

"A heartwarming story about
our need for miracles—
and our ability to create them."

—KATARINA BIVALD, *New York Times*
bestselling author of *The Readers of Broken Wheel*
Recommend and *Check In at the Pine Away Motel*

The Fifteen Wonders of Daniel Green

ERICA BOYCE

READING GROUP GUIDE



1. Munsen is a dying town, and Sam wants to breathe new life into it with his creative scheme. How accurately do you think *The Fifteen Wonders of Daniel Green* portrays small-town America? Have you ever been to or lived in a place like Munsen?
2. Daniel travels across America and has stayed in many different towns; on the other hand, Molly has lived in the same place for most of her life. How do you think they differ in their definitions of home, and how would you describe it for yourself?
3. Even though we only see Claire in flashbacks, she is a strong character throughout the present narrative. Why do you think it is so hard for Daniel to let her go, and how is she different or similar to Nessa?
4. How did you feel about the progression of Daniel and Nessa's friendship? Are you happy with the status of their relationship at the end of the book?

5. Why do you think Nessa hides her obsessive-compulsive disorder from Daniel until midway through the book?
6. Why do you think everyone in Munsen feels responsible for finishing Daniel's final circle?
7. If you were designing a crop circle for your hometown, what would it look like? Why would it look like that?
8. Charlie loves his father, but it is unclear if he forgives Sam for the pain he inflicted on him when he came out. How do you reconcile your feelings toward a family member's imperfections or intolerance?
9. Although the group of circlemakers is decidedly *not* from outer space, do you have any stories about aliens or other paranormal activity that have provided just a pinch more mystery to your life?
10. What are the messages or inspirations you took away from reading this book, and how would you describe the one that resonated strongest with you?
11. Where do you think Daniel, Nessa, and the rest of the residents in Munsen will be in five years? What do you think will have changed, and what will stay the same?

A CONVERSATION WITH THE AUTHOR



Do you remember the moment when that first spark of inspiration flashed through your mind for *The Fifteen Wonders of Daniel Green*?

I was in college—nine years ago as of publication date, yikes!—so it’s a little blurry at this point, but I do remember messing around on YouTube. At the time, YouTube was a much smaller place, and it was possible to stumble across something new without falling down an endless black hole of videos. I found a clip about how crop circles are made and just found the whole process so fascinating. I dug into the Circlemakers.org website; even back then, they had a very helpful curated list of resources to learn more. I knew I had to write about it, so I did! I wrote three chapters for my senior year creative writing class, one of which was from a completely different and pointless fourth character’s perspective, which will now never see the light of day! And then I proceeded to neglect them for another six years, thinking about Daniel and the Bartses during my commutes without writing a word before finally sitting my butt down in front of a notebook in 2016 to finish a draft.

Vermont plays such a rich role in your book. Do you have any background with that part of the world?

I do! My great-great-uncle built a cabin on a lake in Vermont in 1926, and my family has been going there every summer since long before I was born. The town is pretty rural, full of dirt roads and farmland and wonderful people, and when I learned more about farming when I was in college in New Hampshire, I felt drawn to writing about that side of Vermont.

Each character is so different and richly realized. Additionally, they all feel so familiar and therefore accessible. Which character is most like you, and why?

Honestly, I think every main character I've ever written has a little part of me in there somewhere. Maybe that sounds kind of self-centered, but writing can be a very self-centered (maybe *introspective* is a nicer word) process! The most obvious answer would be Nessa, because I also have OCD and a lot of her stories about grappling with the disorder before her diagnosis and dealing with the diagnosis once it came are very similar to my own. And I do love *Anne of Green Gables*! But Nessa's also much more outgoing than I am, so there's a bit of wish fulfillment there. Personality-wise, I'm more of a quiet Daniel type, all too aware of and a little embarrassed by my own shyness. Finally, I was really starting to get into baking bread around the time I wrote Molly's first chapter, so I guess that's where you can find me in her!

Did people you actually know inspire any of the characters in your story?

