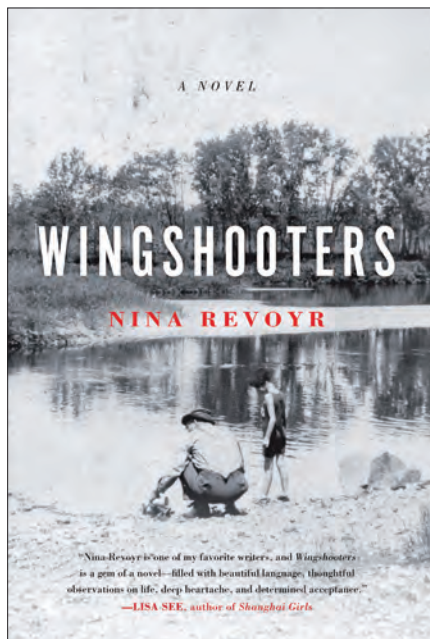


A LETTER FROM NINA REVOYR, AUTHOR OF *WINGSHOOTERS*



Dear Reader,

Thank you for the opportunity to present this reading group guide for *Wingshooters*. I'm especially pleased that it is being shared with bookstores in both the **Midwest Booksellers Association** and the **IndieBound** community, and by extension, with the many readers across the country who support independent bookstores. It's impossible to overstate my gratitude to independent booksellers, who have always been supportive of my work—never more so than with *Wingshooters*, which has the honor of being selected as a **Midwest Connections Pick** and for the **Indie Next List**.

While the raw elements of my novel are based in fact—like the protagonist, I lived with my grandparents in rural Wisconsin for a brief time—the events of the story are fictional. I took what I knew of my grandparents, their friends, and the town where they lived, and then began to wonder, "What would happen if?" This is often how I start to work on a novel—not with answers, but with questions. And when I'm lucky, the characters and story take on a life of their own, as I hope they have with *Wingshooters*.

Wingshooters is a story about many things—family, dislocation, loneliness, and a small town's inability to cope with change. But it is also, at heart, a love story—the account of a young girl's connection to the land, her dog, and her larger-than-life grandfather, who is nurturing and fiercely protective, even as he reveals himself to be a deeply flawed man.

It is always strange when a book I've written in solitude, with joy and despair, leaves the privacy of my desk and becomes a part of the world. And in the case of *Wingshooters*, I've been delighted—and humbled—by the strength of early readers' responses. I'm especially thankful that such a wide range of readers have found something in the story to relate to—perhaps because so many of us have felt different or out of place; perhaps because we are again in a time of uneasy social change; perhaps because we recognize that the best and worst elements of people—and of life—are often intertwined. I feel tremendously fortunate to be able to share this novel with you, and I hope it will create opportunities for lively conversation. Thank you so much for taking the time to read it.

Sincerely,

Nina Revoyr



FOR DETAILS ABOUT NINA'S READING EVENTS, PLEASE VISIT: WWW.AKASHICBOOKS.COM/WINGSHOOTERSEVENTS.HTM
BOOKSTORES INTERESTED IN AUTHOR APPEARANCES, IN PERSON OR VIA SKYPE,
PLEASE CONTACT JOHANNA INGALLS: JOHANNA@AKASHICBOOKS.COM



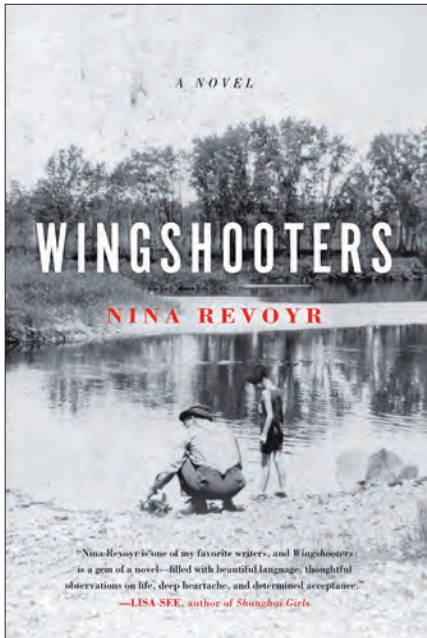
AKASHIC BOOKS



CONTACT:

