

MERRY

BOOK CLUB KIT



A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Discussion Questions:



Merry Bingham decides to sell her treasured edition of A Christmas Carol to take her family to London. What do you think of this decision? Would you have made the same choice or a different one?



What was your most memorable trip or vacation? Do you find you remember vacations better when things go right or wrong?



With which of Merry's three children did you feel most sympathetic? Why?



What five words would you use to describe Merry as a character? Have you ever known someone like her?



Many of the characters in this novel are dealing with guilt and shame. What are their different coping strategies? Who do you think handles it most effectively?



What does the ghost of Charles Dickens add to the novel? What do you think the author's intention was in adding a dash of magic to an otherwise real-world setting? Or is the magic—and Dickens—all in Merry's mind? Have you ever experienced moments of magic in your own life?



Building on question number six, do you believe Leroy the dog actually speaks to Merry? Why or why not?



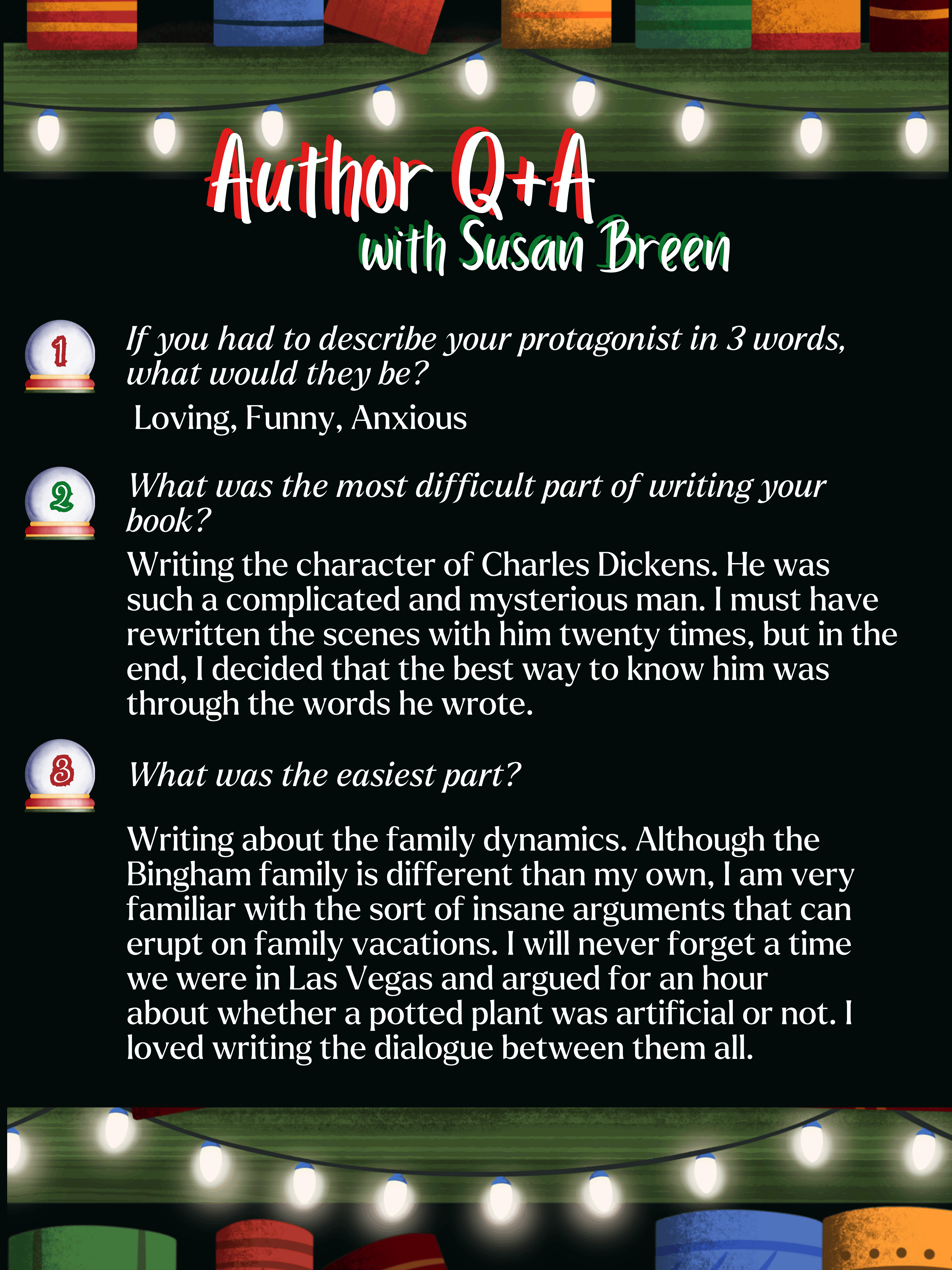
Are you an eldest, youngest, middle, or only child? Do you have any personal experience with adoption (international or otherwise)? How has your family structure shaped your life?



