

"Clever, dark, and hopeful."
—New York Times bestselling author V. E. Schwab



BOOK CLUB KIT

AUTHOR LETTER

Dear Reader,

The Wishing Game was born one rainy day when I was in the third grade. Our teacher Mrs. Glenn turned off the lights and put on *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory* for us to watch while she graded papers. In the dark at my little desk, I watched, mesmerized.

It's been a favorite film of mine ever since, and I rewatch it every couple of years, finding something new to delight in every time. I always cry when Willy places his hand on the sacrifice Charlie has made of his Everlasting Gobstopper and whispers, "So shines a good deed in a weary world . . ."

The world was feeling very weary and tired in the autumn of 2021. It seemed like the pandemic would never end. The idea for *The Wishing Game* had rolled around my mind for years, but I'd never started it. Then during lockdown, I asked myself, "If not now, then when?"

So I wrote it. A few ideas came together in the book—stuck in our houses, people were reading more books than they had in years. It made me think about the books that formed and shaped my life. I kept returning to the children's books I loved, rereading every year: *A Wrinkle in Time*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Westing Game*. And I remembered an *All Things Considered* episode I'd heard years earlier, the story of a lonely teenage boy who ran away from home and turned up on the doorstep of Piers Anthony, his favorite author. I thought of how broke I was in my twenties, mired in debt, how hopeless I felt that I would ever have the simplest things in life—a home, a family, a chance to write one book, maybe two?

Writing *The Wishing Game*, this love letter of a book to books, helped me write my way out of weariness. I hope its readers also find a little happiness on this journey with Lucy and Christopher, Jack, and Hugo.

Make a wish!
Meg Shaffer

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *The Wishing Game* revolves around the Clock Island books that so many children loved when they were growing up. Did reading this book remind you of when you fell in love with reading? What was your favorite book (or book series!) as a child?
2. The themes of “family” and “parenthood” are woven throughout the novel. Discuss each character’s experiences with family and how this impacts their decisions and motivations.
3. Lucy, Hugo, Christopher, and Jack all struggle with deeply rooted fears. How does each character face and overcome these?
4. Why do you think Jack Masterson recreated Clock Island in the real world? Why do you think it wasn’t finished before the game?
5. The author sometimes pairs scenes from the Clock Island books with chapters of *The Wishing Game*. Discuss how these two stories connect and why the author made this stylistic choice to help tell her story.
6. So much of the novel deals with family, especially the idea of “found family.” What do you think of the idea of “found families”? What do you think defines what “family” really is? Who is in your family of choice?
7. Were you surprised by the outcome of the contest?
8. What do you make of Hugo’s comment to Jack that he “can’t save the world”? How does Jack try to save everyone around him?
9. If you could travel to any fictional world, what would it be?
10. Who would you cast as each character in a movie adaption of *The Wishing Game*?

WHOOPIE PIES

The official state treat of Maine!

Ingredients

3 cups sugar
1 cup butter
4 eggs
½ cup vegetable oil
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
6 cups all-purpose flour
2 cups unsweetened cocoa powder
1 teaspoon baking powder
1½ tablespoons baking soda
1 teaspoon salt
3 cups milk

Directions

Preheat oven to 350°F, or preheat a convection oven to 315°F.

In a large bowl of an electric mixer, beat the sugar, butter, and eggs together until well combined. Add the oil and vanilla and beat again.

In a separate bowl, combine all of the dry ingredients. Add half of the dry mixture to the egg mixture and beat or stir to blend. Add 1½ cups milk and beat again. Add the remaining dry mixture and beat until incorporated. Add the remaining 1½ cups milk and beat until blended.

With a large spoon, scoop out 32 circles of batter onto a baking sheet. Bake for 10 to 12 minutes. Let cool.

Spread filling onto 16 circles and place remaining circles on top, to make 16 Whoopie Pies.

Filling

1½ cups shortening
3 cups confectioners' sugar
1⅓ cups marshmallow topping
Dash salt
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
⅓ to ½ cup milk

In the bowl of an electric mixer, combine all ingredients except the milk and beat well. Add just enough milk to achieve a creamy consistency. Spread filling across cooled cookie circles.

[Courtesy of the Food Network](#)



BLUEBERRY TEA COCKTAIL

Blueberries are the state fruit of Maine! Cozy up with this yummy blueberry tea cocktail.

Ingredients

0.8 fl. oz. Grand Marnier

0.8 fl. oz. Amaretto

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup Earl Grey Tea, freshly brewed, or Orange Pekoe Tea



PLAYLIST

[Listen on Random House's Spotify!](#)

COAT OF MANY COLORS – DOLLY PARTON

FIGHT SONG – RACHEL PLATTEN

CLOCKS – COLDPLAY

CARDIGAN – TAYLOR SWIFT

TIME AFTER TIME – CYNDI LAUPER

THE SECRET LIFE OF DAYDREAMS – PRIDE AND PREJUDICE SOUNDTRACK

BRAVE – SARA BAREILLES

STORY OF MY LIFE – ONE DIRECTION

ROCK AROUND THE CLOCK – BILL HALEY

DALURV – ÓLAFUR ARNALDS

IF I COULD TURN BACK TIME – CHER

RAINBOW – KACEY MUSGRAVES

WHEN WE WERE YOUNG – ADELE

KEEP YOUR HEAD UP – ANDY GRAMMER

A MILLION DREAMS – PINK

SOMEWHERE OUT THERE – LINDA RONSTADT

[I'VE HAD] THE TIME OF MY LIFE – JENNIFER WARNES

AIN'T NO MOUNTAIN HIGH ENOUGH – MARVIN GAYE AND TAMMI TERRELL

WUTHERING HEIGHTS – KATE BUSH

YOU'VE GOT A FRIEND IN ME – RANDY NEWMAN

CAN'T STOP THE FEELING! – JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE

HERE COMES THE SUN – THE BEATLES

HUNG THE MOON – DREW HOLCOMB AND THE NEIGHBORS