Johanna Ingalls, Akashic Books
PO Box 1456, New York, NY 10009
Tel: 718-643-9193, Fax: 718-643-9195
johanna@akashicbooks.com
www.akashicbooks.com

HARDCOVER Original: \$23.95, 250 pages, ISBN-13: 978-1-936070-86-2
Trade Paperback Original: \$15.95, 250 pages, ISBN-13: 978-1-936070-71-8
Pub. date: March 1, 2011, Fiction/Literature



WINGSHOOTERS

a novel by Nina Revoyr

“Revoyr does a remarkable job of conveying [protagonist] Michelle’s lost innocence and fear through this accomplished story of family and the dangers of complacency in the face of questionable justice.” —*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

“Revoyr writes rhapsodically of a young girl’s enthrallment to the natural world and charts, with rising intensity, her resilient narrator’s painful awakening to human failings and senseless violence. In this shattering northern variation on *To Kill A Mockingbird*, Revoyr drives to the very heart of tragic ignorance, unreason, and savagery.” —*Booklist*, starred review

“Gripping and insightful.” —*Kirkus Reviews*

“Nina Revoyr is one of my favorite writers. What I admire most is the compassion she shows for her often flawed characters. *Wingshooters* is a gem of a novel—filled with beautiful language, thoughtful observations on life, deep heartache, and determined acceptance.”

—Lisa See, author of *Shanghai Girls*

“Nina Revoyr’s young protagonist and her searing, skillfully told story are unforgettable. Don’t miss it.” —Marian Wright Edelman, President, Children’s Defense Fund

Selected for IndieBound’s March 2011 INDIE NEXT LIST: Great Reads from Booksellers You Trust & an MBA Midwest Connections Pick

MICHELLE LEBEAU, THE CHILD OF A WHITE AMERICAN FATHER and a Japanese mother, lives with her grandparents in Deerhorn, Wisconsin—a small town that had been entirely white before her arrival. Rejected and bullied, Michelle spends her time reading, avoiding fights, and roaming the countryside with her English springer spaniel, Brett. She idolizes her grandfather, Charlie LeBeau, an expert hunter and former minor league baseball player who is one of the town’s most respected men. Charlie strongly disapproves of his son’s marriage to Michelle’s mother but dotes on his only grandchild, whom he calls Mikey.

THIS FRAGILE PEACE IS THREATENED when the expansion of the local clinic leads to the arrival of the Garretts, a young black couple from Chicago. The Garretts’ presence deeply upsets most of the residents of Deerhorn—especially when Mr. Garrett makes a controversial accusation against one of the town leaders, who is also Charlie LeBeau’s best friend.

IN THE TRADITION OF *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD*, *A River Runs Through It*, and *Snow Falling on Cedars*, Revoyr’s new novel examines the effects of change on a small, isolated town, the strengths and limits of community, and the sometimes conflicting loyalties of family and justice. Set in the expansive countryside of Central Wisconsin, against the backdrop of Vietnam and the post-civil rights era, *Wingshooters* explores both connection and loss as well as the complex but enduring bonds of family.

NINA REVOYR is the author of three previous novels, *The Necessary Hunger*, *Southland*, and *The Age of Dreaming*. *Southland* was a Book Sense 76 pick, won the Lambda Literary Award, and was a *Los Angeles Times* “Best Book” of 2003. *The Age of Dreaming* was a finalist for the 2008 *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize. She lives and works in Los Angeles. For more information, visit www.NinaRevoyr.com.

ALSO AVAILABLE BY NINA REVOYR:

Southland, Trade Paperback Original, \$15.95, ISBN-13: 9781888451412

The Age of Dreaming, Trade Paperback Original, \$15.95, ISBN-13: 9781933354460



In award-winning author Revoyr’s best novel to date, the events of 1974 forever change Michelle LeBeau, her town, and her family.

PRAISE FROM BOOKSELLERS FOR WINGSHOOTERS BY NINA REVOYR

“*Wingshooters* is a book that I could not put down. Michelle LeBeau, the protagonist, is a memorable creation that stands very comfortably alongside Harper Lee’s Scout Finch. *Wingshooters* will be one of my staff recommends at City Lights.”

