

## Book Club Discussion Guide



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# The Shape of Thunder

By Jasmine Warga

## About the authors:

Jasmine Warga is the New York Times-bestselling author of middle grade novels *Other Words For Home* and *The Shape of Thunder*. *Other Words For Home* earned multiple awards, including a John Newbery Honor, a Walter Honor for Young Readers, and a Charlotte Huck Honor. *The Shape of Thunder* was a School Library Journal best book of 2021, and has been named to several state reading lists. She is also the author of young adult books, *My Heart and Other Black Holes* and *Here We Are Now*, which have been translated into over twenty different languages. Her next novel, *A Rover's Story*, will be out on October 4, 2022. Jasmine currently teaches in the MFA program at Vermont College of Fine Arts. Originally from Cincinnati, she now lives in the Chicago-area with her family in a house filled with books.

Source: Author's website: (<http://jasminewarga.com/>)

## About this book:

Cora hasn't spoken to her best friend, Quinn, in a year.

Despite living next door to each other, they exist in separate worlds of grief. Cora is still grappling with the death of her beloved sister in a school shooting, and Quinn is carrying the guilt of what her brother did.

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On the day of Cora’s twelfth birthday, Quinn leaves a box on her doorstep with a note. She has decided that the only way to fix things is to go back in time to the moment before her brother changed all their lives forever—and stop him.

In spite of herself, Cora wants to believe. And so the two former friends begin working together to open a wormhole in the fabric of the universe. But as they attempt to unravel the mysteries of time travel to save their siblings, they learn that the magic of their friendship may actually be the key to saving themselves.

The Shape of Thunder is a deeply moving story, told with exceptional grace, about friendship and loss—and how believing in impossible things can help us heal.

Source: Publisher’s website (<https://www.harpercollins.com/>)

### Discussion Questions:

1. Cora is frustrated that people try to remember her sister as a perfect person, which she wasn’t. Cora wants to remember Mabel as she was (p. 5). Why do people sometimes change their memories of those who have passed on? Do you think it is healthier to think of the departed as perfect, or to honor their flaws as well? Why?
2. Quinn has a difficult time performing in class. On page 8, she says, “I lose track of my thoughts a lot. I have so many of them that by the time it comes to write them down, it ends up coming out all wrong, and my teachers start to think I don’t have any thoughts at all.” Do you think there should be a way for young people who think differently to earn credit for their abundant, often creative thoughts? What might that look like if schools were run differently?
3. Quinn says, “My brother does not deserve to be saved after what he did, but I can’t help wanting to save him anyway” (p. 28). Do you agree that he does not deserve to be saved? Why or why not?

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4. Quinn has to think about when her brother became the new person capable of such a horrible crime, and how far in time she would have to go back in order to save him. Do you think there was a point at which she could have saved him? When would it be, and what would she have to do? How can reading this story help someone who is watching a loved one go down a dangerous path?
5. Quinn blames herself for what happened, since she didn't stop her brother when she saw warning signs. Cora also says "I think you should've stopped him" (p. 120). Do you believe Quinn is to blame? How does feeling responsible affect her? How can she change when she lets go of that feeling?
6. Quinn says several times that she and her brother were not allowed to cry. How do you think holding in their emotions affected each of them? Dr. Randall "doesn't make a big deal about it" when Cora cries during therapy sessions (p. 80). Do you think crying is important? Why or why not?
7. Discuss Cora's visit with Dr. Randall (pp. 77-81). How is Dr. Randall different from other people? Why do you think his behaviors help Cora speak about and heal from her trauma? How do you think therapy differs from speaking with a family member or friend who cares about you?
8. Cora and Quinn argue a bit over whether they're seeking science or magic. They settle on "science that feels magical" (p. 127). Do you think time travel would be magic, science, both, or something else? Reread Cora's talk with her dad from the bottom of page 251 to the top of page 253. Do you see parallels between magic, emotions, and science?
9. In her last letter to her brother, Quinn writes what Cora's Gram said, that "the dead belong to the living. ... it's the people who are alive who create the memory of the dead person" (p. 271). She decides she can love Parker without excusing or forgiving what he did. How does this final letter show Quinn's growth?

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10. As a book of realistic fiction, how many ways could their time travel quest have ended? How did it feel going through this journey with them? Did you hope they would succeed? How did the end make you feel? What do you think the author was trying to show? How would the story feel different if the author had chosen to write it as magical realism? Which would you prefer for this story?

Source: Author's website: (<http://jasminewarga.com/>)