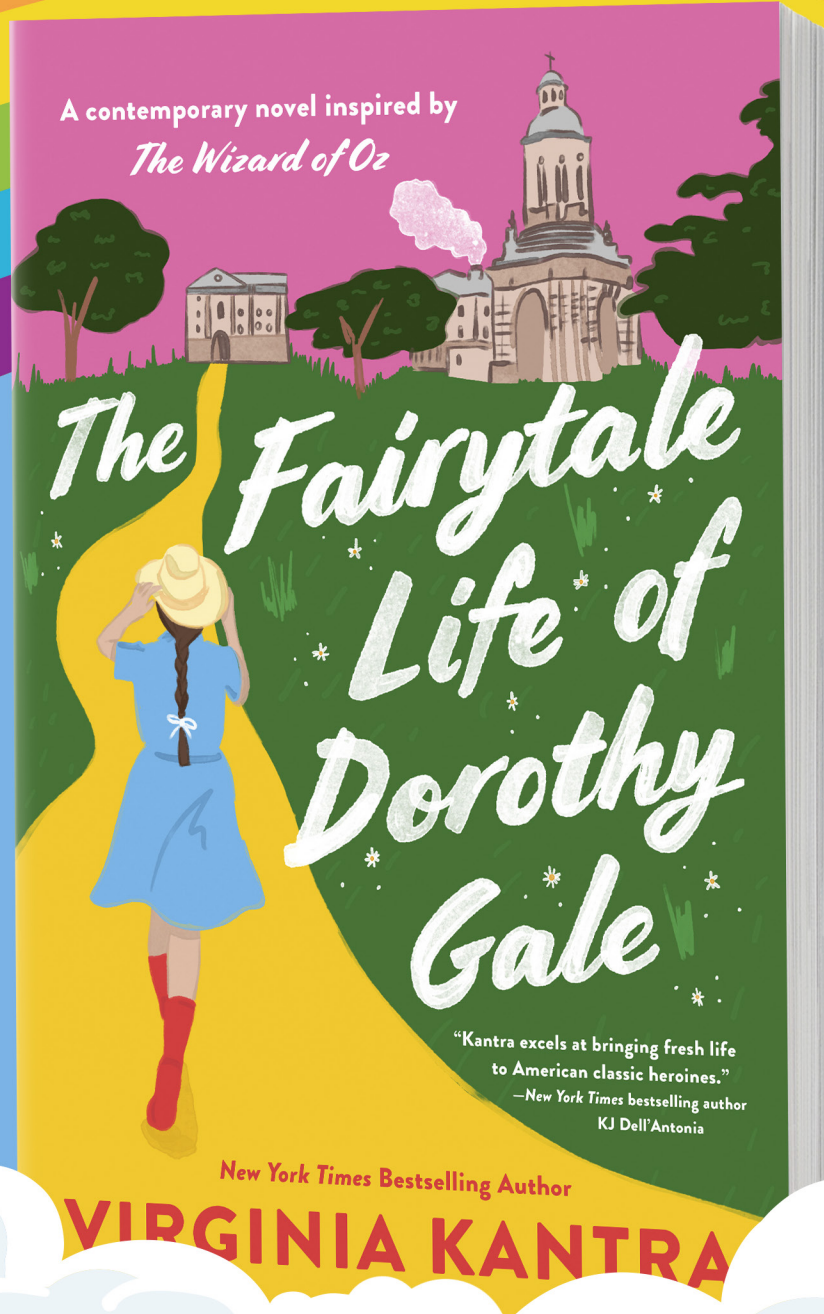


BOOK CLUB KIT



Dear Reader,

When I was seven years old, I discovered a copy of *Dorothy and the Wizard in Oz* on my parents' bookshelves, a Christmas gift from "Aunt Hildy" to a remote uncle back in 1909, the story passed to my grandmother and my mother and—eventually—to me. I loved the gilded cover and elaborate illustrations. A kindly children's librarian guided me to and through the rest of the original series (fourteen books! an entire shelf!), starting with the first book, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*.

Hidden away on the floor of my room between the bed and the wall, I imagined myself as Dorothy, armed with nothing but a kind heart and kick-ass shoes, as she's whisked away to another world and must learn to confront her fears.

Like Dee, I've always loved stories about children on a journey into the magical unknown. When I started writing this book, I couldn't travel outside the United States because of the pandemic. So I pored over maps and catalogs instead, searching for images and newspaper articles about Dublin online. Stuck at home on my computer, the Emerald Isle became my Emerald City, full of wonder and adventure. When I was finally able to visit Ireland last summer, I retraced Dee's footsteps, ducking into bookstores, poking into alleys, and wandering the Trinity College campus. I found my way around Dublin by a combination of memory and instinct, surprised by the thrill of discovery and the shock of coming home around every corner, helped along the way by generous strangers.

“Look, look!” I’d say, grabbing my husband’s arm as we walked along the dark waters of the Grand Canal. “There’s the church Dee and Toni went to on Christmas.” And, “The bridge is that way.” A faculty member told me of the “secret entrance” to Oscar Wilde’s house (through the ground floor of the science building). Together, my husband and I drank whiskey at The Duke, hopped the DART, and re-created the selfie Dee takes with Tim in front of Malahide Castle.

Whether you travel to Ireland like Dee or only visit from your favorite reading chair, that’s the feeling I want to share with you—that joy, that escape, that sense of fun, purpose, and adventure with true companions. After the past few years, I think all of us can relate to Dee’s feelings of being swept up by circumstances beyond our control, her yearning for a place to belong, and her desire to protect the people she loves. I hope her story makes you fall a little in love—with Dee, with her friends, and with Ireland.

Enjoy the journey! And may you find the power that’s been inside you all along.

Virginia

Scan this QR code to see an interactive map of Dublin created by the author!



Discussion Questions

1

How do the characters in *The Fairytale Life of Dorothy Gale* feel the same as or different from the familiar characters in *The Wizard of Oz*?

2

A big part of Dorothy's journey is the friends she makes along the way. Are there similar companions in your life?

3

Dee thinks of libraries as her magic kingdom, her refuge, her home. Do you have special memories of a library from your childhood?

4

Both Dee and Sam feel they need to take responsibility for their families after the death of a parent. How are their situations the same or different? Are they sometimes *too* responsible?

5

How does Dee's perception of Em change over the course of the story? How does Aunt Em compare with the other mother figures (Judy Gale, Glenda Norton, Janette Clery) in the story? Have your feelings toward a parent or other adult ever changed as you got older?

6

Sam and Tim are romantic possibilities for Dee. Do you think she made the right choice for her? Which one would you choose to be with? Why?

7

Dee, Reeti, Fiadh, and even Glenda deal with various forms of discrimination, from academic bias to being exoticized to catcalls on the street. (Dee describes it as “the cost of being a woman—the crime of being female in public.”) Have you ever been harassed or discriminated against? How did you deal with it?

8

Toni is very young when their mother dies. She has trouble separating real memories of their mother from the stories Dee tells. Are there memories/stories from your childhood that feel that way?

9

“Women who tell the truth are always called witches,” Maeve says. Who are the influential women in your life? What truths did they tell you?

10

Tim and Dee speak different “love languages.” How do they bridge the gap between them? How do you express and receive love? Which do you appreciate most in a partner: what they say or what they do?

11

Maeve tells Dee, “You had the power inside you all along. You just had to find it.” What do you consider your power? When did you first realize it?

Dee's Playlist

Scan this QR code to listen to a curated playlist!

