

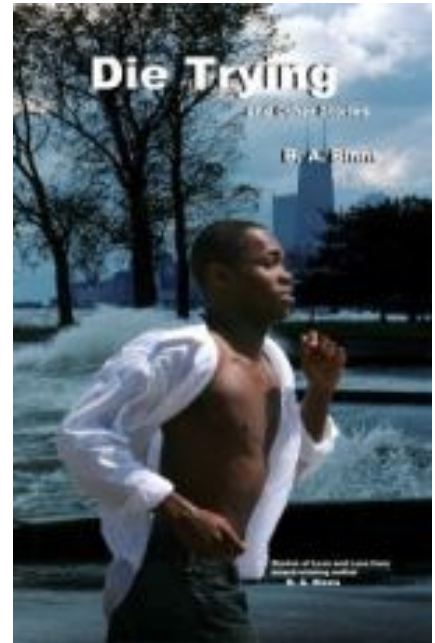
Die Trying: [ISBN 978-0-9881821-9-6](https://www.amazon.com/dp/9780988182196)

Reading level

Grade 6 and up

Die Trying is a collection of short stories designed to bring enjoyment to the enthusiastic reader, and attract reluctant readers with stories about family and friendship. The contents include

A True Original
I'm Coming Home
He's Coming Home
Abomination
Runaway
Fathers And Sons
Polar Bears
Momma Said
Why Does It Always Have To Be Me?
Temporal Relativity
Control
And In The End
Beggar Boy
Die Trying



Classroom discussion topics (may be done before reading the book)

- Secrets make you sick, is an old saying. We all have them. Why would they keeping things in our past inside us cause problems if no one else ever finds out?
- Parents and children often have difficulty seeing eye-to-eye. What are some of the worst things your parents ever said to you?
- Is there a difference between forgiving something, and forgetting it?
- Many of us face daily challenges, including bullies, drugs, and gangs. How do we handle those constant challenges?

Discussion/Short Answer Questions

A True Original

- People sometimes say that “the grass is greener on the other side of the fence”, meaning that other people seem to have things better. In this story, David wonders what life is really like for girls, as he notices that Yolanda seems to have it all, and is still unhappy. Have you ever tried to put yourself in someone else’s position and feel what they really feel?

I'm Coming Home

- How do you feel about the relationship between Damani and his younger brother, Bakari?
- Damani compares his fellow juvie inmates to his mother when he says “the gangsters in detention never pretended they cut you down out of love.” What do you think is wrong with his mother? Do you

know anyone like her?

Momma Said

- The protagonist disobeyed clearly set rules. But was her mother justified in her reaction? Can you think of other punishments the mother could have used in the situation?
- Do you remember your first crush? When is it right to disobey a rule to help someone else?

Control

- Malik thinks it will be easy to change his bad habit. Have you ever tried to change a bad habit? Did things go “easy-peasy?”

Beggar Boy

- Sayeed holds a secret. What makes him decide to open up about his own past?

Vocabulary:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>abomination</i> (Abomination) ▪ <i>arrogance</i> (Fathers And Sons) ▪ <i>burgeon</i> (Beggar Boy) ▪ <i>cantankerous</i> (Why Does It Always Have To Be Me?) ▪ <i>congeal</i> (Polar Bears) ▪ <i>deity</i> (Die trying) ▪ <i>disassociating</i> (Fathers And Sons) ▪ <i>elegant</i> (A True Original) ▪ <i>glioblastoma</i> (Die Trying) ▪ <i>henna</i> (He’s Coming Home) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>humiliation</i> (Momma Said) ▪ <i>inclination</i> (Fathers And Sons) ▪ <i>lucrative</i> (Beggar Boy) ▪ <i>malnutrition</i> (Beggar Boy) ▪ <i>oncologist</i> (Die Trying) ▪ <i>psyche</i> (Momma Said) ▪ <i>resplendent</i> (Beggar Boy) ▪ <i>sable</i> (Runaway) ▪ <i>tomes</i> (Why Does It Always Have To Be Me?) ▪ <i>unkempt</i> (I’m Coming Home)
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Essay Writing

Writing is an important part of common core and getting students ready for higher education. Students may write papers using one or more of the situations/examples below:

POV

Fathers and Sons is written from the POV of a mother watching her husband and son engage in a battle of wills. **Temporal Relativity** tells of a meeting between a girl and the man who killed her mother, from the girl’s POV. **Abomination** is about the breakup of two gay boys told from one of their viewpoints. In **Why Does it Always Have To Be Me**, a young woman has to persuade her grandfather to change. Pick one story and re-write choosing a different POV. Show what the character would notice, his emotions and concerns, and what lesson he absorbed from the episode.

