

WISH

DISCUSSION GUIDE

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By Barbara O'Connor
Farrar Straus Giroux (BYR)
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Middle-Grade Fiction
5.50 x 8.25 inches, 240 pages
Age Range: 9 to 12

About the Novel

Eleven-year-old Charlie Reese has been making the same secret wish every day since fourth grade. But when she is sent to live with family she barely knows, it seems unlikely that her wish will ever come true. That is, until she meets Wishbone, a skinny stray dog who captures her heart, and Howard, a neighbor boy who proves surprising in lots of ways. Suddenly Charlie is in serious danger of discovering that what she thought she wanted may not be what she needs at all.

From award-winning author Barbara O'Connor comes a middle-grade novel about a girl who, with the help of the dog of her dreams, discovers the true meaning of family.

Discussion Questions

1. Describe Charlemagne Reese—Charlie—and what's recently changed for her. How is she dealing with these new changes? What is the biggest change you ever faced?
2. Why is Charlie mad at her sister, Jackie? Who do you think she should be most mad at? Why?
3. What trick does Howard give Charlie to help her calm down? What do you do to calm down when you're mad?
4. Why do you think Charlie yells at Bertha (pg. 45)? How does Bertha respond? Why do you think she calls Charlie a "blessing" (p. 53)?
5. Describe the Odom home. How were Charlie's first impressions of their home all wrong? How does the Odom family affect Charlie's view of her own family?



6. Why is Wishbone so important to Charlie? Do you think Charlie and Wishbone have anything in common?
7. How does Charlie respond to Audrey at Sunday school (p. 113)? Compare it to the way Charlie responded to Audrey at the beginning of the book. What is different? What do these differences say about how Charlie is changing in Colby?
8. Why do you think Charlie insults Howard? What do you think of his reaction? What do you do when you say something wrong?
9. What does Bertha say you should judge a person by? Do you agree with her? How is Bertha's approach to parenting different from Charlie's mother?
10. How is Jackie different when she visits Charlie? Does Charlie like this difference? Why do you think Charlie wants to be more like her sister?
11. Why is the lunch note from Audrey's mother more important to Charlie than to Audrey (p. 185)? What does it inspire Charlie to do the next day?
12. Why do you think Bertha gets frustrated with Charlie's mom? How are Bertha and Jackie's view of Charlie's mom different from her own? How does Bertha try to make things right for Charlie?
13. Explain why Charlie doesn't need to wish on the first star of the evening. What do you think was her wish all along?

About the Author



Barbara O'Connor is the author of seventeen novels and biographies for children. Drawing on her South Carolina roots, Barbara's novels have a distinctly Southern voice. Her books have received many distinctions, including ALA Notable, NCTE Notable and Parents Choice Gold awards, and have been nominated for young readers' choice awards in thirty-eight states.



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