



BESTSELLING AUTHOR
JENNIFER MOORMAN

THE
MAGIC
ALL
AROUND

A NOVEL

READING GROUP GUIDE



This reading group guide for *The Magic All Around* includes an introduction, discussion questions, ideas for enhancing your book club, and bonus material to elevate your experience. The suggested questions are intended to help you find interesting topics and new perspectives for your discussion. We hope that this guide will add more magic to your conversation and increase your enjoyment of the book.

In this enchanting magical realism novel, a treasure hunt through the past reveals one woman's extraordinary gift for arranging the future, leading her family to love, hope, friendship, and new beginnings.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.** In some ways, *The Magic All Around*, is about the memories of places and people we carry with us throughout our lives—sometimes physical mementos and other things are intangible. What are some things you've been carrying with you, either in your heart or in a box of memories? Why have you kept these particular items or memories?
- 2.** Mamas and daughters is a big theme in this book. Some mamas we're born with, like Lilith and Mattie. Other mamas we receive as bonuses, like Penelope and Mattie. How do you relate to having multiple "mamas" who have cared for you or for people close to you?
- 3.** Friendship is another big theme in this book as is love. Who is your Lucy? Who has pulled you out of your shell and opened your eyes to the beauty of friendship? Who is your Jonathan? Who has made you feel essential and important and seen?
- 4.** Mattie has always loved painting, but she thought of it as more of a hobby until later in life. What's something you're passionate about that others might view as a hobby? Can you see yourself turning this hobby into something more? Why or why not?

5. Mattie and Jonathan met when they were teenagers, but they never forgot that first meeting. It made quite an impression on both of them. Have you ever met someone when you were younger and you still think of that person even today? What about that person resonated with you so deeply?

6. Lilith creates a scavenger hunt for Mattie that she is not thrilled about. What are your feelings about participating in a scavenger hunt? Do you find them boring or exciting? Would it change your mind about participating if the hunt led you toward a hefty inheritance?

7. A major theme of the book centers on the idea of figuring out who you are, being true to your feelings, and learning to have faith in others. Mattie, Penelope, Stephen, and Jonathan all move through a season of learning about themselves and being honest about not only what they've done but also about where they want to go. What parts of the story allow these transformations to happen for them? Have you ever experienced a season of self-realization? What or who helped you discover what was hidden in your heart?

8. There are a few love stories in this book. Which relationship was your favorite and why?

9. The Russell house has a personality of its own. What was your favorite aspect of the house? If given the opportunity, would you live in an enchanted house? Why or why not?

10. If you could go out for coffee or have lunch with one of the characters, who would you choose and why?

ELEVATE YOUR EXPERIENCE

- 1.** One thing Mattie realizes during this story is that her mom is more than just “her mom.” Lilith had a life before her daughter, and she had a life even when her daughter was part of it. Lilith wasn’t just Mattie’s mom. She was a friend, a lover, a daughter, an ex, an employee, a granddaughter, etc. You might be surprised to learn you’ve also placed the people you know into boxes and don’t think of them outside of how you’ve defined them. “Interview” people in your life and really listen to their stories. You might discover how little you know and how much more there is to learn about those you love.
- 2.** Do you have routines you stick to, such as the same people you speak to, shows you watch, or book genres you read? Mattie is encouraged to be open to new opportunities and experiences. Think of ways you can branch out from your everyday routines and open up yourself to new adventures.
- 3.** Try something new every month—a restaurant, a hobby, a new route home. Encourage a friend to go with you.
- 4.** Journal about the things that light you up, the things you love, and add more of those things to your daily life.
- 5.** Learn what else Jennifer is up to online at jennifermoorman.com.

CINNAMON ROLLS



These light, puffy cinnamon rolls are full of warm flavor and fill the kitchen with a cozy scent while baking. One bite will relax you even on your most stressful days. Paired with a cup of tea or a mug of hot cocoa, these are perfect for any day.

Prep Time: 1 hour 40 minutes

Baking Time: 25 minutes

Total: 2 hours 5 minutes

Yield: 12 rolls

Ingredients

For the dough:

1 cup warm whole milk

1/3 cup granulated sugar

6 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

1 teaspoon kosher salt

One .25-ounce package active dry yeast

2 large eggs

4 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting

Vegetable oil, for the bowl

For the filling:

6 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened, plus more for the baking dish

3/4 cup light brown sugar

Ingredients (cont.)

