Fine Art, runs into Murphy. Incredibly, the two both share the same favorite painting and artist, and this common ground of love in art gets them to talking. Sophie, who once believed she could never like Murphy, or even spend time with him, especially because of his skinniness, his lack of physical appeal, and his dejected nature, actually decides to spend time with him, and begins to grow attracted to him, based not only his looks, but on his real



personality, which she has never before truly seen. (She does not recognize it to this extent, yet.)

Interestingly enough, Sophie and Murphy continue to spend time with one another. Sophie tells Murphy that she only wants to be friends with him, which Murphy says he is fine with. Yet, it is on this platonic level that they connect, and it is on this platonic level that Sophie begins to suspect she may have feelings for Murphy that do extend beyond the level of friendship. She is confused by this, but continues to want to see Murphy anyway, believing that in the end, they will just be friends.

## Discussion Question 1

How does the fight between Sophie and her mother end? What are the consequences of their making up, especially with Sophie's apology in the mix? What does this say about her evolution as a character? Explain.

## Discussion Question 2

Describe Sophie's encounter with Murphy in Boston. What happens? Why do you think Sophie consents to hanging out with Murphy? What reasons does she give? Do you think she has ulterior reasons? Explain.

## Discussion Question 3

Why do you believe that Sophie doesn't fully explain her time over winter break to Rachel and Grace? Do you agree with her decision not to tell them? Why or why not?

## Vocabulary

abjectly, devastated, fixating, moot, merits, gilded, flit, lusting, gnarled, rattling





## Pages 204 - 259

### Summary

Sophie very much enjoys the Museum of Bad Art. She and Murphy then go to the aquarium on Central Wharf, to sketch fish. They invent names for the fish that swim by, and end up laughing hysterically. They then go to the Golden Palace in Chinatown to get pan-fried chicken dumplings, which is the favorite of them both. They feed squirrels, then go to the top of the John Hancock building, 740 feet up, to see Boston, and the sunset. But Sophie realizes that Murphy is watching her instead of the sunset. Walking to the bus stop, Sophie shivers, and Murphy puts his arm around her. Sophie realizes nothing else has ever felt right like that.

Sophie begins to wonder if she is attracted to Murphy. She wonders if he could be boyfriend material. Sophie dreams of the red-bearded man in Renoir's painting unbuttoning her blouse, and at the last button, he turns into Murphy. This makes her want Murphy more. But just as he is cupping her bra, his hands goes flat like a mime, and he shrugs with a grin. Sophie wakes up, incredibly confused. Murphy draws her a postcard that says "Greetings from Boston" with a tiny "Bal a Bougival" stamp. Murphy writes that he wishes Sophie were there, and that he is lucky that she really is there. It is signed with his love. Sophie reads it seventeen times.

Sophie gets out the sketch she made of Murphy, but realizes she didn't truly capture his sense of humor, or his eyes which make her seem like she is the most fascinating person in the world. She realizes she has missed that part completely in art class. Rachel and Grace both e-mail Sophie, looking forward to seeing her. Rachel tells that she is finally missing Danny, and asks if she has found Mr. Right yet. Sophie puts off replying to either one. Sophie calls Murphy to thank him for the postcard, and he says he will not be able to hang out that day, as he and his mom are going Christmas shopping, and then he and his dad are getting a tree. But he invites her to help decorate the tree the following day. Sophie agrees if his parents don't mind, and Murphy says his parents are dying to meet her. It makes Sophie happy. Murphy's parents are both very happy to meet her. Murphy's mother is Jewish, while her husband is Christian. The tree ends up looking beautiful. It is a perfect afternoon. The family has Sophie put the star on the tree.

