

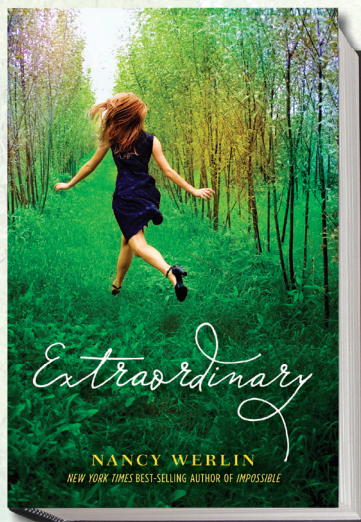
## A DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR

# Extraordinary

BY NATIONAL BOOK AWARD FINALIST

NANCY WERLIN

978-0-8037-3372-5 (HC) • \$17.99 • Ages 12 up • Grades 7 up



Available September 2010!

## ABOUT THE BOOK

### A BEST FRIEND'S DECEPTION LEADS TO THE ULTIMATE BETRAYAL

Phoebe Rothschild finds herself drawn to Mallory, the strange and secretive new kid in school, and the two girls become as close as sisters . . . until Mallory's magnetic older brother, Ryland, shows up during their junior year. Ryland has an immediate, exciting hold on Phoebe—but a dangerous hold, for she begins to question her feelings about her best friend and, worse, about herself. Soon she'll discover the shocking, fantastical truth about Ryland and Mallory, and about an age-old debt they expect Phoebe to pay. Will she be strong enough to resist? Will she be special enough to save herself?



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

NANCY WERLIN was a National Book Award Finalist for *The Rules of Survival* and winner of the Edgar Award for *The Killer's Cousin*. Her previous novel, *Impossible*, is a *New York Times* Bestseller, an ALA Best Book for Young Adults, and a *Booklist* Editors' Choice, among other honors. Nancy and her husband live in Melrose, Massachusetts. Visit her at [www.nancywerlin.com](http://www.nancywerlin.com).

## ALSO BY NANCY WERLIN

AGES 12 UP • GRADES 7 UP

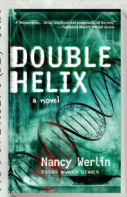
978-0-8037-3002-1 (HC) • \$17.99  
978-0-14-241491-0 (PB) • \$9.99



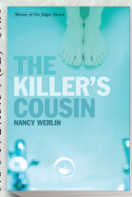
978-0-8037-2605-5 (HC) • \$16.99  
978-0-14-250028-6 (PB) • \$6.99



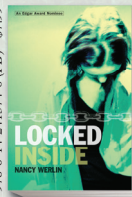
978-0-8037-2606-2 (HC) • \$16.99  
978-0-14-240327-3 (PB) • \$6.99



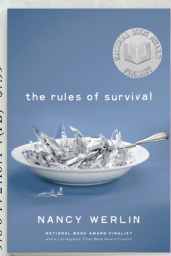
978-0-8037-3370-1 (HC) • \$18.99  
978-0-14-241371-9 (PB) • \$7.99



