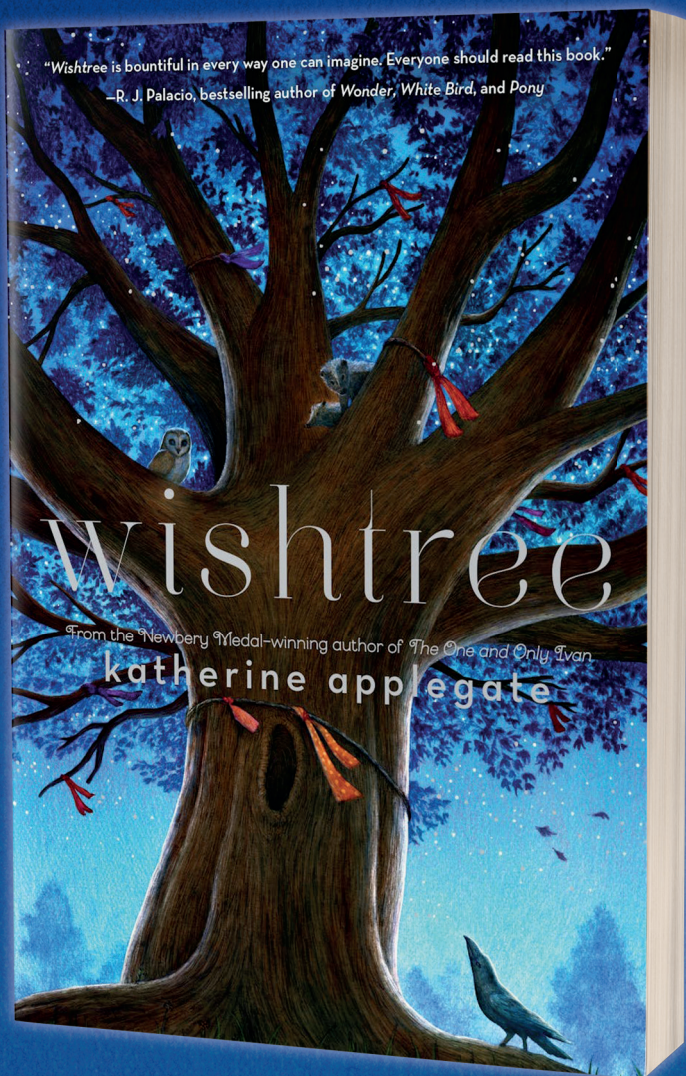


wishtree

Discussion Guide



About the Book

Trees can't tell jokes, but they can certainly tell stories . . .

Red is an oak tree who is many rings old. Red is the neighborhood wishtree—people write their wishes on pieces of cloth and tie them to Red's branches. Along with a crow named Bongo and other animals who seek refuge in Red's hollows, this wishtree watches over the neighborhood.

You might say Red has seen it all.

Until a new family moves in. Not everyone is welcoming, and Red's experience as a wishtree is more important than ever.

Funny, deep, warm, and nuanced, this is Katherine Applegate at her very best—writing from the heart, and from a completely unexpected point of view.

About the Author

katherine applegate is the author of *The One and Only Ivan*, winner of the Newbery Medal. Her most recent novel, *Crenshaw*, spent more than twenty weeks on the *New York Times* children's bestseller list, and her first middle-grade standalone novel, *Home of the Brave*, continues to be included on state reading lists, summer reading lists, and class reading lists. Katherine lives in Tiburon, California, with her family. katherineapplegate.com



Discussion Questions

1. Discuss Red's comment: "Making others feel safe is a fine way to spend your days." How does the tree make others feel safe? Is this statement referring only to the animal inhabitants of the tree? What does this comment tell you about the personality of the tree?
2. Why do the animals feel comfortable with Samar? Why does Bongo give her gifts? What qualities of her nature make the animals trust her? Why do these same qualities make it harder for her to make friends with other children?
3. Red compares the neighborhood to a garden, "wild and tangled and colorful." Why does the tree compare the people in the area to a garden? Why is the neighborhood not welcoming to Samar's family?
4. Describe the boy who carves a word in the tree. What does the author tell you about him and what assumptions can you make about his character? Why do you think he would carve that word into the tree? How does this act affect Red, Bongo, Samar, and her family? What effect does the carving have on Francesca? What are the feelings of the police who come to investigate?
5. Why does Francesca want to cut the tree down? What do the police officers, Max and Sandy, think about her reasons? Discuss Max's wish and what it means.
6. Discuss Red's description—"standing tall, reaching deep"—as it applies to the tree and as it applies to Samar. What personality traits do the tree and Samar have in common? How do those traits help them both cope with the changes in their lives?
7. Discuss Red's question: "How does friendship happen?" What is Bongo's answer? Why do you think Red and Bongo are friends? What makes them special to each other? What qualities do you look for in a friend? Why is it hard for Samar and Stephen to become friends?
8. Why does Red decide to speak to the children? How does this act change their relationship to the tree and to each other? Why will the tree not speak to Francesca?
9. How does Stephen help to make a difference in the neighborhood on Wishing Day? What is the message the children in the school deliver with their wishes? What makes Francesca change her mind about cutting down the tree?
10. Discuss Red's statement: "I wanted to make a difference, just a little difference, before I left this lovely world." What difference does Red make by talking to Stephen and Samar? Discuss Stephen's comment: "My parents aren't bad people. They're just . . . afraid of things." What do you think you can do to make a difference in this world?

