

Book Club Kit

"This book has it all: love, laughter, murder and hope."
-Booklist Starred Review

The
Things

We
Lost

A NOVEL

MAGGIE GILES

Dear Reader,

Thank you for choosing *The Things We Lost* for your Book Club.

The Things We Lost tells the story of Maddie Butler, a disillusioned mother who gets sent back in time ten years to an alternate past. Here she finds her life completely changed, her children are missing, her husband is gone, her best friend hates her and strangest of all, a once close friend -- Gina -- is still alive, four years after her funeral.

With no way back to her original life, Maddie navigates this new timeline trying to uncover the past and the change that caused her to take such a different path in life. As she discovers the truth behind her new life she begins to realize the grass isn't always greener and hopes she can find a way back to the family she loves.

Reviewers have described *The Things We Lost* as being "full of unexpected twists" and "a thought provoking read". I hope you'll find Maddie's story intriguing, allowing you to ponder your own "what ifs"

Happy Reading!

Maggie Giles

Discussion Questions

1. At the beginning Maddie is very unhappy in love and life. She struggles to find a reason to feel joy daily and the only thing holding her to this world is the love she feels for her daughters. She tries to pinpoint where she and Nathan went wrong and seems to put a lot of blame on Nathan. How fair, in your opinion, is her assessment of their relationship and how does it change throughout the book?

2. When Maddie learns more about her new life, she realizes all the mistakes she has made in the present and past. Do you have any big regrets that you believe would have greatly impacted the route your life took? In what ways do you think you would be different now?

3. Maddie's biggest fear is never seeing her children again. How would you feel if you woke up tomorrow with a completely different life and those most precious to you were gone?

4. What do you think happened to Maddie at the end of the book?

5. Knowing Gina's fate in both timelines, do you think Maddie was in any way responsible or if she could have done anything different to help?

6. Maddie became a very different person when she let her life take a different path. Do you have any past relationships that may have changed you as a person if you had continued to hold on to them?

7. Having met Brian in both the past and the present, how did his obsession with Maddie affect her choices and influences the path she took?

8. The title "The Things We Lost" explores the idea that Maddie maybe lost more than she gained by going back in time. Do you think she will be happier in this new timeline, grateful for what she has than she would have been if she had never been given a second chance?

Discussion Questions (Continued)

9. When Maddie discovers the truth about her relationship with Jack, she has mixed feelings of dread and excitement. What does this say about her character when it comes to her relationship with Arabella and Jayson?

10. Maddie wants nothing more than to return home and right her mistakes. When she is not given a chance to, she works towards mending her relationships and finding a way to connect with Nathan. Given where she was in life, do you think she could have been more aggressive in her pursuit of Nathan and attempt to right her story?

11. Throughout the novel, Maddie has flashes of memories and a personality that she didn't realize was a part of her. Do you believe that by entering this alternative timeline her previous life effectively no longer existed, or do you think there are multiple lives out there where different choices were made and they co-exist along side each other?

12. Jayson is a prominent character in both parts of Maddie's life. She attributes a lot of changes to him and how he re-entered her life. Do you think its fair for Maddie to put so much intention on Jayson when he too was just living his life and making his own choices?

13. Dee and Maddie had been best friends for ages. A couple big mistakes caused them to drift apart, something Maddie truly regretted. Do you feel they both equally caused the relationship to flounder? How do you feel about Dee giving Maddie a second chance despite everything they had been through? Do you believe their friendship will be as strong as it was in the past?

14. When Maddie begins to take responsibility for her actions, she starts to realize she is the product of her own unhappiness. As humans, we put a lot of pressure on happiness and finding it wherever we can. How much do you think our happiness relies directly on our choices and how likely is it that we can find happiness despite the scenarios we put ourselves in?

Q&A with Maggie Giles

Where did your inspiration come from for *The Things We Lost*?

Several years ago, I got out of a long-term relationship and felt lost. It had been the longest relationship I'd ever been in, and we were so young when we met that we'd really grown together, even though we'd grown apart. I found myself confused, wondering if I made the right choice all those years ago when we started our adventure, and then I started to wonder, where would I be if we'd never met? That question inspired Maddie's story, while different from my own and focused on other things, that was what began her journey.



