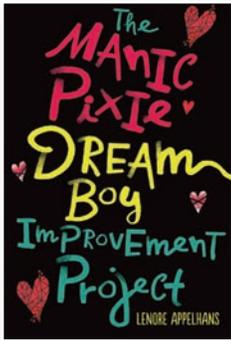


ABOUT THE AUTHOR



LENORE APPELHANS is the author of several books for children and teens. Her work has appeared on the Bank Street Best Books list, won a SCBWI Crystal Kite award, and been featured on boxes of Cheerios. Lenore is an ambivert, a proud Slytherpuff, and a world traveler. She holds an MFA in Creative Writing from Vermont College of Fine Arts. She lives in the D.C. area with her family and her manic pixie dream cat.



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DISCUSSION GUIDE

RILEY lives in **TROPETOWN**, where everyone makes a living playing stock characters in novels. But **RILEY**, a **MANIC PIXIE DREAM BOY**, keeps going off-script and upsetting his Authors. When the TropeTown Council assigns him to Group Therapy, **RILEY** knows that breaking the rules again could get him terminated—yet he feels there must be more to life than recycling the same clichés for readers' entertainment.

Then **RILEY** meets **ZELDA**, a **MANIC PIXIE DREAM GIRL** (Geek Chic subtype), and falls head over heels. Zelda's in therapy too, along with several other Manic Pixies.

PROS

getting to see **ZELDA** every day
complimentary pie after each session

CONS

Tropes in the same therapy group aren't allowed to date

RILEY'S already struggling to balance his work life (his new novel has a more interesting romantic lead than he expected) with his personal life (**ZELDA** proves elusive in more ways than one). But TropeTown has a dark secret, and if **RILEY** and his fellow **MANIC PIXIES** don't get to the bottom of it, they may meet a fate far worse than any stereotype.



TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why is Riley so fascinated by Zelda? What sets her apart from the Manic Pixies he meets?
2. In TropeTown, Manic Pixies can be terminated if they don't fulfill the roles that authors write for them. What are the pros and cons of playing the role that they are programmed to play?
3. Riley admits to himself that he doesn't really know what love is. To what extent do you think his feelings for Zelda are based on who she is, and to what extent are they caused by his programming?
4. Riley struggles to give Clark relationship advice. Why does he have trouble deciding what to say? How is this encounter different from the kinds of interactions he's used to?
5. Do you think Ava and other Developeds are better off than the Tropes? How much of her life and personality are controlled by the Author? In what ways does she grow beyond the Author's original intent?
6. Riley is concerned that playing the same character like the Manic Pixie Dream Boy over and over again will result in him becoming a watered-down or embittered version of himself. In what ways can this happen to teens in real life?
7. George is frustrated that her roles only seem to exist to shake up the lives of main characters who are almost always white guys. Angela frames this as a privilege and a way to make a difference. In what ways can the Tropes make a positive impact on Developeds and, by extension, on Readers? In what ways could their roles have a negative effect?
8. Why do you think Nebraska became so cynical and manipulative?
9. What are the differences between TropeTown and the real world? As Riley sees it, what are the advantages of Reader World? What does TropeTown offer its residents that Reader World doesn't?
10. Why does Riley decide not to plant in his novel? What does this choice say about his values and his goals?
11. At the Trope Museum, Riley becomes concerned that his existence supports problematic stereotypes. In what ways have stereotypical characters like the ones in the museum harmed Readers and society at large? What do you think is an appropriate way for Riley to respond to his Trope's problematic legacy?
12. What arguments do the Manic Pixies make in their defense at the Council hearing? How is the message of their Pixie-Off performance different from the message of Nebraska's speech?
13. When Riley decides to board the train, he is risking his life for the chance to have free will. What responsibilities will come with that freedom? How do you think he will cope with the challenges of life in Reader World?