

Reading Group Guide

1. “I will protect you,” Christopher silently resolves to his mother at the end of Chapter 1 of *Imaginary Friend*. Discuss the various ways that Christopher protects his mother over the course of the novel, as well as the ways Kate protects Christopher. What does it mean to protect those you love? From what should one’s loved ones be protected? Does this impulse ultimately do more harm or good, whether in your own personal experience or in Chbosky’s novel?
2. *Imaginary Friend* is a different genre than Chbosky’s acclaimed, celebrated debut novel, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*. Have you read both books? If so, in what ways are the novels similar? In what ways are they different? If you haven’t read *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, do you think you’ll now be seeking it out after reading *Imaginary Friend*? If you’ve already read *Perks*, do you think you’ll be rereading it after reading Chbosky’s second novel, or will you think of Chbosky’s debut in a different light?
3. What other novels, TV shows, or movies do you feel share a kinship with *Imaginary Friend*? Where in the canon of horror and contemporary literary fables does Chbosky’s novel fall, in your estimation?
4. What or who do you think was the cloud with the smiling face who first led Christopher into the Mission Street Woods?
5. Kate chooses to raise her son Catholic, so he can grow up the same way his father had grown up; Mary Katherine, who plays an important role in the story, is also religious. Discuss the role of religion and spirituality in the novel.
6. Discuss the phrase “To think it is to do it,” which Chbosky uses to explore a handful of different themes in the novel. What does the phrase mean to Mary Katherine? What does it mean to Christopher?
7. Discuss the role that nightmares play in *Imaginary Friend*. What does Chbosky’s novel seem to suggest about the things that haunt us, whether during our waking hours or when we’re asleep?
8. What conclusions can you make about the nature of evil as Chbosky describes it? Of good as Chbosky describes it?
9. *Imaginary Friend* takes places in the months leading up to Christmas. Why do you think Chbosky chose to set this story then? What effect does the countdown to Christmas lend to the overall mood and tone of the read?

10. *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* is, in part, famous for a handful of quotable lines like “I feel infinite” and “We accept the love we think we deserve.” If *Imaginary Friend* becomes, like Chbosky’s debut, a novel that readers continue to discuss for years to come, what lines from Chbosky’s newest seem most likely to you to stand the test of time? What about this novel might readers remember long after finishing it?
11. How does this book help you to better understand people with mental and/or social disabilities? Does it make you think differently about the young or old people, or see them in a different light?
12. What do you think is the scariest part of *Imaginary Friend*? Explain why.
13. What was your favorite part of *Imaginary Friend*? Explain why.