Afterwards, Murphy's parents run out on some errands. He asks her if she would like to see his room. One wall is completely used as a bulletin board. It is full of sketches, paintings, photos, poems, and cutouts from magazines and elsewhere. Among them is a postcard of "Le Bal a Bougival" and next to it, a sketch of Sophie from that day in art class. It delights Sophie. They both want dogs, they discover, but neither can have a dog because both their mothers are allergic. Sophie suddenly realizes that all she wants for Christmas is Murphy. They draw tattoos on each other's arms, and then dance when a slow song comes on the radio. Suddenly, Sophie realizes that Murphy is the masked man. Murphy asks her to the movies, and she says yes, and they kiss. It is so wonderful



it feel as if their souls are touching. They can't stop kissing. When Murphy's mother walks in the front door, she calls for him by his first name, Robin, which no one has used at school in years. Sophie tells him she will call him Robin from now on, if it is okay. He answers with a kiss. When they go to the movies, all Sophie can focus on is Robin. His hands entwine in her hair, and she wants it to stay there forever.

Sophie e-mails Rachel and Grace at the same time, telling them about Robin, and that he is her Mr. Right. They have exchanged pencils and sketchpads as gifts for Christmas. By the Charles River, Robin tells Sophie he loves her, and she tells him she loves him. Then they kiss. When a foot of snow falls, they spend all their time outside in the snow together. Sophie recalls that, with Dylan, the more she learned about him the less she wanted to kiss him, but with Robin, the more she knows about him, the more she wants to kiss him. Sophie believes it is real love. Sophie also finds that she loves Robin's forearms. Rachel and Grace e-mail back. They both can't wait to see Sophie, or meet Robin. They want to see Sophie on New Year's morning, Sunday. Rachel is considering breaking up with Danny on New Year's Eve. But Sophie worries about how they will react when she tells them who Robin really is.

While Robin's parents know they are dating, Sophie's parents do not yet know. Sophie and Robin are home alone. His parents are next door for a New Year's Eve party. Sophie and Robin make hand puppets with a flashlight. At midnight, they kiss. As his parents get home, they jump to opposite ends of the couch. Robin's dad drives Sophie home, and Sophie is worried about how she will tell Rachel and Grace in a few hours who Robin is.

The next morning, Rachel gives Grace and Sophie sky blue nail polish and lip gloss, while Grace gives Rachel and Sophie sunglasses with tiny seashells on them. Sophie then gives Grace and Rachel pairs of sperm panties, which they love. Sophie tells them all about Robin, except who he is exactly. She goes skating on Valadon Pond. Robin arrives, and takes her in his arms. Robin knows Sophie hasn't told Rachel and Grace yet, and he tells her that he will understand if things have to end. Sophie cries, and Robin tells her not to be such a Murphy. Then, they kiss.

Sophie's dad goes away on another business trip, and Sophie hugs her mother with everything she has. Sophie wants to run away with Robin, rather than be forced to go to school. Sophie's mom comes in to talk to her in her bedroom, and Sophie tells her mother everything. And she isn't even mad that Sophie hasn't told her that Robin is more than a friend now. The next day, lunch arrives. It is the moment that Sophie has been dreading. How will everyone react, she wonders, when they see her and Robin together? She resolves herself, sees Robin eating by himself, sees Rachel and Grace, and waves, and then goes to sit down with Robin. She knows that everything is going to be alright.



## Analysis

As Sophie continues spending more time with Murphy, she finally comes around to recognizing that she may like him as more than a friend, though the reader has suspected such for a while at this point. Indeed, even Sophie's subconscious in her dreams appears to be exploring the question of whether or not Murphy is boyfriend material. Sophie ultimately comes to realize that, not only is Murphy boyfriend material, but that she hasn't ever truly seen him before. There is so much more of him than his appearance and his looks, and this is when she discovers that Murphy is the man behind the mask, that the mask he wears at the dance can be seen as a symbolic mask at school, that no one truly knows the real Murphy, except Sophie -and no one truly knows the real Sophie, except Murphy. And Sophie loves that Murphy knows exactly who she is. By the end of the novel, the reader comes to learn much more about Sophie, beyond her search for Mr. Right, and the people in her life. She is a kind, caring, compassionate, sweet, and considerate human being who loves art, and discovers that she is worthy of love.

