



Weaving Magic

Discussion Guide

By: Mindy Hardwick

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He loves magic. She loves romance. Can illusions be shattered without disastrous consequences?

About the Book

He loves magic. She loves romance. But the biggest illusion is the one Shantel and Christopher perform together. Sixteen-year-old Christopher fights to stay sober while fifteen-year-old Shantel struggles in the aftermath of her mother's death and seeks refuge in a fantasy world. But the unacknowledged roots of their problems refuse to stay buried and soon, the two are headed toward a deadly magic trick. Can Shantel and Christopher move beyond magical illusions to find love?

If You Liked This Book, Try...

Perfect Chemistry, Simone Elkeles

Beneath a Meth Moon, Jacqueline Woodson

If You Come Softly, Jacqueline Woodson

Crank, Ellen Hopkins

Dairy Queen, Catherine Murdock

After, Amy Efaw

Websites

- Weaving Magic Facebook Page: www.facebook.com/weavingmagic
- Author Website: www.mindyhardwick.com
- Denney Juvenile Justice Center Poetry Blog: www.denneypoetry.com
- Society of Young Magicians: <http://www.magicsym.com>
- Alcoholics Anonymous: <http://www.aa.org>
- Al-Anon Family Groups: <http://www.al-anon.alateen.org/>
- National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated: <http://fcnetwork.org/>

About the Author



Mindy Hardwick is a former middle school and alternative high school teacher who now writes full-time from her home in Seattle. Mindy facilitates a poetry workshop with teens at Denney Youth Juvenile Justice Center. She is the co-editor of four anthologies, written by the youth at Denney, as well as the teen's blog at www.denneypoetry.com.

Mindy is included on the Washington State Arts Commission Teaching Artist Roster and worked with the youth of the Tulalip Tribe in the 2011 New Directions Music and Art Prevention Program. She holds an MFA in Writing for Children and Young Adults from Vermont College and is a member of Seattle SCBWI. When Mindy is not writing, she likes to art journal and visit the Oregon Coast.

Mindy's Published Writing

Stained Glass Summer – Middle Grade novel for ages 10-14

<http://www.mindyhardwick.com/books/stained-glass-summer/>

Rachel: The Pike Place Market Piggy Bank – Public Art in Seattle Article, Middle Grade

<http://columbia.washingtonhistory.org/kids/Fall2008/what-is-that.aspx>

Fremont Troll – Public Art in Seattle Article, Middle Grade

<http://columbia.washingtonhistory.org/kids/spring2010/whatisthat.aspx>

I Believe--Audio Short Story for Tweens:

<http://www.sniplits.com/storiesforauthor.jsp?a=242>

Ghost in the Lighthouse – Historical Fiction Short Story for Middle Grades

<http://columbia.washingtonhistory.org/kids/fall2009/onedayinhistory.aspx>

Interview with Mindy Hardwick

How did you start writing?

I was always a reader. As a child, I devoured books. My favorite books were: *The Little Princess* by Frances Burnett Hodgson, *Mandy* by Julie Andrews Edwards, *Homecoming* and *Dacey's Song* by Cynthia Voigt. I wrote a guest blog post about *Homecoming* here: <http://basicallyamazing.blogspot.com/2011/05/memory-monday-meet-mindy.html>

In middle school, I really enjoyed writing stories. But, somehow, I never made the connection that I could be the person who wrote those stories! When I got to college, I majored in Creative Writing and spent time working on the St John Fisher College literary magazine, *The Angle*. My first published writing was in *The Angle*. Now, I knew I liked to write, but I had to find what I liked to write! A few years later, I was teaching middle school language arts. I took a group of students to a young author's day, and I heard children's authors speak. That was the moment I began to connect my passion for children's stories to writing.

Where did you get the idea for Weaving Magic?