2 tablespoons ground cinnamon

1 cup chopped toasted pecans, optional

1/2 cup raisins, optional

For the icing:

2 cups confectioners' sugar

2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

4 tablespoons milk, plus more as needed

Directions

- 1.** For the dough: Combine the milk, granulated sugar, butter, salt and yeast in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the hook attachment and stir to combine well. Add the eggs and stir until well mixed. Add the flour and mix on medium-high speed until the dough is smooth and elastic, about 4 minutes.
- 2.** Transfer the dough to a large, lightly oiled bowl and cover with plastic wrap or a clean kitchen towel. Let stand in a warm, draft-free place until doubled in size, 1 1/2 to 2 hours.
- 3.** Punch the dough down and lightly flour a work surface. Lay the dough out and pat or roll the dough out into an 18-by-12-inch rectangle.
- 4.** For the filling: Butter a 13-by-9-inch glass baking dish. Spread the softened butter evenly all over the dough, leaving a 1/2-inch border, then sprinkle evenly with the brown sugar and cinnamon. Sprinkle with the pecans and raisins if using. Starting with a short end, roll up the dough and press and crimp the edges to seal. Cut the dough into 12 slices and arrange them in the buttered baking dish. If you want to bake them the same day, cover with plastic wrap and let stand until doubled in size, about 1 hour. Otherwise, refrigerate overnight; take out of the refrigerator and let sit at room temperature for 1 hour before baking.
- 5.** Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F. Bake the cinnamon rolls until puffed and golden brown all over, about 25 minutes.
- 6.** For the icing: Put the confectioners' sugar in a medium bowl. Whisk in the melted butter, vanilla and 4 tablespoons of milk; whisk until smooth. Add additional milk, about 1 teaspoon at a time, if needed to achieve a thick but spreadable consistency.
- 7.** Spread the icing over the warm cinnamon rolls. Serve warm.

THE MAGIC ALL AROUND PLAYLIST

[Listen on Spotify Here!](#)



- “I Put a Spell on You” by Nina Simone
- “Best of My Love” by The Emotions
- “Celebrate Me Home” by Kenny Loggins
- “The Weight” by The Band
- “Lean on Me” by Bill Withers
- “Gypsy” by Fleetwood Mac
- “Against All Odds” by Phil Collins
- “Little Lies” by Fleetwood Mac
- “Monster Mash” by Boris Pickett
- “I Only Have Eyes for You” by The Flamingos
- “Somebody’s Watching Me” by Rockwell

...and more!

A conversation with
Jennifer Moorman



Q: Was the title of your book, *The Magic All Around*, always the title?

A: No. When I originally wrote this book, it was a short story that I titled *October*. I hadn't thought much about ever doing anything with it, but when I decided to take the short story and create a full-length novel, I had absolutely no idea what the title would be. Even after I sent the finished manuscript to my editor, I hadn't a clue! But the wonderful team at Harper Muse helped come up with this brilliant title, and I loved it straightaway!

Q: Who's the main character of your book—and was that always their name?

A: Mattie is the *main* main character, although Jonathan and Penelope play significant roles too. Mattie wasn't her original name. I named her Piper, but my editor felt having Piper and Penelope might be too confusing for readers, so we changed it up. I know Piper will show up again somewhere.

Q: At the start of the book, what's the character's goal?

A: Mattie wants to go to Ivy Ridge, attend the funeral, and leave town. She has no idea where she's going, but she doesn't plan to stay in the small town long. Plans change!

Q: What was the core idea for this novel—a plot point? a theme?—and where did it come from?

A: I never start novels with a specific theme in mind. The theme, if there is one, evolves organically during the storytelling. If I were to pick out one theme in the novel, it would be the search for the barriers we build around ourselves to keep our hearts safe, which actually don't keep us safe but instead keep love out. Our task, like the poet Rumi encourages, is to seek out these barriers and take them down. With love, of course.

Q: At what point did you come up with the final version of the first line? What is it?

A: I removed about 3–4 pages of content from the original beginning. As much as I liked it, the information was too much backstory and didn't bring you into the action fast enough. Also, halfway through the story, I realized that I wanted Penelope to have a POV, so chapter 1 starts with her. I'd say this happened during the first major rewrite and was somewhat unexpected.

First two lines: People assumed July would be the hottest month in Ivy Ridge, Georgia—probably because it fell slapdab in the middle of the scorching summer months. But they were wrong.

Q: Did you know the ending of the book when you started?

A: I thought I did, ha! But during edits, I changed the ending POV to a completely new POV. I don't want to spoil it for you, but originally the final chapter was told through someone else's thoughts.

Q: What's something in this book that you've never done before?

A: I've never been on a real scavenger hunt that takes you across a city or through tasks. I think I'd be up for it because those type of adventures sound appealing to me.

Q: How do you want readers to feel when they close the book?

A: I hope readers feel uplifted, hopeful, and surrounded by the magic of the everyday. I hope they see that opening yourself up to love is worth the risk because love is never wasted. I hope they continue to look for the magic and synchronicities everywhere.

Q: What did you learn from this book? About writing, or life, or the writing life?

A: I learned more about how to create an interesting plot, how to move a story along without getting bogged down in side stories, and how not to give too much away too soon. That sounds like a lot because it is! But every story I write teaches me more about the craft and more about myself as a writer. I'm learning more every day about the kind of stories I want to share with the world.

Take a local pizza cooking class.

Take a local baking class.



Tuesday, January 16, 2024

text
Jonathan

Plant these twelve plants in the Russell family garden. Each plant must be labeled with its coordinating symbol/number: black-eyed susan, 5; bleeding heart, 6; columbine, 2; coneflower 7; geranium, 6; hibiscus; hydrangea, 1; lantana



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