Descriptive Writing

Kate Mason gazed through the windshield at the rainforest burgeoning on one side of the fast-moving car. The road was little more than a stretch of stones and worn down vegetation. The rental car only pretended to have shock absorbers. But the view made her forget everything else. The landscape was

resplendent with every imaginable shade of green. (Beggar Boy)

Write a descriptive paper that uses sensory images, metaphors and/or similes to help tell your story. Use strong verbs and powerful adjectives and adverbs. Make sure to include as many of the senses--sight, sound, smell, touch, taste--as you can.

Narrative Writing

For five years I spent every morning in the water, sun, rain or snow. People all over Chicago's south side were proud of Juvon Stewart. I promised my parents they'd see their son standing tall and proud with a gold medal around his neck and the Stars and Stripes playing at the London Aquatic Centre. Two years ago I was approaching the top of my game, staring at college scholarship offers and preparing to be crowned the greatest African American swimmer ever, beating even the great Sabir Muhammad.

Only the universe ended first. (Die Trying)

Write a narrative paper describing yourself, your goals and plans for the future. Include important details to make your reader feel they are really getting to know you.

Research paper: pick one of the following:

In **He's Coming Home**, Leah makes money by making Henna tattoos for her friends. Research this technique, including where henna comes from, and how it is commonly used today.

Ogun the mythical deity from **Die Trying**, is one of the Orisha from African Mythology. Look up his different names, the powers different cultures ascribe to him. Don't forget to explain the difference between an Orisha and a god.

Persuasive Writing

Write a letter to the Mother in **Momma Said** to giving reasons why she should agree to let her daughter stay after school for the school beautification project.

FUN

- Choosing one or more stories from the book and write a script or create fan fiction that follows the characters over the years. What are they proud of? What do they regret?
- Make a storyboard or multi-panel cartoon to depict your favorite story from the collection.
- Write a script for a radio talk show that discusses family relationships. Have various people call-in to discuss different types of familial interchanges.

Enrichment across the Curriculum:

Language Arts: Have students write a poem, song or rap about a misunderstanding between family members or friends.

Science: Study the history of cancers like the one attaching Juvon in **Die Trying**. Thanks to research, some are very treatable. However, others, because of their location or type, remain deadly in a high percentage of cases. Have students study the different types and stages of cancer, and why glioblastoma malforme, which took the life of Senator Ted Kennedy in 2009, would be called the

“terminator cancer.”

Drama: Write and enact a scene based on **He's Coming Home/She's Coming Home** where Leah and Damani meet face-to-face. What does Damani say to the girl who turned him in to the police?

Art: Draw or sculpt some of the locations from the story. For example, the icy beach of **Polar Bears**, or the Jamaican rainforest of **Beggar Boy**.

Civics: In **He's Coming Home**, Leah remembers turning her former boyfriend over to the police. What does it take for someone to reveal unpleasant truths about a person they care for?

About the Author:

B. A. Binns is the pseudonym of Barbara Binns, a Chicago Area author who finds writing an exercise in self-discipline, and the perfect follow-up to her life as an adoptive parent and cancer survivor. She holds Masters degrees in both Biochemistry and Computer Science. Following a career as an Information Technology analyst, she studied creative writing at Harper College and Chicago State University.



She writes to attract and inspire both male and female readers with stories of “real boys growing into real men...and the people who love them.” She is a member of RWA (Romance Writers of America), the Chicago Writers Association, SCBWI (Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators) and YALSA (Young Adult Library Services Association).

In addition to *Die Trying*, she is the author of *PULL* ISBN [978-0-9881821-0-3](#) and *Being God* ISBN [978-0-9881821-1-1](#), coming in January 2013. *Pull* is on the School Library Journal's 2011 list of Best Books for Youth in Detention, YALSA's 2012 Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers, and was nominated for Indiana's 2012/2013 Eliot Rosewater award.

Her writing achievements include a first place in Oregon's 2009 Golden Rose contest, a 2010 National Readers Choice Award in the Young Adult category, and being a finalist in the RWA Golden Heart® contest. She also gives talks to teacher and librarian groups, having appeared at the 2011 ALAN, the 2011 and 2012 Ohio Educational Library Media Association (OEMLA), the 2012 Indiana Library Federation (ILF).

In the Author's Words: Why I Write

I have been researching reluctant readers and the “reading gap” ever since I attended a panel titled “Why Johnny Won't Read” during the 2008 Association of Writing Professionals conference. Teachers, librarians, and bookstore owners joined in lamenting the lack of books designed to capture young males. Since then I have come full circle and now write to capture both male and female readers, to entice reluctant readers and still hold the attention of good readers. I write about young people discovering that they are more than they think they are, and becoming everything they ever dreamed. In 2013 I come full circle, by giving a workshop on ways teachers and librarians can reach out to reluctant readers at the American Library Association.

Connect with the author on

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