

WESLEY YORSTEAD GOES OUTSIDE

BY STEPHANIE HARPER



Book Club Guide

Wesley Yorstead Goes Outside

About the Book

When an agoraphobic man develops a relationship with a vivacious grocery delivery woman, the order he prescribes to his apartment, and his world, begins to crumble around him. **Wesley Yorstead Goes Outside** explores the life of Wesley Yorstead, a thirty-three year old graphic novelist who suffers from a severe case of agoraphobia that has kept him shut inside for over five years. When he meets Happy Lafferty for the first time, delivering groceries on behalf of her father's neighborhood market, Wesley can't shake the inherent magnetism between them and seeks to get to know this young woman who invades his space—both physical and mental. As their relationship grows more intimate, the restrictions of his situation become an even greater obstacle. When Happy's past comes back to haunt her, Wesley must decide if he can finally leave his apartment to help. A meditation on anxiety, fear, and human connection, **Wesley Yorstead Goes Outside** asks the reader to consider what our fears take away from our lives, and how we might overcome them.

About the Author



Stephanie Harper is the author of **Wesley Yorstead Goes Outside** (Propertius Press, 2020), as well as the poetry collection **Sermon Series** (Finishing Line Press, 2017). Her narrative nonfiction work can be found in a number of publications, including *HelloGiggles*, *HuffPost*, *Living Lutheran*, *Grok Nation*, *Aleteia*, *Healthline*, *The Daily Dot*, *Folks Magazine* and more. She often writes about chronic illness and spirituality.

Stephanie grew up in Colorado, where she graduated from CU Boulder with a BA in English in 2009. She received her MFA in Creative Writing from Fairfield University in 2012. She's worked on several literary magazines, including *Mason's Road* and *Spry Literary Journal*. She also served as a guest editor for *The Puritan*, where she wrote and curated pieces about narrative generosity.

Stephanie lives in Littleton, Colorado with her family and a strange half-dog, half-gremlin named Cher. When she's not writing, Stephanie is actively involved in a progressive faith community called Abiding Hope Church. She loves to sing and laugh and her favorite time of the day is brunch.

What is Agoraphobia?



According to the American Psychiatric Association, agoraphobia is an anxiety disorder. Anxiety is a worry about future events, while fear is a reaction to current events. These feelings may cause physical symptoms, such as increased heart rate and shakiness.

Agoraphobia is characterized by symptoms of anxiety in situations where the person perceives their environment to be unsafe with no easy way to escape. These situations can include open spaces, public transit, shopping centers, or simply being outside their home.

Being in these situations may result in a panic attack. In severe cases people may become completely unable to leave their homes

Panic attacks are sudden periods of intense fear that may include palpitations, sweating, shaking, shortness of breath, numbness, or a feeling that something bad is going to happen.

Agoraphobia Facts

- Agoraphobia occurs about twice as commonly among women as it does in men.
- Panic disorder with or without agoraphobia affects roughly 5.1% of Americans, and about 1/3 of this population with panic disorder have co-morbid agoraphobia. (Clinical Psychology Review)

Notable Agoraphobics

- **Will Friedle**- American actor, known for role of Eric in Boy Meets World
- **Woody Allen**- American actor, director, musician
- **Kim Basinger**- American actress
- **Howard Hughes**- American aviator, industrialist, film producer and philanthropist
- **Shirley Jackson**- American writer: her agoraphobia is considered to be a primary inspiration for the novel We Have Always Lived in the Castle.
- **Brian Wilson**- American singer and songwriter, primary songwriter of the Beach Boys



The home of Howard Hughes

Raising Awareness

Domestic Violence

According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Domestic Violence is defined by the willful intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault, and/or other abusive behavior as part of a systematic pattern of power and control perpetrated by one intimate partner against another. It includes physical violence, sexual violence, psychological violence, and emotional abuse.

Domestic Violence Facts

- 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men in the United States have experienced some form of physical violence by an intimate partner
- Women ages 18-24 experience all forms of domestic violence at the highest rate
- On a typical day, domestic violence hotlines receive approximately 21,000 calls, an average of close to 15 calls every minute.

National Domestic Violence Hotline

1-800-799-7233

You can also chat with an advocate 24/7:

<https://www.thehotline.org/help/>

Human Trafficking

According to the Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking, human trafficking is a severe form of exploitation of another person involving force, fraud, or coercion for labor or commercial sexual purposes.

Groups and identities of people who have been trafficked include: homeless, people struggling with substance dependency, LGBTQIA+, sex workers, minors away from guardians (runaways), undocumented individuals, as well as asylees and refugees.

Common sectors where human trafficking occurs: hospitality, construction, commercial sex industry, agricultural labor (H-2 visa program), debt bondage and servitude, forced marriages, labor operations exploiting children.

National Human Trafficking Hotline

1 (888) 373-7888

SMS: 233733 (Text "HELP" or "INFO")

Wesley Yorstead Goes Outside

Discussion Questions

1. Do you ever feel anxious? How does anxiety affect your life? Could you relate to Wesley?
2. How credible or believable did you think Wesley was as a narrator? Did you feel like you got the “true” story?
3. How did you feel when the Wesley left the house for the first time?
4. How did you feel about the developing relationship between Wesley and Happy? Did they change? Did your opinion of them change?
5. What did you think of the references of Harper Lee’s *To Kill A Mockingbird* throughout the book? Did this help you better understand the characters?
6. How did you feel about sex work before this book? After? What about human trafficking?
7. What made the setting, both inside and outside Wesley’s apartment, unique or important? Could the story have worked anywhere?
8. How did you feel about the ending? What did you like or dislike about it? Do you wish anything happened differently?
9. What do you think Stephanie’s purpose was in writing this book? What ideas was she trying to get across?
10. If you were making a movie of *Wesley Yorstead Goes Outside*, who would you cast?

Spotify Playlist

Check out the “Writing Wesley” playlist on Spotify. This is a sampling of the music Stephanie was listening to while she was writing “Wesley Yorstead Goes Outside.” Enjoy!

Search for the Writing Wesley Playlist or use this link:

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/3Nxu9eZe7qvHzt4KOTSXw5?si=v5-GH76rQnWRljvjk1H8Q>