© Captured by Kirsten

The Things We Lost “will have you wondering, what if?” Is the concept of “what if?” something you’ve grappled with in your own life?

I think at one point in everyone's lives we always consider what if. I've definitely found myself wondering how things could have been different if different choices were made. How one single choice could change the whole landscape of someone's life. It was a fun experiment to start that ended up turning into a novel that has readers wondering their own what ifs and if the grass is truly greener on the other side.

You like to give characters “an unexpected twist.” What’s your writing process like to ensure that this happens? Do you ever second guess yourself in these twists?

I tend to have the majority of my novels planned out before I start writing. I consider myself a hybrid of plotting (planning a novel) and pantsing (letting the words come to me as I write) because while I have a general idea of the over all plot and storyline, there are always bits and pieces throughout the writing process that come to me unexpectedly. This helps me craft more twists and turns in the novel. I've definitely second-guessed myself.

Where do you find the inspiration for you characters? Are they based off anyone you know?

I usually start with inspiration around me. I like to use my friends as starting points for description and style, then I pepper in the details depending on my character's need. Maddie, for example, started out as a version of me. Obviously, she's changed a lot since the very first draft and we have much less in common these days...

Q&A (continued)

Arabella was a love to hate character. Why did you decide to write a character like her and what did you hope audiences would think?

I love Arabella, personally. I think she is more complicated than she lets on and is so desperate to hold up her reputation that she doesn't care who gets stepped on in the process. I loved writing the wedding scene when her mask of perfection slipped and everyone got to see the unhappy, troubled girl beneath. I hope readers find her intriguing and can see through the many masks she wears. I truly wish her and Jack well.

Maddie is an author (like you!). Why did you decide to have her pursue this career path?

The short and sweet answer is simply because it was easy. I know the writing industry and the path to publication like the back of my hand. I wanted her to have a career that made her life flexible from socializing with her friends to having children and being at home with them. I know so many moms who are also authors so it felt like a great fit.

"Toronto seemed like the perfect place for the turmoil in Maddie's life to take place."

Maddie has her own sort of love-triangle with Jayson and Nathan but they both seem so different. What drew her to each of them?

Nathan was a solid and steady presence when Maddie first met him. They had an easy friendship, and great chemistry. She immediately pictured a life with him and even on her down days, remembered the person he was before they both gave up. Jayson was her first real love. He was encouraging of her writing (being an editor himself) and always validated her. It was easy to fall back into his comfort when things weren't great at home.

The Things We Lost is set in Toronto, Ontario. Why did you pick this setting?

I'm Canadian and I love reading books set in cities I know. I used to live in Toronto and spent much of my younger days hanging out downtown. It seemed like the perfect place for the turmoil in Maddie's life to take place. I also wanted other Canadian readers to recognize the locations I mention. I've had a lot of people reach out to me and tell me how awesome it is to read about Toronto and know exactly what I'm referencing.

Q&A (continued)

Jack is an interesting character. What made you include him as a former Bachelorette contestant? Are you a fan?

I'm a *reluctant* fan. Meaning I probably wouldn't watch reality TV if not for some of the influencers in my outside life. That being said, I do enjoy the drama. I decided to make Jack a former Bachelorette contestant at the request of my editor. We needed a better reason for him to be so popular in the tabloids, and giving him a reality TV background helped bump his notoriety. And honestly, he would totally compete and be offended he didn't get picked as the next Bachelor.

In Maddie's "new" life we see a lot of the bad choices she makes. When people think about "what ifs" they usually think how things could be better, why then did you make Maddie's "what if" worse?

I wanted to explore the idea of going back in time and things being worse than you remember them. I think a lot of people wonder what if and imagine how things could be better, but I believe we make certain choices for a reason and making a different one doesn't necessarily ensure happiness. I wanted Maddie to really question her choices and have her realize that just because there were complications and bad days, things being imperfect doesn't mean they're bad or can't improve. I wanted her to really appreciate what she did have.

"I believe we make certain choices for a reason and making a different one doesn't necessarily ensure happiness."

What part of writing do you enjoy the most?

