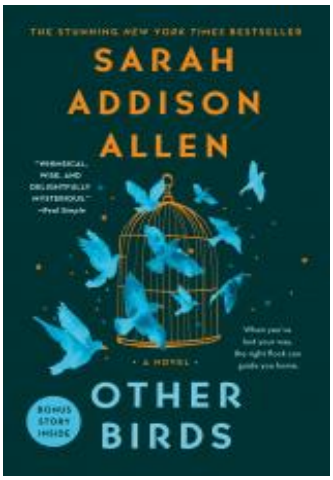
Other Birds

by Sarah Addison Allen



About the Book

From the acclaimed author of GARDEN SPELLS comes an enchanting tale of lost souls, lonely strangers, secrets that shape us, and how the right flock can guide you home.

Down a narrow alley in the small coastal town of Mallow Island, South Carolina, lies a stunning cobblestone building comprised of five apartments. It?s called The Dellawisp, and it is named after the tiny turquoise birds who, alongside its human tenants, inhabit an air of magical secrecy.

When Zoey Hennessey comes to claim her deceased mother?s apartment at The Dellawisp, she meets her quirky, enigmatic neighbors, including a girl on the run, a grieving chef whose comfort food does not comfort him, two estranged middle-aged sisters and three ghosts. Each with their own story. Each with their own longings. Each whose ending isn?t yet written.

When one of her new neighbors dies under odd circumstances the night Zoey arrives, she is thrust into the mystery of The Dellawisp, which involves missing pages from a legendary writer whose work might be hidden there. She soon discovers that many unfinished stories permeate the place, and the people around her are in as much need of healing from wrongs of the past as she is. To find their way they have to learn how to trust each other, confront their deepest fears, and let go of what haunts them.

Delightful and atmospheric, OTHER BIRDS is filled with magical realism and moments of pure love that won?t let you go. Sarah Addison Allen shows us that between the real and the imaginary, there are stories that take flight in the most extraordinary ways.

Discussion Guide

1. After Zoey?s mom died, she grew up in a house that never felt like a home to her. However, she finds a home on Mallow Island. What makes up the idea of home for Zoey? What is your idea of home? Is it a place, or people that make a home?

2. Zoey?s neighbors are a quirky bunch, but they soon become her chosen family. Which character do you most identify with? Is that character also your favorite? Why or why not?

3. In chapter 10, Frasier says, ?There are birds, and then there are other birds. Maybe they don?t sing. Maybe they don?t fly. Maybe they don?t fit in. I don?t know about you, but I?d much rather be an other bird than just the same old thing.? Who are the ?other birds? in the novel? How did the imagery of the various birds impact your reading of the story? What did you think of the Dellawisps? What do the birds represent?

4. When Zoey leaves home for Mallow Island, it is both an end and a beginning. Think about the following statement: *Endings are beginnings and beginnings are endings.* Can you think of some examples in the novel where this statement is true? What about in your own life?

5. Zoey and Oliver both leave home at pivotal times of transition and self-exploration in their lives. Discuss the themes of self-discovery and growth and their importance in the novel. What does Zoey?s self-discovery look like? What about Oliver?s? How does their self-discovery and growth affect their relationships with the other characters and each other? How did each character change from the beginning to the end of the novel?

6. How did the chapters from the point of view of the various ghosts affect your reading of the novel? How would the story have been different without these chapters? What do the ghosts represent, both literally and metaphorically, for each of the characters?

7. Food is inextricably linked to the people and places in our lives, and by recreating a memorable meal we can feel reconnected to our past. Mac expresses love through food, as Camille once did for him. For example, he invites Charlotte and Zoey to his restaurant
and makes Charlotte breakfast the morning after she stayed overnight. In chapter 18, when Charlotte realizes Mac has feelings for her, she says ?This is what being full feels like.? How do you express your love? What role does food play in your life? Who or what does it connect you to?

8. Think about the aspects of magical realism in OTHER BIRDS. In chapter 9, Zoey says, ?Invisible did not always mean imaginary,? and in chapter 22, she says, ?Not everything has to be real to be true.? How is this evident in the novel? Do you agree? How have you experienced these sentiments in your life?

9. When Charlotte, whose birth name is Pepper, escapes the cult she grew up in, she takes her late friend Charlotte?s name to protect herself, but also to reinvent herself. After her mother exposes this secret, Charlotte thinks about going on the run again in chapter 21, and how ?she would have to change her name, her whole identity, again... It was like losing *herself* all over again.? What does a name mean to Charlotte? Do you agree that a name is tied to an identity? Discuss the importance of name and identity to Roscoe/Frasier and Paloma/Pigeon. What does a name mean to you?

10. Each character in this novel has a complex past that contributes to who they are and where they are in their lives. For example, Charlotte escaped a painful childhood to reinvent herself as an independent artist on Mallow Island. Think

about your past. How has it contributed to who you are today?

11. How did you feel after you found out that Pigeon was Paloma?s spirit guarding Zoey? What role does Pigeon play in the story before learning she is Paloma?s spirit? In your opinion, did the revelation change Pigeon?s importance in the story? Why or why not?

12. A lush and vivid setting is integral to Sarah Addison Allen?s novels, and Mallow Island is no different. How real did you find Mallow Island? Is it a place you?d like to visit? Were you surprised by how marshmallows got their name?

13. In chapter 9, Zoey finds four highlighted passages in Lizbeth?s copy of *Sweet Mallow*:

History is known for sugar-coating. Sometimes it?s the only thing that can make it palatable.

Second chances are not to be wasted. It is one of the most valuable lessons we can learn in life.

Stories aren?t fiction. Stories are fabric. They?re the white sheets we drape over our ghosts so we can see them.

Once I got over the guilt of loving my future more than I loved my past, my old life dropped away and became make-believe, and my present life became my second birth.

Which of these lines most resonates with you? Discuss.

14. *Sweet Mallow* is a book within a book. Taking into consideration what you learned about *Sweet Mallow*, what are the similar themes of *Sweet Mallow* and OTHER BIRDS? Did you want to read *Sweet Mallow*?

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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