Indeed, being with Murphy has helped Sophie not only to discover who she really is, but to build up courage as well. This courage, borne of love for Murphy, helps her to reject the school's potentially condescending and rejecting opinion of her dating Murphy, to sit down with him at lunch in front of the whole school, and to hold his hands in the process to demonstrate her love to him before everyone else.

### Discussion Question 1

What is different about Sophie's relationship with Murphy, as opposed to her relationships with Dylan and Chaz? Why does Sophie ultimately commit to Murphy, and fall in love with him? Provide evidence from the book to support your claim.

### Discussion Question 2

What is the relationship like between Sophie and her mother by the end of the book? What does Sophie see differently about her mother now as opposed to the rest of the novel? How does this affect Sophie's courage when it comes to Murphy and the rest of the school?

### Discussion Question 3

Why does Sophie choose to demonstrate her love for, and her relationship with Murphy, in such a public way? What does this say about who Sophie has become as a person? Is this change for the better or for the worst? Explain.

## Vocabulary

bewildered, fascinating, acutely, commiserating, nanosecond, fusing, montage, delirious, implicitly



# Characters

## Sophie Stein

Sophie Stein is the main character and principal protagonist in the novel “What My Mother Doesn’t Know” by Sonya Sones. Sophie is a fourteen year-old freshman living in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where she lives with her mom and dad. Sophie is brown-haired and tall, and doesn’t always feel pretty. She is an incredible artist. While she is extremely close with her two best friends, Rachel and Grace, Sophie is not as close with her parents. She is currently dating Dylan, whom she grows more and more distant with over the course of the novel, until she breaks up with him. At the same time, Sophie is talking to a boy she met online named Chaz, while feeling sorry for Murphy, a lonely, skinny, but talented artist in class.

As the year progresses, Sophie dumps Dylan, and finds out that Chaz is a sexual pervert. She deletes him from online. At the Halloween Dance, a mysterious masked man dances with Sophie, who becomes obsessed with him. At the same time, over winter break, she grows closer to Murphy, whom she develops romantic feelings for. She also discovers that Murphy is her masked man, and the two fall in love. Yet, Sophie is unsure how the school will deal with her love of Murphy, and so she turns to her mother for comfort and understanding. Sophie ultimately decides that her love of Murphy is worth the risk of social ostracism, and she commits to him.

## Dylan

Dylan is Sophie’s first love interest in the novel “What My Mother Doesn’t Know” by Sonya Sones. Dylan is very much the surfer type, with long blonde hair. At first, he and Sophie are inseparable, but over time, the more she learns about him, the more she doesn’t like him. They have too many disagreements, and Dylan smothers Sophie, wanting her to go further and further, so Sophie ultimately breaks up with Dylan, who quickly finds another girlfriend.

## Rachel Ness

One of Sophie’s two best friends, Rachel Ness is very sweet, very kind, and very defensive of Sophie. She has been friends with Sophie since third grade, when she physically defended Sophie and her Jewish faith against an older bully. Rachel is also there for Sophie through her breakup with Dylan, and her dangerous online relationship with Chaz. Rachel is also in a relationship with a boy named Danny, but Rachel isn’t very into the relationship, and she ultimately breaks up with him.



## Grace Brody

One of Sophie's two best friends, Grace Brodie is very kind, very caring, and very obsessed with an English-accented boy named Henry. Grace is very loyal and considerate of Sophie. Grace, like Rachel, is there for Sophie through her breakup with Dylan, and her dangerous online relationship with Chaz.

## Zak

Zak is a common friend between Sophie, Rachel, and Grace. He is also friends with Danny. When Sophie and Dylan break up, Zak asks Sophie out, but Sophie lets him down gently, telling him she views him as a brother, and doesn't want to lose that.

