

Meet the Author

COURTNEY SUMMERS

Sex, Bullying and Friendship

Courtney Summers is the author of White Pine selection *Some Girls Are*. She is from small town Ontario and writes young adult fiction. Her other novels are *Cracked Up To Be*, and the latest, *Fall For Anything*. *Some Girls Are* is a compelling account of how a girl is ostracized and understands the implications of her previous behaviour.

TingL: Sex, like bullying, figures largely as a tool for power in *Some Girls Are*. The teen-aged characters are carving out their identities and they use their sexual relations as marks of their social status. Can you comment on how the characters objectify sexual partners and how you see this reflected in society?

Courtney Summers: In *Some Girls Are*, Regina is assaulted by Anna's boyfriend, Donnie. When she confides in her long-time rival, Kara, about this, Kara spreads lies to gain the upper-hand in their clique. Much of the torture Regina endures in the book is motivated by her former friends refusing to believe the truth. What happens to Regina is devastating and horrific and they use it against her in a power play, which is awful. It was very difficult to write. Victim-blaming is something

that, unfortunately and inexcusably, happens too much in today's society. I have lost count of how many times I've heard people say that victims of sexual assault are "just asking for it" and it makes me *furious*. *Some Girls Are* is, in part, a commentary on that. I wanted readers to be frustrated and angry at how unfair it was. I wanted them to look at those sections of the books and think, "That is NOT okay."



You dropped out of high school at the age of fourteen. You have said that you preferred self-directed learning. What could the education system have offered to make you change your mind?

That's a great question, but I'm not sure the education system could have done anything to make me change my mind! Different people thrive in different environments. I didn't leave because the school failed me and I don't think my leaving means I failed school. It just means I needed to travel a different path to realize my potential.

Bullying is one of the main themes of *Some Girls Are*. It is the currency through which a group of girls acquires status. Were you bullied at school, or were you the bullier? Is bullying inevitable?

I experienced bullying from other girls when I was in school and I've also bullied other girls. As depressing as it sounds, I do think bullying is a bit inevitable, even as everyone works hard to promote awareness and prevention. High school is such a microcosm of life; all of these teenagers are in a building trying to figure out who they are and what they want from themselves and each other, which tends to create some pretty explosive social dynamics. I think bullying (unfortunately) is part of that. Perhaps not to the degree as in *Some Girls Are*—but I think it's there.