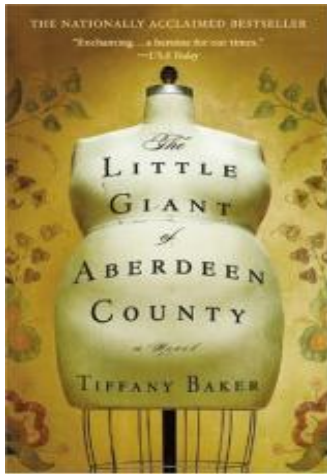


# The Little Giant of Aberdeen County

by Tiffany Baker



## About the Book

In an upstate New York backwater, Truly, massive from birth, has a bleak existence with her depressed father and her china doll-like sister, Serena Jane. Truly grows at an astonishing rate --- her girth the result of a pituitary gland problem --- and after her father dies when Truly is 12, Truly is sloughed off to the Dyersons, a hapless farming family. Her outsize kindness surfaces as she befriends the Dyersons' outcast daughter, Amelia, and later leaves her beloved Dyerson farm to take care of Serena Jane's husband and son after Serena Jane leaves them. Haunting the margins of Truly's story is that of Tabitha Dyerson, a rumored witch whose secrets afford a breathtaking role reversal for Truly.

## Discussion Guide

1. Truly is the "little giant" of this book, yet her size seems to make her less, rather than more, visible to the town around her. Can you explain this phenomenon? What do you think the author is trying to say about her outsider status?
2. Serena Jane and Truly are as physically different as sisters can be, yet Truly sees that this difference is crucial, explaining "the reason the two of us were as opposite as sewage and spring water, I thought, was that pretty can't exist without ugly." (pp. 97-98) How would you describe Truly and Serena's connection? How is it different from Truly's relationship with Amelia Dyerson? Which seems the more genuine sisterhood to you?
3. As the successor to a long line of old-fashioned, small-town doctors, Robert Morgan is traditional, strict, and often cruel. In the end, however, the legacy terminates with him and he becomes Aberdeen's last Dr. Morgan. How do he and Bobbie stray from the family paradigm? What Morgan characteristics stayed with each of them? Is the town "more modern" without a Dr. Morgan, and with Bobbie and Salvatore's restaurant instead? Is the replacement of nurturing through nourishment rather than doctoring a symbolic replacement?
4. Death haunts Truly and all of Aberdeen, sometimes in unexpected ways. As a gardener, Marcus's aim is to "make

things live,? but, as Truly realizes, ?wasn?t it also true that gardeners were always wrestling with death, whether in the form of drought, or blight, or hungry insects? In a garden, Marcus always said, death was the first, last and only fact of life.? What other parallels do you see in the ways Marcus and Truly court life and death?

5. Truly?s size marks her as an outcast, but throughout the novel, other characters have trouble ?fitting in? in a more figurative way. Examine how this manifests in Bobbie, Marcus, Amelia, even Serena Jane. What larger point do you think the author might be trying to make about the importance of conforming?

6. What role does Aberdeen County play in the novel? Could the story or these characters exist elsewhere? Do the effects of the 60s and the Vietnam War seem to touch Aberdeen in the same way they touched the rest of the country? What is unique and what is not about Aberdeen as a setting?

7. When Amelia discovers how Priscilla Sparrow and Robert Morgan died, she asks Truly whether it was mercy or murder that killed them. What do you think? How do you feel about Truly?s actions? What in Truly?s character draws her to ?collect souls? as she comes to call it?

8. When Marcus and Truly finally come together, Marcus says ?We?re not exactly a match made in heaven, you and I, but I figure we?re good enough for here on earth? (p. 334) What does he mean by this? Do you agree?

9. Why doesn?t Robert Morgan ?care? that his son runs away? What does it say about what he thinks of himself? How does this connect to Serena Jane?s leaving and his reaction to that event?

10. After Robert Morgan?s death, Truly gradually takes on some of his responsibilities as town doctor by using the knowledge she?s gained from Tabitha?s quilt. How is this a fitting purpose for Truly, and a fitting counterpoint to the legacy of Morgan doctors?

11. What about this story is larger than life or possesses elements of a tall tale or folklore? How are these details woven into the story? How is the book similar to or different from other works in this tradition?

## Author Bio

Tiffany Baker is the author of *THE GILLY SALT SISTERS* and *THE LITTLE GIANT OF ABERDEEN COUNTY*, which was a *New York Times* and *San Francisco Chronicle* bestseller. She holds an MFA (creative writing) and a PhD (Victorian Literature) from UC Irvine, and lives in the San Francisco Bay Area with her husband and three children.

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