## Danny

Danny is Rachel's boyfriend. Over the course of the book, they grow distant, until Rachel decides that it may not be worth being together anymore.

## Robin Murphy

Robin Murphy is an unattractive, skinny, and unpopular kid at school. Murphy is a very talented artist, is very kind and patient, and has a very good sense of humor. He also has good morals and values, and a loving mother and father. Murphy is so unappealing that people usually don't even bother to make fun of him. Sophie, however, feels bad for Murphy, and somehow attracted to him at the same time. She volunteers to be Murphy's partner in art class for portraits. At the Halloween Dance, Murphy disguises himself in a mask and dances with Sophie.

Over winter break, after Sophie and Dylan have broken up, Murphy runs into Sophie at the art museum. They begin to find common ground in love of art, and discover they have many other things in common. Slowly, Sophie falls in love with Murphy, and Murphy with Sophie. Sophie ultimately decides that she doesn't care what the rest of the school will think, because she has her Mr. Right.

## Henry

The crush of, and later boyfriend of Grace, Henry is a kind and polite boy with an English accent. Grace ultimately becomes obsessed with Henry.

## Sophie's Mom

Sophie's mom is in difficult straits with her husband, for unknown reasons, though one suspects that her husband's unaffectionate nature has something to do with things.



Sophie's mom turns on all the televisions in the house during the day so she has company while she tends to things, and so she doesn't miss anything. Sophie's mom begins the novel as very controlling, and very unsure how to handle Sophie beyond that. Ultimately, she comes around to become Sophie's confidante to her relationship with Murphy, and what the school might think.

## **Sophie's Dad**

Sophie's dad is in difficult straights with his wife. He is an unaffectionate person, as were his parents, and he is frequently away on business trips. Sophie's relationship with her father is essentially nonexistent.

## **Chaz**

Chaz is the second boy, between Dylan and Murphy, that Sonia likes. She meets him online, and when she discovers he is a sexual pervert, she cuts off contact with him.



# Symbols and Symbolism

## Skinny Black Dress

A skinny black dress is what Sophie wants to wear to the Halloween Dance, though her mother disapproves, and convinces Sophie to go with a different dress instead. Sophie, however, secretly buys and wears the dress to the dance, only to be discovered by her mother wearing the dress after the dance. This leads to temporary rift between mother and daughter.

## Sketchbook

A sketchbook is carried by Sophie everywhere she goes. A sketchbook is also carried by Murphy everywhere he goes. The two make sketches of people, still life objects, and other subjects in their sketchbooks as they go around alone, and together.

## Pencils

Pencils are what are used by Sophie and by Murphy to sketch in their sketchbooks. Professional drawing pencils are obtained by Sophie with her Hanukkah money, and she gives some of them as a gift to Murphy for Christmas.

## Sperm Panties

While in Boston on her day vacation, Sophie buys five pairs of green panties with squiggles on them that resemble sperm from Filene's Bargain Basement. She gives a pair to Rachel and to Grace for Christmas presents.

## Christmas Star

A Christmas Star completes the tree the Murphy family decorates at their home. The star is placed on top of the tree by Sophie, at Murphy's request, and at the approval of her parents. It helps to make her feel wanted and accepted.





# Settings

## Cambridge, Massachusetts

Cambridge, Massachusetts, is the home city of Sophie, her parents, and Rachel and Grace and their families. It is where Sophie and her friends attend school and hang out in their free time. Cambridge, located just outside of Boston, is also home to a reservoir, and a pond deep in the woods which Sophie and Murphy come to call Valadon Pond.

## Boston, Massachusetts

Boston is the capital of Massachusetts. It is located near Cambridge, and is the location of the Ritz-Carlton and the Museum of Fine Arts, among others. Sophie takes a day vacation to Boston to see the sights and sounds while her friends are out of state over winter break. Boston is also a favorite place of Murphy, and he and Sophie begin to spend more and more time together in Boston.