Weaving Magic is partially inspired by my experience running a poetry workshop with teens in juvenile detention. (www.denneypoetry.com) I've always been fascinated by teens who are in sobriety and working hard to stay sober. How do you start a new life when you are sixteen and still have to attend school with the same kids, live in the same home, and same neighborhood? How do you balance things like a girlfriend when you are trying to start a new life, clean and sober? How do you handle a girlfriend who has her own issues of addiction that she hasn't faced yet? These are some of the questions I tried to address in *Weaving Magic*.

What advice would you give young writers?

Read, write, have patience and persistence, but most of all, believe in your story. It took five years to write *Weaving Magic*, and seven years to sell the story. There were many times I wanted to give up. But, I always had faith in the story, and that kept me going.

How can readers contact you?

I love to hear from readers and you can find me:

Website/Blog: www.mindyhardwick.com

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/#!/mindyhardwick>

Facebook: www.facebook.com/weavingmagic

Discussion Questions: Chapters One thru Two

➤ **Predict**

Look at the cover. Read the summary of the book. Predict what the story will be about. What are the cover art details or book summary which gives shape to this prediction?

➤ **Journal**

Write about a time you played the “pretend game.” It might be a memory from childhood such as playing school or it might be a time when you received bad news and pretended nothing was wrong.

Do you believe in “fate?” Why or why not?

➤ **Discuss**

How would you describe the relationship between Shantel and Mia? How would you describe the relationship between Shantel and Christopher? How do you predict these relationships will impact the story?

What are some of the ways Shantel plays the “pretend game” in this opening chapter? What do you think she doesn’t want to face? How will Shantel’s denial impact her story?

Compare and contrast how Christopher and Shantel remember each other.

➤ **Activity: Descriptive Writing**

The bakery and street fair are vividly described places. Think of a place you love. On a piece of white paper, draw that place. Write a summary describing what you have drawn in words. Remember to include the five senses in your description.

Discussion Questions: Chapters Three thru Five

➤ **Predict**

Why do you think Christopher's Dad is arrested? How do you think this will impact Christopher's story?

➤ **Journal**

Write about a secret. How does it feel to keep the secret? Why do you keep the secret?

Write about a time you were trying to start over with a new habit or way of life. Who or what were your challenges?

➤ **Discussion Questions**

Discuss Shantel's relationship with her Dad. What are his expectations of her? How does she respond to those expectations? How does Drew resemble Dad?

How does Christopher respond to seeing Michael? How does he respond to Mrs. McCallister? What do Christopher's responses tell us about his character?

Discuss the ways Shantel covers up how she is feeling. How does "needing to keep up appearances" impact the choices she makes?

➤ **Activity: Travel Writing**

Research the Skagit Valley in Washington State. Write a one-page, "Day in the Life" which tells prospective visitors about a day in the Skagit Valley. You might include photos and make a flyer, brochure, or powerpoint.

Discussion Questions: Chapters Six thru Eight

➤ **Predict**

Will Shantel trust Christopher?

➤ **Journal**

In chapter six, Christopher says: *I was just starting to learn how to believe in the magic that came from being sober. I stared at Shantel. What did she believe in?* Write a list or poem of what you believe and titled it, "I Believe."

Write about a lie you told.

➤ **Discussion Questions**

Christopher's dad says: "Magic is about believing in things we can't see. It's about the illusion we create for others to believe." What "magic" is Shantel creating?

What does Shantel reveal about her Mom? How is Mom a part of the illusions Shantel creates?

How is Christopher trying to live without magical illusions? How do his AA Meetings help him?

➤ **Activity: Character Sketch Writing**

Write a one-two page character description of a person who is an illusionist. What illusions are they creating? Why? Describe their appearance, manners, way of speaking, hobbies and interests.

Discussion Questions: Chapters Nine thru Eleven

➤ **Predict**

At the end of chapter eight, Charlie tells Christopher that if he wants to stay sober, he needs to stay away from the girls. Do you think Christopher is in danger of relapsing?

➤ **Journal**

Write about someone you know who is affected by an addiction.

Write about a time you did something which pushed the boundaries of how far you thought you would go. How did you feel afterwards?

