

## Reading Group Guide

### *Sometimes That Happens With Chicken: A Novel by Wanda Shapiro*

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*Sometimes That Happens With Chicken* is a rare novel that includes a surprise beginning. It tells the story of a fake orphan from Saudi Arabia, and a dream he is called to follow. With great tenderness, humor, and wisdom the twisted tales of the people he draws into his scheme are revealed. Moving from an orphanage in a dusty town in Texas to a fortress in the sands of Saudi Arabia to a brownstone on the south side of Tomkins Square Park, the story loops effortlessly through time and place.

#### Discussion topics:

1. Reading this book is not like reading other novels, since there are seven Amandas. How would you describe the difference? How does it affect your reading of the novel? Does it lead to any new ideas about who we are and how we read books?
2. Discuss each of the Amandas. Who is your favorite Amanda and why?
3. When did you get to know each Amanda? What made each character become clear for you?
4. Discuss the role of time in the novel. How are the stories revealed? What role does repetition play?
5. There are many themes and patterns in this novel, like being an orphan, relations with parents, and secrets. What are some other themes you discovered in the book?
6. Discuss the men in the book—fathers, grandfathers, boyfriends, stalkers, husbands. How are men represented in this novel? Discuss Nat as an archetype. What does he stand for?
7. Discuss the role of dreams, visions, psychics, and psychiatrists in this novel.
8. What is the symbolic meaning of Nat's broom?
9. How is sex treated in this novel?
10. Discuss social criticism as it appears in this novel.
11. Discuss the role of lying and honesty in this novel.
12. When Nat says he is just listening to the voice in his head, what voice is he referring to? Does everyone have that voice?
13. Many references are made to events that occur after the end of the story, including Nat's death. What effect does this device have on your experience of the book?
14. There are few visual details in this novel. What effect does that have and why did the author choose this style of storytelling?
15. Compare Jack Black and Bo D. Houston.
16. Discuss what meaning the title of this novel may hold.
17. Did Nat's mother do the right thing for her son? Would Nat have been happier remaining in Saudia Arabia?

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To invite Wanda Shapiro to your reading group, email [onegirlonenovel@gmail.com](mailto:onegirlonenovel@gmail.com).  
For more information re: *Sometimes That Happens With Chicken* visit [www.onegirlonenovel.com](http://www.onegirlonenovel.com).