

Background about the Book – Wenny Has Wings

Is there life after death?

Will North thinks so. He and his little sister, Wenny, both died when they were hit by a truck. Will remembers seeing Wenny flying ahead of him toward a golden light. He almost followed her, until he remembered his parents and was pulled back into life. But now Will is angry. He blames himself for Wenny's death, believing there must have been *something* he could have done to prevent the accident. He's mad at his grieving parents, who act as if they can never be happy again. And he is furious with Wenny, not only for insisting on going with him to the store on the day of the accident, but also for leaving him behind. Will thinks that talking about his near-death experience may comfort his parents and help heal his family. But no one seems willing to listen to him.

Will's pastor tells him that when he's angry, he writes letters to God, but Will decides he'd rather write letters to Wenny. So he does, in a touching, funny, and honest correspondence that will make readers cry, wonder, hope...and believe.

simonandschuster.com

About the Author



Biography

Janet Lee Carey grew up in Mill Valley, California, in a house very much like the one in this book. And like Zoe's house, it was surrounded by ancient redwoods that whispered in the night. In the morning, sunlight cut through ocean mist and fingered through the trees. It was in this magic place that Janet first dreamed of writing children's books.

In addition to this book, Janet is also the author of *Wenny Has Wings* and *Molly's Fire*. A teacher, she lives with her family near Phantom Lake in Washington.

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Reviews – Wenny Has Wings

"... (Carey) her characterizations are generally precise and poignant in their accuracy."
Publishers Weekly Review

"A gentle epistolary novel requiring at least three hankies. it allows a heartrending glimpse into what happens in a family when a child dies." *Kirkus Reviews*

Novelistplus.com

Will North, 11, is in the hospital recuperating from an accident in which his little sister was killed. While still in the emergency room, he sees her flying free and happy in the sky, but returns to his body after seeing his parents' grief. He cannot speak to them about his survivor's guilt, his anger at his sister for dying, or his near-death experience. His father in particular *has* great difficulty in coping with his loss, eventually leaving the family in order to sort things out. Mr. James, a church youth leader, gives Will a notebook in which to write his feelings and the boy decides to write letters to *Wenny*, telling her what is going on. Through friendship with his good-natured hospital roommate and the patient, nonjudgmental Mr. James, Will works through the stages of grief and begins healing. The ending is hopeful, with the entire family enrolled in counseling. This book is a useful meditation on death and guilt, particularly for letting children know that adults may have difficulty in dealing with their emotions. Although Will can be a bit disingenuous and the other characters are not fully fleshed out, this novel's unusual focus on near-death experiences should appeal to some readers.

School Library Journal

Will North and his seven-year-old sister, Wenny, were crossing the street when a truck's brakes failed. Both of them died, but the doctor brought Will back. Now he must deal with the loss of his sister and his drastically changed parents who barely acknowledge one another and find it difficult to deal with his survival. Will is sure he knows the reason why, but readers won't find out until the conclusion, which is intriguing but rushed. Until then, Carey provides an interesting take on a fresh topic—children who have had near-death experiences. Will tells his story in a series of letters to Wenny. He blames himself for not being able to protect her and he's angry with her for leaving him alone. There are some problems with the narrative: Will can sound both older and younger than his 11 years, and obvious information, like the name of their dog, is sometimes tucked awkwardly into the text. Yet despite the many books on death, this one stands apart—for its particularly good job of illuminating the sibling relationship and its unique capturing of the phenomenon of heading into the light.

Booklist

Read Alikes – Wenny Has Wings

Toughboy and Sister by Kirkpatrick Hill

The Million Dollar Goal by Dan Gutman

Tarantula Shoes by Tom Birdseye

Radiance Descending by Paula Fox

Jakeman by Deborah Ellis

Novelistplus.com

Discussion Questions: Wenny Has Wings

1. From what Will writes to Wenny, what kind of person do you think she was?
2. How do her parents remember her?
3. Are these memories changed because Wenny is dead?
4. Why do Will's parents become so upset when he wants to make Wenny a birthday cake or is in her room?
5. When Will tries to tell the adults about the light and tunnel, how do they react?
6. Why do you think they did and said the things they did to Will?
7. If you had a friend who had a near death experience, what do you think you would say to them?
8. Do you believe that near death experiences really happen?
9. If a situation similar to this were to happen to you, would you tell anyone? Why or why not?

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GENERAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The following questions can be applied to any book. You can tweak the questions for your specific book. They can be cut into strips and passed around in a basket to help facilitate discussion.

My favorite part of the book was...

A better title for this book would be...because...

(Name of character) reminds me of myself because...

My least favorite character was...because...

If I were (name of character, -----) I would (wouldn't) have...

(Name of character) reminds me of someone I know because...

I changed my mind about...because...

I would (wouldn't) like to read another book by this author because...

This book made me think...When I finished this book, I still wondered...

This book reminded me of...

I'd like to tell the author...

What happened in this book was very realistic (unrealistic) because...

This book was better (worse) than the movie version because...

When I started reading his book, I thought...

I didn't like...because...

This book made me realize...

If I could talk to (name of character), I would say...

One thing I have noticed about the author's style is...

If I could be any character in the book I would be...because...

I was surprised when...

I think the main thing the writer was trying to say was...

The most important thing about this book is...

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I predicted that...

I think the writer must be ...because...

I would change the ending...