## Ritz-Carlton

The Ritz-Carlton is a luxury hotel located in Boston, Massachusetts. It is where Sophie goes to get a scone and a cup of Earl Grey tea to begin her vacation day in Boston.

## Museum of Fine Arts

The Museum of Fine Arts is located in Boston, Massachusetts. It contains a gallery of Impressionist paintings, and is a favorite place to visit of both Sophie and Murphy. Indeed, the two meet up there one day, over the painting "Le Bal de Bougival" by Renoir. It turns out to be both their favorite painting.

## Valadon Pond

Named after the seventeen year-old girl dancing in the painting "Le Bal de Bougival", Marie-Clementine Valadon, Valadon Pond is located deep in the woods by a reservoir in Cambridge, Massachusetts. It is named by Sophie and Murphy. The two go ice skating together at the pond.



# Themes and Motifs

## Family

Family is a major and underlying theme in Sonay Sones's novel, "What My Mother Doesn't Know". Family, thematically, includes love, loyalty, compassion, emotional, and physical support for others who may or may not be blood related, but exist and operate in a traditional family structure. Here, the theme of family specifically refers to Sophie, her mother, and her father. Throughout most of the novel, it is actually a lack of family that affects Sophie more so than anything else.

Sophie's parents largely keep to themselves. Sophie's father is unaffectionate, distant, and frequently away on business trips, while Sophie's mother wraps herself up in soap operas and tending to the house. Sophie frequently wishes that her father would wrap her up in his arms and hold her, and spend time with her. Sophie wishes her mother was not only the same way, but that she would show some sort of interest in Sophie's life at all, the way that Rachel and Grace's parents show interest in the lives of Rachel and Grace.

Things only seem to get worse between Sophie and her mother, as her mother forbids Sophie to wear a black dress to the Halloween Party, and Sophie does anyways. This causes a rift between them that lasts until Sophie apologizes. Ultimately, Sophie comes around to see her mother as a human being, who is also saddened by her father's lack of affection. This draws Sophie and her mother closer together, and compels Sophie to tell her mother about Murphy. This ultimately makes Sophie feel better that she can at least talk to her mother, and shows greater promise for a future, closer relationship.

## Friendship

Friendship is a major and dominant theme in the novel "What My Mother Doesn't Know" by Sonya Sones. Friendship includes the love, compassion, loyalty, and the enjoyment of time spent in the company of others that can be seen among the characters of Sophie, Rachel, and Grace. Their friendship is strong and endures throughout the novel.

Sophie reveals that the friendship between the three of them began in third grade, when Rachel physically defended Sophie against Mary Beth, a bully, because Sophie is Jewish. Their friendship continues through divorces, breakups with boys, and the loss of pets, among other things. Over the years, they only grow closer and closer together, standing by one another through thick and thin.

By the time that their freshman year in high school rolls around, they are as close as ever. Throughout the year, Sophie continually turns to Rachel and Grace for comfort and support, whether it is through her breakup with Dylan, her online relationship with Chaz, and even physically demonstrating her love of Murphy in the lunchroom by sitting



with Murphy. Without Rachel and Grace, Sophie may not have been able to get along well at all, at least until meeting Murphy. Murphy has, ironically, been able to get by alone and well, because his parents are loving, and close.

## Love

Love is a major, dominant, and overarching theme that is consistent throughout the novel "What My Mother Doesn't Know" by Sonya Sones. Love can be either of a friendly and platonic nature, or of a romantic nature. In this case, the kind of love dealt with is of a strong, romantic nature, and principally concerns Sophie, though it does touch on Grace and Rachel as well.