—Paul Yamazaki, City Lights Bookstore (San Francisco, CA)

“An abandoned young girl narrates this tale of spiritual and physical isolation, set in a small Wisconsin town in 1974, as it plummets and tumbles into heartbreak. ‘You don’t belong here,’ the town tells the schoolgirl and everyone else who is not like them. Revoyr’s voice vibrates with the spiritual and physical isolation of a Carson McCullers without adornment or illusion. The pacing is perfect. *Wingshooters* captures the tragedy of personal rejection resulting from racial tension in all these characters with rough lives.”

—James Harris, Prairie Lights Bookstore (Iowa City, IA)

“Born to an American father and a Japanese mother, school-age Michelle calls an early 1970s small town in Wisconsin her home. Her life is far from simple, as the tensions between her own heritage and the growing integration of public institutions slowly burn under the cold face of rural America. *Wingshooters* features a remarkably strong narrative voice: clear, innocent, and unflinching. It is a story of family conflict, race relations, ignorance in the face of inevitable change, and fracture lines that ultimately break apart.

Though a work of fiction, *Wingshooters* explores universal truths in way that should resonate well with book clubs.”

—Geoffrey Jennings, Rainy Day Books (Kansas City, MO)

“This compelling and fearless novel tells the story of Michelle, a young multiracial girl being raised by her white American grandparents in a small Midwestern town. The arrival of an African American couple—a teacher and a nurse—sets off a chain of events that divide the community and force Mikey to face difficult truths about the town and about her family. I love so much about this novel, especially the depiction of the relationship of Mikey and her grandfather. I can’t wait to see this book on our book group display.”

—Karen Allman, Elliott Bay Books (Seattle, WA)

“*Wingshooters* is a rich and provocative novel that thoughtfully tells the story of a small Wisconsin town dealing with race and its own shortcomings post-Vietnam. Revoyr has delivered her best work yet—*Wingshooters* is full of fluid prose that describes the heartache of alienation and the desire to belong regardless of how different we are from one another.”

—Monica Carter, Skylight Books (Los Angeles, CA)

“A must for book groups, *Wingshooters* is a terrific addition to America’s literary legacy. It is the rare novel that explores the intricacies of prejudice so gently and deftly. The characters—even the dog—are complex, full of failings, yet loveable too. I found it gripping and convincing and am thrilled to recommend it.

—Diane Leslie, Diesel Bookstore (Los Angeles, CA)

“I loved *Wingshooters*! It is beautifully written—poetic and heartrending. It should especially appeal to readers in Wisconsin where it’s set. Revoyr’s description of a young girl’s torment and taunting by schoolchildren is evocative of the emotional pain of anyone who has ever been labeled as ‘different’. The intolerance of a rural Wisconsin community in the 70’s should provoke introspection and lively discussions for book groups. I look forward to recommending this compelling novel.”

—Marilyn Sieb, Books & Company (Oconomowoc, WI)

“*Wingshooters* by Nina Revoyr is a riveting story about a young biracial girl being raised by her grandparents in a small rural Wisconsin town in the mid-70’s. Deerhorn is so sheltered and insular that it hasn’t even begun to hear the hum of change in the bigger cities. Revoyr captures both the love and hate of a small town, and mixes them together into a combustible brew. The result is a complicated, beautiful, well-told story that will keep you at the edge of your seat until the very last page.”

—Margie White, Just the Bookstore (Glen Ellyn, IL)

“Once every few years a novel comes along that reminds you just how powerful fiction can be. A novel that is so pure, so well-written, so utterly real, that when you look for ways to describe it, there is only one word that seems sufficient: perfect. *Wingshooters* is just such a book. Nina Revoyr has produced a small masterpiece that should be read by anyone and everyone. It’s that good.”

