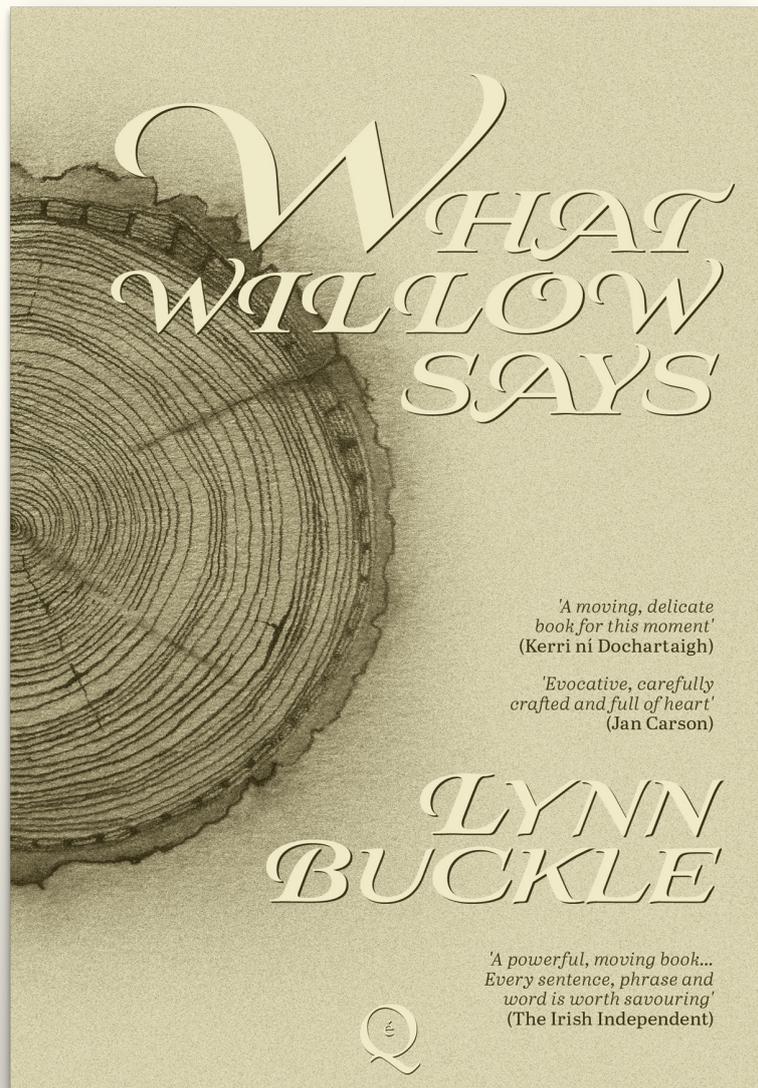


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BOOK CLUB AUTHOR Q&A WHAT WILLOW SAYS BY LYNN BUCKLE



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Please see detailed below some questions and answers provided by the author in relation to their book.

1. How would you summarise the book and your motivations for writing it?

My novel is about language, nature, place, and family seen through a disability lens.

Living in a transitioning bogland landscape which is saturated in ancient stories and myths, I was keen to record this and to encourage others to appreciate and preserve it through my fiction. Being a sign language-user and living with hearing loss also means I am very interested in all forms of communication, including nature's own forms.

2. What is the significance of the title?

The title has a double meaning.

The novel follows Grandmother's journey of understanding what her granddaughter Willow is saying through sign language. She does this through a shared journey of exploring their locality and trying to understand how nature communicates. There is a repeated focus on what the willow trees at the bottom of their garden are saying. These gaps in understanding narrow over the course of the book as we travel on their journey with them.

3. What are the main themes of the book? What do these themes mean to you as the author?

Identifying with nature and place is intrinsic to us all to varying degrees but I felt an urgency to explore these in a time of climate change; to record my surroundings and to encourage others to connect with nature. I embed subtle climate actions, normalising planet-friendly behaviours.

There is also very little quality literary fiction where deafness is represented without the usual ableist tropes. I wanted to correct that as an author with a lived experience.

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4. Did you decide on a specific style of writing for this book, and if so, why? What are you trying to convey through your style?

No, this *is* my writing style, the hallmark which identifies me as a writer.

5. Was the structure and layout of the book an important consideration? If so, why?

Yes, for several reasons.

It is composed of a series of short diary entries, over a one-year period. While reminiscences of the past give back-story and meaning, this diary format offers the narrator (Grandmother) a predictability in her uncertain world and a place to record, confess, and explore. The reader slowly uncovers her need to do this as the story unfolds. Weather reports at the start of each chapter introduce the general tone and provide health updates and the seasonal structure correlates to the plot.

6. What would you highlight as some of the pivotal scenes of the book, what is their importance to the narrative and to you on a personal level?

The novel doesn't really hinge on the trope of structural beats, catalysts, and penultimate scenes leading to a transformative ending. Instead, it is a slowly evolving journey to be enjoyed for itself. Yes, things happen, understandings evolve, we see change, but these things do not happen in pivotal scenes.

7. How important was the time period or the setting to the story? What were you looking to evoke through this?

It set over the period of one year. This, and the seasonal structure with its cycle of life, correlates to the characters' own cycles.

It is set in contemporary times to reflect what our environment is like now as it is quickly changing but the past is drawn upon to lend meaning and timelessness.

The setting is intrinsic to the novel, as place and nature are a major character.

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8. Which location in the book would you most like to visit and why?

I live on The Bog of Allen in the Irish midlands. The locations in the book are descriptions of actual places and can be found by following the coordinates given at the top of each chapter.

I would of course love to pass through the mythical portals described in the novel - a desire also expressed by Grandmother. In fact, she is depending on it.

9. What emotions are you hoping to evoke in the reader?

Loss runs through the novel, but I hope the feeling is more beautifully piquant than dour as the love behind that grief shows through.

10. As an author you are very close to your characters. Reflecting back on the book, which of your characters would you like to meet in real life and why?

Willow. Her confidence is amazing!



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Lynn was born in the UK and after much travel has spent the last thirty years in Ireland. She is a successful Kildare based artist, tutor and writer.

She spent years stealing feelings and painting them onto canvas, but her stories needed words and she changed to writing verse.

She is the UNESCO City of Literature Virtual Writer in Residence, National Centre for Writing 2021.