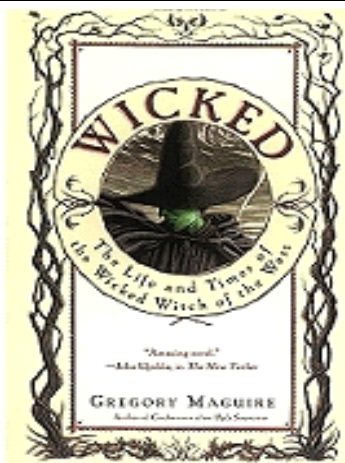




Discussion Guide



About the Book

Book Title: *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West*

Author: Gregory MacGuire

Published by HarperCollins, 1995

Author Website: www.gregorymacquire.com

Book Website: <http://www.gregorymaguire.com/books/wicked.html>

Available on: Amazon.com, BN.com, Kindle, Nook, ebook, + more

Questions for Discussion

What were your general impressions of the book?

What did you most like about the book and what did you most dislike?

Read over the MAMs comments. Which of the MAMs do you most agree with and why?

What would you say MacGuire's perspective is on good and evil? Spirituality? Making positive changes in society?

What is the significance of Elphaba's green skin in the story? What do you think it represents in our society?

Is Elphaba evil? Are her actions? Is there such a thing as evil? If so, what is it and how does it happen?

How does social class define Oz? What is the role of animals? Why does Elphaba fight for them?

If you were writing the back story for the Wizard of Oz, would you do it this way, or what story would you craft?

Would you recommend this book for other Book Clubs? Why or why not?

In what ways, if any, will this book change your life or perspective?

The author's website has many more questions at:

http://www.gregorymaguire.com/books/wicked_guide.html

Nancy and the MAMs discuss the book...



NANCY: What an artful masterpiece! Gregory MacGuire offers an intricate story with well-developed characters and deep layers, including meandering commentary on the problem of evil and suffering, while creating the back story for the beloved tale of the Wizard of Oz.

I must admit, I read slowly and not terribly eagerly at first, my perspective colored by those who told me that the book is very dark, and not as good as the musical. But I quickly became intrigued and engaged as Elphaba's struggle to do good unfolds.

Discrimination and injustice disturb me. I have joined efforts of to work against them for many years. I appreciate that this book puts these deep rooted societal issues at the center of the story. As I have found in my work, there are no simple paths to stop the mistreatment. Those who work for justice are often silenced and marginalized as in MacGuire's novel.

The book causes me to think more carefully about the problem of evil. In the past, the "witches" were burned at the stake for their perceived evil. In this book, MacGuire casts evil in the form of empire to a large extent, and sorcery becomes more of a profession, used from time to time in good and bad ways by individuals. The "witch" characters seem to fear they are merely pawns in the games of the powerful. And the Wicked Witch spends much of her efforts seeking forgiveness, an unlikely past time for an evil sorcerer. On the other hand, I found myself noticing that few, if any characters came off as "good," or free of sin. And I know we all share both light and the shadow, as we follow the yellow brick road through our lives.



MOLLY: I love the song in the musical version of "Wicked" – "For Good." I kept waiting for the redemption of the relationship between Glinda and Elphaba. Although, initially they seemed to connect and influence each other somewhat positively, the relationship soured through the book and neither seemed to be redeemed as time passed. This disappointed me. I wanted to come away with a positive memory of female relationships. Oh well, I guess I'll have to continue to look to the MAMs for that experience!



ABIGAIL: The "Unnamed God" seems to get a bum rap in this story. Those who purport to follow the spiritual path, such as Nessarose and Frex, are seen as one step removed from reality. Yet, perhaps they are judged for their lack of love and self-centeredness, despite their adherence to their beliefs. Whereas, Elphaba who appears to be the agnostic in the bunch, seeks to liberate the oppressed be absolved of her own sin. I don't like this depiction of the spiritual life, but imagine it rings true for many.



SALLIE: I was concerned for the children in this story. It didn't seem that many had very good childhoods! Why did Elphaba neglect her own child, Liir, and then try so hard to liberate Nor? Why did Frex choose Nessarose over Ephie? How could Sarmina allow her children to mistreat Liir? I found myself wanting to scold the parents and then invite these children into my classroom!



PRISCILLA: : I don't like this book. And I would say it's totally unsuitable for young readers. I hope this is banned from the schools. Where was Jesus? Where was scripture? Witches, spells, brews, sorcery. It's the realm of Satan and I don't think we should read this stuff.



KATHERINE: I was intrigued with the ways MacGuire creates the back story for the Wizard of Oz. I've always thought of the Wizard of Oz to be a fairly benign children's story brimming with lessons and morals. From Dorothy's realization "There's no place like home," to the Lion, Scarecrow and Tin Man's reframing of their perceived shortcomings, all set in a magical land where munchkins sing and the Wizard is disclosed by a dog to be acting out his own fantasy of power. I hadn't given much thought to the witches in the story! Now I have. I would say MacGuire has chosen to focus on the negative in this story!



JANE: Speaking of baptism! I found myself wondering what was going on with Elphaba and the water. Was she afraid of baptism? Was she afraid of the transformation that might bring? I found myself wanting to douse her and get it over. Kudos to Dorothy for trying to save her from the fire with water. But you have wonder -- was she saved at last? Or was she just killed? A good book because it made me ponder.