978-0-8037-3369-5 (HC) • \$16.99  
978-0-14-241374-6 (PB) • \$7.99



978-0-8037-3001-4 (HC) • \$16.99  
978-0-14-241071-4 (PB) • \$7.99





# A Discussion Guide for *Extraordinary*

by National Book Award Finalist Nancy Werlin

- In *Extraordinary*, Mallory takes on the enormous task of saving her people. The Faerie Queen expresses her pride in Mallory and says, “You were ever a ferocious sprout.” In what instances did Mallory show this ferocious spirit? (Was it always in service to the Queen?) And when did her spirit falter?
- There were times in her life when Phoebe had wished to be ordinary. Would you rather be ordinary or extraordinary? Why? Which carries the bigger burden?
- Discuss the ways in which wealth might alter relationships. For example, Phoebe realizes it was her wealth that attracted Colette to her in the first place, and it was because of her wealth that Colette would be unlikely to retaliate when rejected. Can you buy friendship? Do you believe wealth can be a form of protection? Can it save one from negative attacks?
- Mallory says to Phoebe: “The history of our family and our people affects who we are in the present.” Do you think this is true? Does your family history shape who you are today? In what ways?
- Phoebe’s mother, Catherine Rothschild, believes that the more the world gives you, the more you owe the world. Do you agree? Can you give examples of individuals who seem to act on this principle?
- On several occasions, Phoebe expresses her belief that her mother wants her to be “worthy.” Do you ever feel this pressure? If so, where does the expectation come from? Is it helpful? Why or why not?
- While discussing the significance of Daisy Fay’s name in *The Great Gatsby*, Mallory leads Phoebe to clues about Ryland’s identity (whose last name happens to be Fayne). Later, she’ll tell a story about Mayer Rothschild and the Faerie Queen. Why do you think Mallory is being subtle in her warnings? Why is she cautioning Phoebe through word play and stories?
- One of the central themes of *Extraordinary* is loyalty. Mallory is divided between two intense loyalties: the love of her people and her love for Phoebe. When have your loyalties been divided? Were you able to honor both sets of loyalties or did you have to choose? Can you think of another instance in literature when a character was torn between two loyalties?
- Phoebe promises not to call Ryland (regarding Mrs. Tolliver), all the while knowing that she will. She thinks, “It would be for Mallory’s own good, and Mrs. Tolliver’s too. And she’d apologize to Mallory later. This was yet another situation in which she knew better than Mallory what should be done, just as she had known four years ago.” Do you think Phoebe did the right thing? Is it okay to step in for a friend against the friend’s explicit wishes?
- Consider the nature and rules of promises. Mallory made a promise to the Faerie Queen before she meets and comes to regard Phoebe so highly. In situations such as these, what is the more honorable thing to do – to stick to your original promise, or to act on the new information? Have you ever gone back on a promise? What would you have done if you were Mallory?
- Phoebe (under the influence of Mallory and Ryland) spends a good deal of time thinking about her own specialness. Do all humans, in all cultures, long to be special? Why or why not? Do you think, as Phoebe proposed, feeling special is essential for our survival? Is being special the same as being extraordinary?
- Nancy Werlin chose to build a fantasy around a real person with historical significance. Why do you think she made this choice? What challenges in writing this novel do you think the author likely faced?
- Phoebe claims Mallory’s story about Mayer Rothschild is offensive. Benjamin counters by saying, “. . . the Phoebe I used to know understood that judging the actions of historical people from a completely modern attitude is stupid and shallow.” Do you agree? Can you think of a time when it would be wrong to judge the actions of people of the past with the knowledge or sensitivity of today?
- The Faerie Queen says of Mayer Rothschild, “And we behave now as my Mayer did then, taking from others because it is the only way to save ourselves. But we know fully what we do, which he did not. And we use guile, which he also did not.” Do you agree with this statement? Should Rothschild have made the deal? Would you have made that deal if in the same situation? Why or why not?
- What is your definition of extraordinary? Is one born extraordinary? Or do you believe, as Werlin wrote: “there is always the capability of becoming extraordinary, buried inside any ordinary being”? Can you be extraordinary at one point in your life and not another?
- In the end, when Mallory knocks the chalice out of Phoebe’s hand, she says, “She’s grown into herself.” What does this mean? In what ways had Phoebe perhaps moved from ordinary to extraordinary?



Dial Books for Young Readers • Puffin Books • Divisions of Penguin Young Readers Group

For more teaching and book group materials, visit [www.penguin.com/teachersandlibrarians](http://www.penguin.com/teachersandlibrarians)

This discussion guide has been provided by Penguin Young Readers Group for classroom, library, and reading group use.

It may be reproduced in its entirety or excerpted for these purposes.