

READING GUIDE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:
THE FIRST HURT, by Rachel Sherman

- 1-How does the title THE FIRST HURT work as a theme for the entire collection of stories?
- 2-Many of the stories in the book deal with skin and physical appearance. How does the characters' exterior reflect their interior?
- 3- Many of Sherman's stories deal with mothers and daughters. What are the similarities between the different female characters? The differences?
- 4-"In Keeping Time", the narrator makes a decision to stay with her boyfriend rather than the girl she had been taking care of. Why do you think this is?
- 5- Sherman's writing has been described as "like splinters: they get under your skin and stay with you long after you read the book." Would you agree? Disagree? Why?
- 6- In "Two Stories; Single Family; Scenic View" Sherman explores the male point-of-view. How does this story fit in with the rest of the collection?
- 7- "Homestay" is told from the 2nd person point-of-view – a departure in voice from the other stories. Why do you think Sherman decided to use this point-of-view for this story?
- 8- In the title story, Sarah and her grandmother have a complicated relationship. Discuss the ways that they affect each other positively and negatively. Talk about where the misunderstanding between them lies.
- 9- Many of the stories in THE FIRST HURT focus on younger women with mentors or lovers who are older. Is there one "truth" that Sherman is getting to about this kind of relationship? Are there many? Discuss.
- 10- In "Proof" the narrator relays stories from things she's heard and things she has imagined. There is a feeling, within her telling, that she is unsatisfied. What is it that she seems to want?