➤ **Discussion Questions**

Discuss the following quote from Shantel: *I learned about drug use in health class. I knew all the facts. I knew about the statistics of families with addictions. I knew the signs to look for in friends and family. I knew all of it. But in health class, no one ever mentioned what happened if the guy you liked was one of the statistics. No one told us about the human factor.*

Why is Christopher upset when Shantel finds the articles? What does his response say about his character? What does Christopher's response say about his sobriety?

How does Christopher feel when he finds Mrs. McCallister after physics class? Why might he not want to help her?

➤ **Activity: Role Play**

Marissa and Michael are challenging characters to like. Select one of the scenes between Michael, Marissa, Shanel and/or Christopher to act out. After you have enacted the scene, reflect on how it felt to be that character. Did your acting give you new insight into the characters? How?

Discussion Questions: Chapter Twelve thru Fourteen

➤ **Predict**

At the end of chapter eleven, Christopher says, "...she falls hard for him." Do you think Christopher is falling hard for Shantel? Why or why not?

➤ **Journal**

Write about a time you had to tell the truth. Who did you tell it to? What was the response? How did you feel before, during, and after?

In chapters twelve, thirteen, and fourteen, we see the relationship between Christopher and his younger brother, Alex. Write about a time you taught a sibling, a younger cousin, or a neighbor how to do something new.

➤ **Discussion Questions**

Describe the relationship between Christopher and Charlie. How is Charlie helping Christopher with his sobriety? How is Charlie like a mentor? Have you ever had a mentor? What was the relationship?

How is Shantel trying to learn about Christopher without talking about him? How does this secrecy encourage her illusions?

Why does Christopher get stuck in the straight-jacket? How is this trick a metaphor for both Shantel and Christopher's illusions?

➤ **Activity: Monologue Point of View Writing**

Write a monologue, from the point of view of Shantel and/or Christopher, talking about a lie. What is the lie? Who do they tell the lie to? Is the lie found out? Act out the monologue.

Discussion Questions: Chapters Fifteen thru Seventeen

➤ **Predict**

Will Shantel and Christopher learn the magic tricks in-time for the show? How?

➤ **Journal**

Write about a costume you wore. What was the costume? How did you find the costume? Read about the author's costume here:

<http://museituppublishing.blogspot.com/2011/10/pumpkin-box-costume.html>

Write about a time you were loyal to a friend, or write about a time when a friend was loyal to you.

➤ **Discussion Questions**

Why does Shantel not like “irrational and out of control?” What does this say about her relationship with her Mom? How is Shantel “irrational and out of control?”

Compare and contrast Mia and Charlie. How are they alike? How are they different? How are Mia and Charlie helping and/or hindering Shantel and Christopher?

Christopher says, *I flipped through the Big Book and tried to figure out what I was supposed to read. None of what was in the book dealt with girls, or little brothers, or magic shows. It was more about drinking and that wasn't my problem. Drugs were the problem.* How does this thinking reflect the “insanity” of an addict?

➤ **Activity: Expository Writing**

Design and draw a stage with two or three symbols that represent the novel. Write two to three paragraphs explaining your symbols and how they represent the story.

Discussion Questions: Chapters Eighteen thru Twenty-One

➤ **Predict**

Did Christopher steal the theater's money?

➤ **Journal**

Write about a time you were afraid.

Write about a time you were confronted for something you did wrong.

➤ **Discussion Questions**

Why is Christopher nervous to talk at the AA Meeting? What does this nervousness say about his feelings toward Shantel? In contrast, what is Shantel's response to Christopher's sharing at the Meeting? What does her response say about how she feels about him?

How does Shantel continue to "keep up appearances" after the AA Meeting? Why is she nervous about Charlie?

How does Christopher's addiction help him understand Shantel? Do you think Shantel loves Christopher? Do you think Christopher loves Shantel? Why or why not.

➤ **Activity: Poetry Writing**

Select one of the following topics and write a free-verse poem from the point of view of one of the characters.

