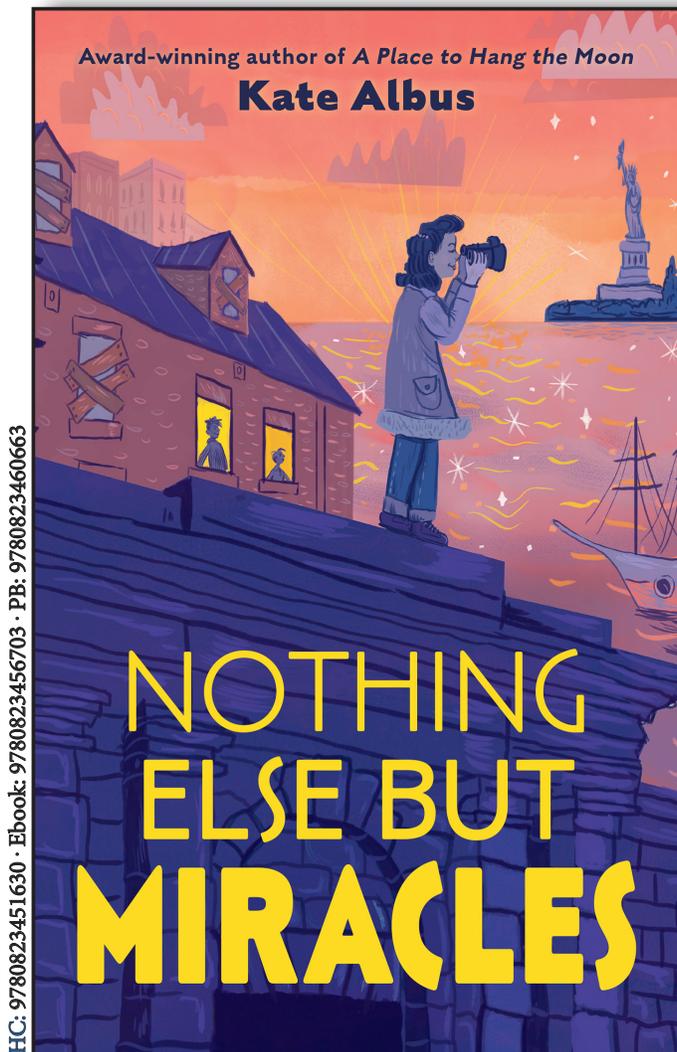


# HOLIDAY HOUSE

## READING GROUP

### GUIDE



## Nothing Else But *Miracles*

by Kate Albus

A New York Public Library Best Book of the Year

A Junior Library Guild Gold Standard Selection

A South Carolina Book Award Nominee

A Bank Street Best Children's Book of the Year

“An absorbing tale about urban life on the World War II homefront.”

—Kirkus Reviews

★“Rich. . . . Briskly moving.”

—Publishers Weekly (starred review)

### ABOUT THE BOOK

From the author of *A Place to Hang the Moon* comes a hopeful World War II story about three scrappy siblings on the Lower East Side of Manhattan.

When twelve-year-old Dory Byrne's pop left New York City's Lower East Side to fight Hitler, he promised her and her brothers that they'd be safe. Like he always said, “the neighborhood will give you what you need.” But

when a new landlord threatens their home in the community that raised them and kept them safe, a secret elevator—and the abandoned hotel it leads to—provides just the solution they need.

Based on a very real place in old New York and steeped in the history of World War II, *Nothing Else But Miracles* is a warm and inviting story of resilience, the tight-knit community of the Lower East Side, and the miracles that await in unexpected places.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Setting is the time and place the novel is set. This novel is set in New York City during World War II. In what ways does the author reveal the setting?
- Describe Fish, Dory, and Pike. In what ways is Dory a typical twelve-year-old? How is she different from her peers? Explain what Dory means by “It had been a while since Fish looked seventeen” (p. 133). Fish doesn't want to ask the neighbors to help with the rent because it would appear that he had failed. Discuss his need to succeed as the head of the household.

- Pop is called to serve in the military. How has he avoided military service in the past? Why is he conflicted about going off to war? Explain why Dory blames Fish for Pop's decision to enlist. How does Dory react when she learns that Vincent's dad has been killed? Discuss how Vincent gives Dory hope when she worries about Pop.
- Discuss the symbolism of the Statue of Liberty. Why is the statue unlit? How does Dory find comfort in talking to the "Green Goddess"? Why doesn't she tell her brothers about her talks with the statue? What is significant about the day the Statue of Liberty is once again lit?
- The Byrnes live in an apartment on the lower East Side. Describe the neighborhood. Discuss Pop's confidence that the neighborhood will take care of his children while he is away. Cite passages from the novel that show Pop is right about the neighbors. How are the children safe under the watchful eye of the old landlord? What happens when Mr. Reedy, the new landlord arrives? Explain why Mrs. Kopek thinks they should take Pop's flag out of the window.
- Discuss the meaning of the slogan "loose lips sink ships." How does this slogan apply to Fish, Dory, and Pike? Dory and Pike play hooky from school. What is Fish's reaction when he learns what his sister and brother have done? How does playing hooky put the children at risk? Explain how such behavior is the same as having "loose lips."
- Dory is fascinated with the dumbwaiter at Caputo's restaurant. Foreshadowing is a hint of events later in the novel. What does the dumbwaiter foreshadow? Explain how Dory's friend Rosemary is the inspiration behind Dory's plan to sneak into Caputo's and try out the dumbwaiter.
- What makes Mr. Reedy, the new landlord, suspicious of the children? Discuss their effort to avoid him. Describe Mr. Kowalczyk. At what point is it obvious that he is observing the children? Mr. Reedy notifies the welfare department. When do the Byrne children learn that Mr. Kowalczyk has protected them by impersonating their father? How does this change the children's view of him?
- Describe the South Street Hotel above Caputo's restaurant. What is Fish's first reaction when Dory tells him about the hotel? Describe their first night in the hotel. Discuss the difference between a house and a home. How do the children make the hotel a home? What is significant about displaying Pop's flag in the hotel? Dory considers telling Vincent about the hotel, but reconsiders. Explain what she means by "There was magic in the secret of the old hotel" (p. 195).
- Discuss the children's homecoming with Pop. What do you think they talked about on Pop's first night at home?
- Explain the title of the book.

Guide created by Pat Scales, retired school librarian and independent consultant, Greenville, South Carolina.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Kate Albus** is the award-winning author of *Nothing Else But Miracles* and *A Place to Hang the Moon*, a Junior Library Guild Gold Standard Selection, Indie Pick, and recipient of three starred reviews. She grew up in New York and now lives with her family in rural Maryland, where an already-dangerous pile of reading material on her nightstand grows daily. Visit her at [KateAlbus.com](http://KateAlbus.com).