There are bits and pieces of real people in lots of those characters, just like there's bits and pieces of me. I don't know if I could ever base a character entirely off a person

in real life—I'd be too worried that I'd get it wrong or that, in trying to be honest, I would hurt some feelings along the way. I've already had a few friends ask if they're "in the book," so now I'm doubly careful to make sure no one is!

Nessa is in love with *Anne of Green Gables*. If you were to sit in the open air on a porch with a view of the rolling Vermont hills, what would you be reading?

Hmm. The honest answer is probably whatever's next on my to-be-read pile; sadly, I rarely have time to revisit my favorites, although I did reread *Anne* in college! But if time were unlimited, I would probably reach for one of my all-time favorites—maybe *The Sleepwalker's Guide to Dancing* by Mira Jacob or *Born Confused* by Tanuja Desai Hidier or *Let the Great World Spin* by Colum McCann. I've also felt a strong urge lately to revisit Megan McCafferty's Jessica Darling series now that I'm supposedly an adult, so those might show up, as well.

Will you describe your favorite writing place for us?

I do most of my writing in my home office, which is my favorite room in our house. We built a desk that spans the whole width of one wall out of some IKEA cabinets and a countertop, and one side is for working and the other is for my craft supplies. The "working" side is right in front of a window that looks out on our street, which is a nice distraction when my characters just won't cooperate with this whole plot thing. The corgi who's usually sitting at my feet begging for attention doesn't hurt, either.

Finish this sentence: One time I was so engrossed in a book that I...

...started crying in the middle of a restaurant! When I was

younger, I read everywhere: walking down stairs, sitting in a pool, and, yes, under the table when my family was out to dinner (sorry, Mom and Dad). That time, I was reading *My Friend Flicka*, and there's a scene in the book where the main character tries to save his horse from drowning. I've always had a soft spot for animal characters, and I just started full-on bawling, unable to tell my poor parents what was wrong.

Oh, and there was also the time I tried to finish reading a book during class in high school and got caught. Because I was sitting in the front row. In English class. Sorry, Mr. Potts.

What do you do when you're not putting pen to paper?

I just love making things. That "crafting" side of my desk has a huge pegboard mounted above it with all my supplies hanging from it—my husband and father-in-law built it for me after several years of dealing with fabric, pins, and punched-out bits of paper on every available surface in our apartment. I do a fair bit of sewing, but also love calligraphy and hand-lettering, cross-stitching, and occasionally knitting, though the results are usually disastrous. I'm also very lucky in that our yard has room for gardening, so every summer, I spend a fair bit of time outside planting flowers in the front and veggies in the back, fighting a constant losing battle against the neighborhood rabbits. I think the long and short of it is that I like being able to hold something in my hands and know that I made it, even if the end result isn't the prettiest.

As a debut author, what was the most surprising discovery you found on your journey to becoming published?

The whole process has been completely surreal! I've

dreamed about writing a book since I was a kid, and even when I finally got up the guts to actually sit down and finish a novel, it was still something that mostly lived in my head. To have other people read it and hopefully connect with the characters that I'd been thinking about for so long...it's been a dream, seriously.

What piece of advice would you give to aspiring writers?

Don't give up, but also have patience with yourself. If I'd written an entire manuscript back when I wrote the first few chapters of this book nine years ago, it would've been a very, very different book—and, I suspect, not a very good one. I think you have to be disciplined to get the words down on the page, but there's also something to be said for letting things simmer in your head for a while and, in the meantime, going out and making your living however you can, collecting experiences and people and feelings that you can funnel into your characters when the time comes.

If there's one thing you'd like readers to take away from *The Fifteen Wonders of Daniel Green*, what would it be?

Your “legacy” can consist of any number of things. You can leave an impact on your job, your community, your family. And you can leave a legacy more than once: at the end of your life, at the end of your career, or even just at the end of a particular phase of your life. But no matter where or when you leave it, your legacy should not be one of intolerance.