I love writing dialogue. I'm a talker (sorry for everyone who meets me in person), and I love seeing sassy dialogue come to life on a page. I have something called Aphantasia, which essentially means I am unable to visualize imagery. So description has always been a bit more of a struggle. I've also been told that dialogue is one of my strengths as a writer, so of course, I take that to heart!

Aphantasia is a unique term. What exactly is it and how does it affect your writing process?

Aphantasia is the inability to visualize. Otherwise known as image-free imagination. People with aphantasia don't create any images of familiar objects, people, or places in their mind's eye, not for thoughts, memories, or pictures of the future. We lack this visual system completely. This means that I am often a very "bare-bones" writer. My strength is dialogue and plot. The description, the things that make you visualize, I always have to add that in later. Often I am looking at pictures or listening to sounds to make sure I get the description down right.

Coconut Martini

Ingredients

- 1.5 oz Vodka
- .5 oz Coconut Rum
- 1 oz Pineapple Juice
- 1 oz Coconut Cream
- Sprinkle of Cinnamon sugar
- Ice Cubes
- Pineapple Wedge or Shredded Coconut (Optional)



Directions

1. Add Vodka, Rum, Pineapple Juice, Coconut Cream and Ice cubes into a cocktail shaker and shake vigorously
2. Strain and pour cocktail into a chilled martini glass
3. Sprinkle a pinch of cinnamon sugar on top
4. Optional: Garnish with Pineapple wedge or rim glass with shredded coconut before straining.

I leaned forward and sniffed the drink before taking a hesitant sip. Coconut and a hint of pineapple. Definitely vodka. Tangy, but good.

"One of their specialties," Jayson said, nodding to the martini in his hand. "It's creatively named The Coconut Martini."

Dad's Famous Burgers

Ingredients:

- 1 egg
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- 1 tsp Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tsp creamy caesar salad dressing
- 1 small onion, finely grated
- 1 clove of garlic, minced
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp pepper
- Sliced cheddar cheese
- 1.5 lb lean ground beef
- sesame bun and desired toppings



Directions:

1. Lightly oil grill & heat barbeque to medium.
2. Whisk egg in a bowl. Add mustard, Worcestershire sauce, Caesar dressing, onion, garlic, salt and pepper & mix. Add ground beef and gently mix together.
3. Shape mixture into burgers about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick.
4. Place burgers on the grill and close lid. Barbeque turning once about 6 – 8 minutes per side or internal temperature of 145°F to 160°F depending on preference
5. Add sliced cheese to the burgers if preferred and add buns to the top rack for toasting
6. When buns are toasted and cheese melted, place the burger on the toasted bun and add your favourite toppings

Recommended toppings: Roasted garlic mayonnaise, caramelized onions, avocado and iceberg lettuce

When he's gone, I head to the store to pick up the ingredients for his favourite meal, Dad's famous burgers, hoping that a special dinner might bring him a little extra luck with his interview.

PLACES IN THE THINGS WE LOST

Maddie's Lawrence Park Home



Beaver Creek Institution

DT Bistro



Jack and Arabella's Rosedale Mansion



Maison Mercer

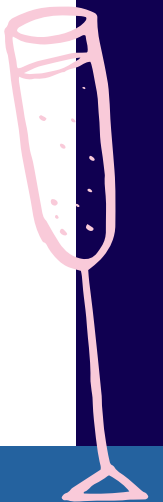


The Things We Lost

Arabella's Bachelorette Playlist



Tonight.....ENRIQUE IGLESIAS
Party Rock Anthem.....LMFAO
S&M.....RIHANNA
Give Me Everything.....PITBULL
On The Floor.....JENNIFER LOPEZ
Super Bass.....NICKI MINAJ
Where Them Girls At.....DAVID GUETTA
F You.....CEELO GREEN
Till The World Ends.....BRITNEY SPEARS
Born This Way.....LADY GAGA
Firework.....KATY PERRY
Raise Your Glass.....P!NK
Dynamite.....TAIO CRUZ
DJ Got Us Fallin' in Love.....USHER
Hold it Against Me.....BRITNEY SPEARS
We R Who We R.....KESHA
Only Girl (In The World).....RIHANNA
Just A Dream.....NELLY
I Like It.....ENRIQUE IGLESIAS



Playlist available on Spotify [here](#). Or scan the code below.