For Sophie, love concerns three boys: Dylan, Chaz, and Murphy. When the novel begins, Sophie believes she is in love with Dylan, and can't stand not being around him. But over time, the more she discovers about him, the more she doesn't like him, and falls out of love. She even admits to wondering if she was ever in love with Dylan in the first place. With Chaz, Sophie falls for him quickly, only to lose interest in him just as quickly, because Chaz is a sexual pervert. With Murphy, Sophie's attraction is quick, but love is slower, coming over time as she learns more and more about him. Indeed, the more Sophie discovers about Murphy, the more and more she falls in love with him.

For Rachel and Grace, love has to do with their boyfriends, Danny and Henry, respectively. For Rachel and Danny, it is the discovery that Rachel may not actually be in love with him at all. For Grace, it is the quick discovery that she is in love with (and obsessed with) Henry. She cannot stop thinking about him, or missing him when he isn't around. This leads Rachel to wonder about her relationship with Danny, and Sophie to question her relationship with Dylan.



# Styles

## Point of View

Sonya Sones tells her novel "What My Mother Doesn't Know" in the first person limited-omniscient perspective, from the point of view of main character and principal protagonist, Sophie Stein. This is done for several reasons. First, the story being told is Sophie's, and because it deals primarily with her feelings and emotions about three different boys, who better to tell her story than Sophie? The first person narrative also gives the reader firsthand knowledge and experience of Sophie's emotions on an intimate level, without the bother of a third person narrator between. Additionally, because Sophie is unaware of the feelings of Murphy, and is unaware of the true identity of her masked man, or who Chaz really is, the limited omniscient narrative provides an air of mystery and danger to the novel as well.

## Language and Meaning

Sonya Sones tells her novel "What My Mother Doesn't Know" in language that is simple, sweet, and poetic. This is done mainly to reflect the first person narrative perspective of Sophie, who is very sweet and poetic, and whose intelligence does not outshine her compassion. The simple language also endears young adult readers by not making the story something beyond their comprehension. The poetic nature of the language further helps to reinforce Sophie's character as a believable fourteen year-old girl experiencing love for the first time. It also adds an emotional depth to the novel that allows the reader to feel, through the poetic language, the feelings and considerations of Sophie.

## Structure

Sonya Sones writes her novel "What My Mother Doesn't Know" in one, long narrative, unbroken by chapters, parts, or any kind of division save the events that transpire every few pages. This gives the novel a stream of consciousness feel, and a much more intimate nature, as if Sophie is relating all of the events of the past year to the reader as though the reader were simply a friend listening to a story, and not reading a book.



## Quotes

But Dylan calls me Sapphire. He says it's because of my eyes. I love the way his voice sounds when he says it. Sapphire. I like whispering it to myself. His name for me.

Sapphire. It's like the secret password to my heart.

-- Sophie (Page 1 paragraph 2)

**Importance:** In this section, readers can learn two things. First, that Sophie loves to feel as if she is special and cared for. Dylan's use of the nickname "Sapphire" for her means the world to her, and makes her feel special and loved. Secondly, this quote demonstrates the seeming love and desire that Sophie has for Dylan. This will prove especially important later on in the novel as Sophie comes to question her feelings for Dylan.

The truth is I have no idea what this movie's even about. I couldn't tell the good guys from the bad guys if you paid me a million dollars. But I do know that there isn't anyone on this whole entire planet that I'd rather be watching this movie with than Dylan.

-- Sophie (Page 54 paragraph 1)

**Importance:** In this quote, the strength of Sophie's feelings and love for Dylan are further on display. But interestingly enough, it is all about Dylan, and his physical presence, not his emotional, intellectual, spiritual, or personal aspects. This, like the previous quote, will prove telling in future chapters as Sophie comes to end her relationship with Dylan.

There's something so neat about not even knowing what he looks like. Something even neater about not even caring. And knowing that he doesn't care what I look like either. It's a soul thing with us. A cybersoul thing.

-- Sophie (Pages 84-85 paragraph 3)

**Importance:** When Sophie begins to date Chaz online, she is excited that she doesn't know what he looks like. This is important because it demonstrates to the reader that Sophie is truly not only interested in physical appearance, but that she is a much deeper, more emotional human being, who deserves love.