Merry helps people collect books. Do you collect anything? Why do you think so many people find the idea of collecting so compelling?



Merry loves the Christmas holiday season. What is your favorite holiday and why?



Author Q+A

with Susan Breen



If you had to describe your protagonist in 3 words, what would they be?

Loving, Funny, Anxious



What was the most difficult part of writing your book?

Writing the character of Charles Dickens. He was such a complicated and mysterious man. I must have rewritten the scenes with him twenty times, but in the end, I decided that the best way to know him was through the words he wrote.



What was the easiest part?

Writing about the family dynamics. Although the Bingham family is different than my own, I am very familiar with the sort of insane arguments that can erupt on family vacations. I will never forget a time we were in Las Vegas and argued for an hour about whether a potted plant was artificial or not. I loved writing the dialogue between them all.



If you could cast the characters of your book for a film or TV series, who would you cast?

- Merry: Julia Louis-Dreyfus
- Bessie: Emma Stone
- Nick: Robert Pattinson
- Song Lee: Madison Hu
- Leroy: Caleb McLaughlin
- Sully: Jeff Daniels



What's the most surprising thing you learned while researching/writing Merry?

I was surprised at how accessible the antiquarian book world is. I thought it would be prim and stuffy, but in fact there's a lot of fun and passion there. Also, all the story-telling! I was surprised at how small the original volume of *A Christmas Carol* is. You'd think it would be a tome. But it's almost pocket-sized.



What authors inspire you to write?

I read all the time, so I am in a continual state of inspiration. I love the way Kate Morton delves into her characters. Emma Straub always makes me cry, in a good way. Tana French has taught me so much about plotting.



What advice would you give to your pre-published self?

Don't be afraid to dream big!



Does teaching about writing make writing easier or harder for you?

It definitely helps. For one thing, it means that I'm always in the company of writers. Which is a joy. But a lot of learning to write is about learning craft, and so if I get stuck, I can usually figure out what to do.



Which character do you most relate to in your book and why?

Merry. We look at the world the same way and have the same sense of humor. We also value the same things. Writing about her gave me a chance to spend more time with my father, who, like Merry's, suffered from Multiple Sclerosis for decades. He was the bravest man I ever knew, but sometimes I feel like the man himself was overshadowed by his illness. There was so much more to him than I realized. That said, Merry's father and my own are not the same people and I've never been to Gstaad.



What is one book that you return to again and again?

Hmmm. A Christmas Carol! 😊

About the Author:



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Susan Breen is the award-winning author of **The Fiction Class** and the **Maggie Dove mystery series**. She teaches novel writing at Gotham Writers and has been on the faculty of conferences from Cape Cod to Dubai. She loves stories about families, London, ghosts, guilt, atonement, dogs, Charles Dickens, and Christmas. She likes the idea of collecting rare books, though so far, she's only collected two, both of them being early editions of **A Christmas Carol**. For more info check out susanbreenauthor.com.

MERRY OFFICIAL PLAYLIST

RUN RUN RUDOLPH - KELLY CLARKSON

IT'S BEGINNING TO LOOK A LOT LIKE CHRISTMAS - MATTHEW IFIELD

CHRISTMAS TIME IS HERE - LUCIUS, FUG YEP SOUNDATION

MAYBE THIS CHRISTMAS - MICHAEL BUBLE, CARLY PEARCE

LONDON CALLING; REMASTERED - THE CLASH

WATERLOO SUNSET - THE KINKS

WE ARE FAMILY; 1995 REMASTERED - SISTER SLEDGE

JINGLE BELL ROCK - SIERRA FERRELL

AND WE DANCED - THE HOOTERS

EVERYBODY DANCE NOW - RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS

ON A NIGHT LIKE THIS - BUCKWHEAT ZYDECO

GHOST - JUSTIN BIEBER

O HOLY NIGHT - JOSH GROBAN

THE FIRST NOEL; 2004 REMASTER - EMMYLOU HARRIS

CHRISTMAS MAKES ME CRY - KACEY MUSGRAVES

STEP INTO CHRISTMAS; REMASTERED 1995 - ELTON JOHN

THANK GOD IT'S CHRISTMAS; 2011 REMASTER - QUEEN

DO YOU HEAR WHAT I HEAR? - MARY J. BLIGE, JESSIE J

RUDOLPH, THE RED-NOSED REINDEER - MARY J. BLIGE

JOY TO THE WORLD - SEABIRD

WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD - LOUIS ARMSTRONG



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