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PEARSON, Kit

*The Whole Truth*


Set in Depression-era Canada, this story follows nine-year-old Polly and her older sister Maud. The two girls are newly orphaned after their father dies tragically, and they travel from Winnipeg to live with their mother's family, with whom they have been long estranged, on a fictional island located in the Gulf Islands between Vancouver Island and the mainland.

With its vivid descriptions of island life, Polly, initially shy, comes to love her new family and her life on the island, and Maud embraces boarding school in Victoria. Yet the unsent letters Polly writes to her father show that life is not always easy or simple. She struggles with vegetarianism, Maud's finding Jesus, and accusations of racism against Polly's grandmother.

Moreover, the girls have a secret they have sworn not to discuss. Their father is actually alive, but hiding from supposedly false accusations of theft. Polly remains steadfast in her belief of her father's innocence, but when he comes for a secret visit, Polly comes to understand that the truth is much more complicated.

The strength of this novel lies in its realistic depiction of island living in the 1930s (with the exception, as Pearson notes, of an improved ferry schedule to facilitate travel to Victoria) and the sympathetic characters that are not black and white, but instead represent the ambiguous reality of everyday life.

**Thematic Links:** Fathers, Family, Secrets; Island Life

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