

## The Book of Lost Friends

By Lisa Wingate

### Discussion Questions

1. Lisa Wingate brings to life stories from actual “Lost Friends” advertisements that appeared in Southern newspapers after the Civil War, as newly freed slaves desperately searched for loved ones who had been sold away. Had you heard of the real “Lost Friends” ads before? What did you think of the words written so long ago? What did you learn about the Reconstruction era through this novel?
2. The Book of Lost Friends is a story of remarkable women who built legacies we benefit from today. There are many women from the past, like Hannie, who do not often make it into our history books. Who is one woman from history that you greatly admire and think that the world should know more about?
3. What lessons does Benny learn from her students? Do you think her students change her?
4. The town of Augustine is controlled by a powerful family with secrets. Have you ever learned of a secret in your own or someone else’s family? What was the reason for it, and what were the results of it coming out?
5. Hannie, Juneau Jane, and Lavinia are an unlikely trio when they start on their quest. How does their journey shape them as they come of age? How do Hannie and Juneau grow during their quest? What does each learn from the other?
6. Elam Salter is a character with a larger-than-life reputation. What is his role in the story? Why does Hannie find it hard to trust him?
7. Symbolism is used in this novel in a number of ways, including: the single ladybug, Hannie’s blue beads, and the church where the main characters hide. What do you think these symbols mean? Did you notice any other symbolism in the novel?
8. In what ways do Benny and Nathan help each other move forward? 9. What do you think Benny is going to do at the end of the novel?
10. A volunteer at the Historic New Orleans Collection sparked the idea for this novel when she wrote to Lisa about the Lost Friends database. Why do you think history, particularly that preserved in the voices of those who lived the experience, matters?
11. Visit the Lost Friends database. Choose one ad to share with another member of your book club

<http://www.randomhousebooks.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/The-Book-of-Lost-Friends-Book-Club-Kit.pdf>



## Summary

*A family amid the destruction of the post-Civil War South, and of a modern-day teacher who learns of their story and its vital connection to her students' lives.*

Bestselling author Lisa Wingate brings to life startling stories from actual "Lost Friends" advertisements that appeared in Southern newspapers after the Civil War, as newly freed slaves desperately searched for loved ones who had been sold away.

*Louisiana, 1875:*

In the tumultuous era of Reconstruction, three young women set off as unwilling companions on a perilous quest: Hannie, a freed slave; Lavinia, the pampered heir to a now destitute plantation; and Juneau Jane, Lavinia's Creole half sister.

Each carries private wounds and powerful secrets as they head for Texas, following roads rife with vigilantes and soldiers still fighting a war lost a decade before.

For Lavinia and Juneau Jane, the journey is one of stolen inheritance and financial desperation, but for Hannie, torn from her mother and siblings before slavery's end, the pilgrimage west reignites an agonizing question: Could her long-lost family still be out there? Beyond the swamps lie the limitless frontiers of Texas and, improbably, hope.

*Louisiana, 1987:*

For first-year teacher Benedetta Silva, a subsidized job at a poor rural school seems like the ticket to canceling her hefty student debt—until she lands in a tiny, out-of-step Mississippi River town.

Augustine, Louisiana, is suspicious of new ideas and new people, and Benny can scarcely comprehend the lives of her poverty-stricken students.

But amid the gnarled live oaks and run-down plantation homes lie the century-old history of three young women, a long-ago journey, and a hidden book that could change everything.  
*(From the publisher.)*

<https://www.litlovers.com/reading-guides/fiction/11690-book-of-lost-friends-wingate>



## About the author



Lisa Wingate is the author of the #1 *New York Times* bestseller *Before We Were Yours*, which has remained on the NYT Bestseller List Hardcover and softcover lists for 104 weeks and has sold over 2.5 million copies. She has penned over thirty novels and coauthored a nonfiction book, *Before and After* with Judy Christie. Her April 2020 novel, *The Book Of Lost Friends*, became an instant New York Times Bestseller and has remained there six weeks and counting. The story follows an unlikely trio of girls coming of age as they embark on a perilous journey through reconstruction Louisiana and Texas... and a modern-day teacher in small-town Louisiana who rediscovers their story. *The Book Of Lost Friends* was inspired by the real-life “Lost Friends” ads, through which families separated during slavery sought to find their lost loved ones in the chaos following the Civil War. A reader and museum volunteer from the Historic New Orleans Collection connected Lisa with HNOC’s vast database of over 2500 Lost Friends ads, which chronicle the heart wrenching and hope-filled searches of separated families, and which inspired the story of eighteen-year-old Hannie Gossett in the novel.

Lisa lives with her husband in North Texas. More information about her novels can be found at [www.lisawingate.com](http://www.lisawingate.com).

<https://lisawingate.com/about-lisa/>