"I always wanted to tell you..."

"You see me as...but really I am..."

"Beware of..."

"I used to be...but now I am..."

Discussion Questions: Chapters Twenty-Two thru Twenty-Five.

➤ **Predict**

Will Shantel confess about the theater's money? Will Christopher take the pills in his pocket?

➤ **Journal**

Write about a difficult conversation or a time **you** had to confront someone.

Write about a time when you let someone or something go.

➤ **Discussion Questions**

Explain how Shantel's illusions contribute to the final magic trick?

Christopher says, "The people around you could see the truth of your disease better than you." What does Christopher see as the truth of his disease? The truth of his Dad's disease? The truth of Shantel's disease?

Explain the connection between Shantel's ability to face the truth about her Mom and the truth about herself?

➤ **Activity: Collage**

Truth and lies. Gather magazines and images and create a collage about truth and lies. Consider creating a digital collage using Pinterest and link it to *Weaving Magic's* Facebook page at:

www.facebook.com/weavingmagic

Book Activities and Resources

1. Shantel talks about the fairy tale, "Beauty and The Beast." Choose a Fairy Tale to retell which represents your life. Produce the retold version as either a video story or an audio story. Post the link on *Weaving Magic's* Facebook Fan Page: www.facebook.com/weavingmagic
2. Create a music playlist which tells the story of Shantel and Christopher. Upload the list to *Weaving Magic's* Facebook Fan page at: www.facebook.com/weavingmagic
3. Research a famous magician such as Houdini, David Blaine, or David Copperfield. Create a picture book biography as a PowerPoint presentation and upload your link to *Weaving Magic's* Facebook Fan page at: www.facebook.com/weavingmagic
4. Be a book reviewer! Write a series of reviews about Weaving Magic and post on the following sites: Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and Goodreads. Be sure to link your reviews to *Weaving Magic's* Facebook Fan Page at: www.facebook.com/weavingmagic
5. Go to the Denney Juvenile Justice Center Poetry blog (www.denneypoetry.com). Download and read one of the poetry anthologies. (<http://www.denneypoetry.com/p/denney-poetry-books.html>). Write your own collection of poetry based on real life experiences and modeled after the Denney Poems. Post one of your poems to the *Weaving Magic* Facebook Fan Page at: www.facebook.com/weavingmagic
6. Research and work a physics project. Write up your findings.
Little Shop of Physics:
<http://littleshop.physics.colostate.edu/onlineexperiments.htm>

Brockport High School Science Department Labs
http://www.frontiernet.net/~jlkeefe/phys_labs.html

PBS Teachers Science and Tech
<http://www.pbs.org/teachers/classroom/9-12/science-tech/resources/>

7. Research the history of mosaics.
<http://www.thejoyofshards.co.uk/history/index.shtml>

<http://www.thejoyofshards.co.uk/links.shtml>

Draw and design a mosaic project, take pictures of your project and post the photos to the *Weaving Magic* Facebook Fan Page at:
www.facebook.com/weavingmagic. Consider creating a board on Pinterest about mosaics.

8. Research and learn magic tricks. Perform your tricks at a magic show or child's birthday party. Video the event and post the video to *Weaving Magic's* Facebook Fan Page at: www.facebook.com/weavingmagic

Society of Young Magicians
<http://www.magicsym.com/about.asp>

9. Research and learn about children with incarcerated parents. Write a picture book that you would share with a child who has a parent in prison.

National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated:
<http://fcnetwork.org/>

National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated
Resources:
<http://fcnetwork.org/resources>

10. Research drug and/or alcohol addiction. Attend an Open AA, NA, and/or Al-Anon/Alateen Meeting. Write a series of poems from the point of view of an addict or a family member of an addict.

Alcoholics Anonymous
www.aa.org

Narcotics Anonymous
<http://www.na.org/>

Al-Anon Family Groups
<http://www.al-anon.alateen.org/>

