Wishtree by Katherine Applegate

Our McAlister One-Book, One School community read for Summer of 2019 is Katherine Applegate's latest book, <u>Wishtree</u>. <u>Wishtree</u> was released on September 26, 2017. If ever there was a book to share and discuss as a family, this is the one! Beautifully crafted by Applegate, <u>Wishtree</u> is chock-full of nuances and metaphors that will lead you and your children on a journey of many thoughtful discussions. Don't miss out on the opportunity for discussions around friendship and diversity by having your child read it alone. Use the attached guide to pace your reading and for great discussion questions. Talk around the campfire, dinner table or at the beach!

Fun with Words:

Look up the meaning of the following words as they relate to plants and trees: photosynthesize, dioecious, monoecious, scaffold branch, crepuscular.

Look up the meaning of these words relating to behavior: introvert, pessimist, optimist, compromise, busybody, buttinsky

Talking to Trees:

Read the poem "Be Different to Trees" below. Discuss what it means to you before you read the story. After finishing the book, look at this poem again and discuss whether your understanding of the poem has changed.

Be Different to Trees

The talking oak
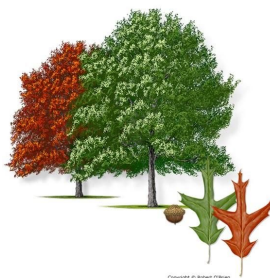
To the ancients spoke.

But any tree

Will talk to me.

What truths I know

I garnered so.

But those who want to talk and tell,

And those who will not listeners be,

Will never hear a syllable

From out the lips of any tree.

by *Mary Carolyn Davies* (1924)

Discussion Questions

Week 1: Chapters 1-3	1. Who is the narrator of the book? Describe him/her (including age). 2. Name 3 ways that trees are amazing.

Chapters 4-7	1. Who is the narrator's best pal? Describe him/her.
	2. Discuss Red's feelings about giving a home to so many animals. How does the tree make others feel safe? How does Red feel about it? How do you know?
	3. What is one rule Red has "made it clear" everyone must follow?
	4. Which of these would be the best title for chapters 1-5? Explain your choice.
	    ● The Differences between Crows and Trees
	    ● Getting to Know the Wishtree
	    ● Mother Nature
	    ● Introverts and Extroverts

Chapters 8-11	1. Why does Bongo give Samar gifts? 2. What qualities of Samar's nature make the animals trust her? Why do these qualities make it harder for her to make friends with other children? 3. Why do you think Samar had been crying before she comes outside at 2 a.m.? What clues are given in the text? 4. Why do you suppose Samar wished for a friend? 5. What do you think Red means when she says, "A few days after Samar's tearful wish, something happened that made me wonder if I'd finally witnessed too much."?
Chapter 12-14	1. Describe the boy who carves a word in the tree. What does the author tell you about him and what assumptions can you make about his character?

Week 2: Chapters 13-15	1. Why do you think the boy would carve that word into the tree? How does this act affect Red, Bongo, and Samar? 2. Red compares the neighborhood to a garden, "wild and tangled and colorful" (p. 54). Why does the tree compare the people in the area to a garden? 3. Why is the neighborhood not welcoming to Samar's family?
Chapters 15-17	1. What effect does the carving have on Francesca? What are the feelings of the police who come to investigate? 2. Discuss Red's description—"standing tall, reaching deep"—as it applies to the tree and as it applies to Samar (p. 71).
Chapters 18-20	1. Max makes a wish, "I'll tell you what I wish for...I wish I didn't have to investigate things like this." What does he mean by this wish? 2. Discuss Red's question, "How does friendship happen?" (p. 82). What is Bongo's answer? Why do you think Red and Bongo are friends? What makes them special to each other? 3. What qualities do you look for in a friend? Why is it hard for Samar and Stephen to become friends?
Chapters 21-26	1. What did BigYou and FreshBakedBread argue about? 2. Describe Red's Plan Number One. Did it work? Why or why not? 3. Describe Red's Plan Number Two and why it failed.

Week 3: Chapters 27-30	1. Why does Red decide to speak to the children? How does this act change their relationship to the tree and to each other? 2. Discuss Red's statement: "I wanted to make a difference, just a little difference, before I left this lovely world" (p. 126). What difference does Red make by talking to Stephen and Samar? 3. Discuss Stephen's comment: "My parents aren't bad people. They're just . . . afraid of things" (p. 125). What do you think you can do to make a difference in this world?
Week 4: Chapters 31-34	1. Describe Maeve and her family. 2. What was Maeve gifted at? What qualities did Maeve have that helped her use her gift?

Chapters 35-39	1. What did the dark-haired woman leave in Red's hollow? 2. Who was Amadora, and what did the name mean? 3. How did other people react to Maeve's baby? 4. How did Stephen and Samar react to Red's story?

Week 5: Chapters 40-42	1. What deal do Samar and Stephen agree to with each other? 2. What reason does Francesca give for planning to cut down the tree? 3. How do Sandy and Max, the police officers, react to the news that the tree will be cut down?
Chapters 43-44	1. Why will Red not speak to Francesca? 2. Why does Francesca think that it will be good timing to cut down Red on Wishing Day?
Week 6: Chapters 45-47	1. How does Stephen help to make a difference in the neighborhood on Wishing Day? 2. What is the message the children in the school deliver with their wishes?
Chapter 48-51	1. What stops the tree cutters from using their saw? 2. What makes Francesca change her mind about cutting down the tree?