—David Mallmann, Next Chapter Bookshop (Mequon, WI)

FOR DETAILS ABOUT NINA’S READING EVENTS, PLEASE VISIT: WWW.AKASHICBOOKS.COM/WINGSHOOTERSEVENTS.HTM

BOOKSTORES INTERESTED IN AUTHOR APPEARANCES, IN PERSON OR VIA SKYPE,

PLEASE CONTACT JOHANNA INGALLS: JOHANNA@AKASHICBOOKS.COM

READING GROUP GUIDE FOR WINGSHOOTERS BY NINA REVOYR

1. Charlie LeBeau helps people in his community, and is a loving caretaker to Mikey. Yet he is also one of the men most deeply involved in the effort to intimidate the Garretts. How can all of these qualities exist in one man? Do you consider him a good person or a bad person?
2. *Wingshooters* is set in 1974, during the Boston bus crisis, at the end of the Vietnam War, and just after the Civil Rights movement. How do national and world events influence the things that happen in the novel?
3. Mikey is half-Japanese, and lived in Japan for several years. When she moves to Deerhorn, she is not welcomed by many people in town. Why are people unfriendly to her? Do you know of situations where people have been unkind to children, or where kids have been unkind to each other? What kind of impact can this sort of experience have on a child?
4. Charlie and Stewart LeBeau disagree about many things. Do you understand the decisions that Stewart makes? Do you sympathize with him in his conflict with his father? Why or why not? How do Charlie and Stewart conform to the expectations of men of their respective generations? How do they differ from those expectations?
5. What are the some of the benefits of a small, tight-knit community like Deerhorn? What are some of the things that are less ideal?
6. Charlie, Uncle Pete, Earl, Ray and their friends are “men’s men.” They like to hunt and fish and watch sports, and they proudly work blue-collar jobs. What are the positive aspects of this kind of traditional masculinity? What are the limitations? And how does Mikey feel about the example they set?
7. What is the place of women in *Wingshooters*? Think especially of Helen, Mikey’s grandmother. Does Mikey fit the expectations for girls in town? Does Betty Garrett fit the conventional roles? Why or why not?
8. Why is Mikey so drawn to the Garretts? Why does she go to the satellite clinic to visit Mrs. Garrett? Why do the Garretts make a point of being kind to Mikey?
9. Darius Gordon and Jim Riesling seem to be the only two people in town who don’t approve of how the Garretts are being treated. What is it about these men that allows them to see things differently?
10. Michelle’s dog, Brett, is one of the main characters. What is the significance of his role in the early parts of the book—and of his part in the novel’s climactic scenes?
11. Kevin Watson is harboring a terrible family secret. Have you been privy to such secrets—either in your own family, or in someone else’s? What have you done about them? How do you feel about how you handled the situation?

READING GROUP GUIDE FOR WINGSHOOTERS BY NINA REVOYR

12. *Wingshooters* is told from the point of view of an adult Michelle, looking back on events that occurred when she was nine years old. What is the effect of this kind of narration? How would the story be different if it were truly told from the point of view of a nine-year-old child?
13. How might Earl Watson's childhood have influenced his opinions and choices as a grown man? What are the implications of his story?
14. The Garretts act on principle, even after it becomes clear that doing so is putting them in danger. Why do they do this? Do you agree with their decisions? Have you ever stood up for something on principle, even if you knew that the consequences might be negative for you?
15. In several instances, Canada Geese appear in the story. What is their significance to Mikey, and to the story? How do they relate thematically to Mikey's situation?
16. Revoyr begins the book with two very different epigraphs. How do the epigraphs relate to the novel and its themes?
17. Late in the novel, Michelle states that "blood does not run thicker than color." What does she mean by this? Do you agree? Do the events of the novel support this belief, or contradict it?
18. *Wingshooters* includes many references to faith, sin, and redemption. How do these themes play out in the story? Who is in need of redemption? And can redemption always be achieved?
19. Do Mikey's feelings toward her grandfather change through the course of the story? Why so—or why not? How does Michelle feel about her grandfather years later, when she's an adult? Have you ever had to deal with someone you love behaving in a way you don't expect or agree with?
20. *Wingshooters* is set in a small Midwestern town almost 40 years ago. Could something like the events of this story happen today?
21. Can you think of an instance, either in your own life or more generally, when someone reacted badly to a person or group because they were different? What happened? And what do you think of the situation now?
22. In *Wingshooters*, small-town norms and sensibilities seem at odds with changes in the larger world. Do the characters, settings, or dynamics of the novel have any parallels in present-day America?