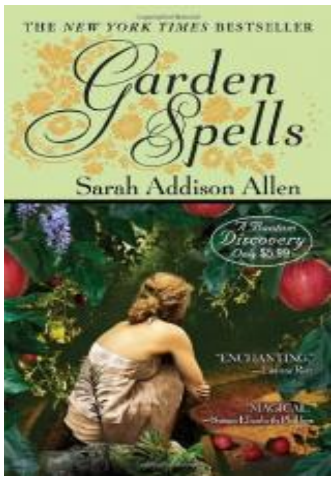
Garden Spells

by Sarah Addison Allen



About the Book

In a garden surrounded by a tall fence, tucked away behind a small, quiet house in an even smaller town, is an apple tree that is rumored to bear a very special sort of fruit. In this luminous debut novel, Sarah Addison Allen tells the story of that enchanted tree, and the extraordinary people who tend it.?

The Waverleys have always been a curious family, endowed with peculiar gifts that make them outsiders even in their hometown of Bascom, North Carolina. Even their garden has a reputation, famous for its feisty apple tree that bears prophetic fruit, and its edible flowers, imbued with special powers. Generations of Waverleys tended this garden. Their history was in the soil. But so were their futures.

A successful caterer, Claire Waverley prepares dishes made with her mystical plants?from the nasturtiums that aid in keeping secrets and the pansies that make children thoughtful, to the snapdragons intended to discourage the attentions of her amorous neighbor. Meanwhile, her elderly cousin, Evanelle, is known for distributing unexpected gifts whose uses become uncannily clear. They are the last of the Waverleys?except for Claire?s rebellious sister, Sydney, who fled Bascom the moment she could, abandoning Claire, as their own mother had years before.

When Sydney suddenly returns home with a young daughter of her own, Claire?s quiet life is turned upside down?along with the protective boundary she has so carefully constructed around her heart. Together again in the house they grew up in, Sydney takes stock of all she left behind, as Claire struggles to heal the wounds of the past. And soon the sisters realize they must deal with their common legacy?if they are ever to feel at home in Bascom?or with each other.

Enchanting and heartfelt, this captivating novel is sure to cast a spell with a style all its own?.

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Discussion Guide

1. Could you be persuaded that certain plants have powers, as Claire describes and uses them? If you believed you possessed the magical powers that Claire has inherited, how would you use them? What?s the first thing you would do?

2. Which of the sisters resonates with you personally? Claire believes everything?everyone?is temporary. She clings to home and makes herself content. Sydney?s philosophy is ?you can?t hold on to everything,? and so has a history of very temporary, noncommittal relationships. Are their outlooks two sides of the same coin? What is the nature of the shift that occurs for each of them?

3. Sydney does what she feels she has to do in running with her daughter. What is your reaction to her dilemma, and her choice?

4. Sydney uses her birth name, Waverley, when she returns to her hometown, after hating the name all her life; she even gives her own daughter the Waverley surname. Why do you think she does this?

5. Do you relate to Emma?s passion for Hunter John? Is it possible for someone else to manipulate personal circumstances as Emma and her mother do?

6. How do you explain Claire?s attraction-repulsion to Tyler? Why do you think Claire sees violet sparks hovering around him the first time she meets him? What makes her eventually realize they are destined to be together?

7. Do you think a child can have the kind of insight and sensitivity that Bay demonstrates? Could a man have it? If not, why?

8. The four Waverley women in this novel (Claire, Sydney, Bay, Evanelle) have special gifts. Which of the four gifts would you like to have yourself? Why?

9. Fred observes, ?You are who you are, whether you like it or not, so why not like it?? How does this statement relate to the different characters in the book?

10. Claire thinks, ?When you tell a secret to someone, embarrassing or not, it forms a connection. That person means something to you simply by virtue of what he knows.? Do you agree with this? Can a secret be a positive thing? A negative thing?

11. Which character changes the most over the course of the book? What does he or she learn? What had to take place in order for this to happen?

12. Do you consider this to be a ?southern? novel? Besides its setting, what characteristics make it so?

13. If you knew that biting into a Waverley apple would reveal your future? would you bite? Why or why not?

Author Bio

Sarah Addison Allen is the *New York Times* bestselling author of GARDEN SPELLS, THE SUGAR QUEEN, THE GIRL WHO CHASED THE MOON, THE PEACH KEEPER, LOST LAKE, FIRST FROST, OTHER BIRDS and PAPER GHOSTS. She was born and raised in Asheville, North Carolina.

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