I notice our reflections in the window of Starbucks and I get this weird feeling that something isn't quite right. Only I can't put my finger on it. Then it hits me: what's wrong is that it looks like I'm taller than Dylan, which is totally bizarre because I'm wearing my flattest shoes and I know for a fact that he's taller than me... I've heard of people outgrowing relationships, but this is ridiculous.

-- Sophie (Page 94 paragraph 2)

**Importance:** Here, Sophie comes to discover that she seems to have outgrown her relationship with Dylan. She is in a totally different place than he is in terms of personality and existence, and it is oddly reflected in a physical illustration in the reflection. Sophie is leagues ahead of Dylan in terms of maturity and personality.



And right then, Muprhy popped into my head. It was so weird, but he did. And I found myself wondering if anyone has ever told Murphy that they love him.

-- Sophie (Page 100 paragraph 1)

**Importance:** As time goes on, Sophie begins to wonder more and more about Murphy and his life. She seems to connect to him on the level of loneliness. Sophie feels very much alone, and can see that Murphy is very much alone. And it breaks her heart. She ruminates on love in this quote, and wonders if Murphy has ever experience love, or ever will experience it.

The only one still working is Muprhy, hunched over his desk, painting a gray road, a road that's fading away into the gray emptiness of the horizon and in the foreground, just one tree, a tree that looks like a poem, a trees that makes me feel like weeping.

-- Sophie (Page 119 paragraph 2)

**Importance:** In this quote, the reader discovers that Sophie has finally begun to truly pay attention to Murphy, not just because he looks lonely, but because he clearly is lonely. There is little, if any color in his life, and his life -the road - seems to be going nowhere. Indeed, the road and the horizon are both gray and without any kind of brightness. The only living thing int he painting, the tree, stands alone, like Murphy.

I don't have a clue who I'm dancing with, but our bodies are acting like old friends, as though they know something we don't know.

-- Sophie (Page 138 paragraph 1)

**Importance:** In this quote, Sophie reveals that, though she has no idea who she is dancing with beyond knowing him as a masked man, their bodies connect, and everything falls into place as though they were puzzle pieces, or old friends. There is a sense of familiarity, without any familiarity being easily recognizable. Something feels right, and Sophie knows it. The focus is not on the face or the identity, but the way that things just seem to work.

I'm making my way through the halls at school, searching every boy's face for my masked man's eyes... I guess it wasn't how they looked that got to me. It was how it felt when they connected to mine –like this door was opening up inside of me that had never been opened before, and his soul was walking right in.

-- Sophie (Page 159 paragraph 1)

**Importance:** The only part of the masked man that Sophie gets to see are his eyes. The eyes are windows into the soul, as Sophie and others know. And here, Sophie feels as if her soul has connected with the masked man's soul. Indeed, there has been a deeper, more powerful connection between her and this masked individual than there ever has been before between Sophie and anyone else. This then compels Sophie on a quest to find the masked man.

I mean, he's Murphy. We're just friends. And that's all we'll ever be. Right?

-- Sophie (Page 207 paragraph 5)



**Importance:** The importance of this quote is telling. Murphy, who is not an attractive boy, has nevertheless managed to get Sophie to question her feelings of just friendship for him. She begins to wonder if they might end up becoming more than friends, which is important, because it demonstrates that the two of them are connection on a non-physical level.

And his kisses are so powerful they're almost like kisses from another planet. Maybe that's just how it is when your mind and your body and your heart and your soul are in total agreement with each other. Maybe that's how it is with real love.

-- Sophie (Page 235 paragraph 2)

**Importance:** Here, Sophie and Murphy finally kiss. Murphy turns out to be Sophie's masked man, and his kisses are unlike anything she has ever experienced before. Every part of her seems to be in order as they kiss. And the reader, as well as Sophie, understands that this is real love.