HONEY
From the author of PIE
Sarah Weeks
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Discussion Questions for Honey

1. What did you like or not like about Melody?
2. What did you like or not like about Nick Woo? What made Nick a good friend?
3. What is the significance of Melody’s name? Does your name have special significance?
4. Melody and her father play word games together. What kind of games do you play with your parents or other family members?
5. Why do you think Melody’s father refuses to talk about her mother?
6. Who does Bee Bee call before she moves back to Royal? Why was this an important call?
7. Why does Melody think her father has a girlfriend? What makes Melody think that she knows the girlfriend’s identity?
8. What does Melody learn from Bee Bee?
9. Melody’s mother was an incredible pianist. What is one of your talents?
10. Look at the list of nail polish colors on pages 149-152. Which color best describes your personality and why?
11. Why do you think Bee Bee loves wigs?
12. Discuss what you think will happen next for Melody and her family?
About the Author

It’s always hard to know what to say when people ask me to tell them a little bit about myself. Of course there’s the regular stuff to talk about, like where I was born and where I live now. Then there are the harder, more interesting things to get into, like how I write my books and what the best thing is about being an author. Oh, and of course there’s the question everyone seems to want answered—do I have any pets?

So starting with the easy stuff – I was born in Ann Arbor Michigan in 1955, back when there was no color TV, milk came in glass bottles delivered by a milkman, Barbie dolls came in only two varieties – blonde and brunette, and girls had to wear dresses to school every day, even in the cold, harsh Michigan winters when the temperature often dipped below zero.

My dad was an English professor at the University of Michigan. He loved words, and books, and telling funny stories. My mother stayed home with my brother and sister and me until we’d all three gone off to college, at which point she went back to work. I attended Hampshire College in Massachusetts, where I studied music composition then I moved to New York City, went to graduate school, got married and settled down to raise a family.

My sons, Gabe and Nat, were both born in New York City and went to public elementary, middle, and high schools there. Even though we lived in one of the busiest cities in the world, they still did all the same kinds of things other kids do – played sports, hung out with friends, and ate pizza. The only difference is that they played sports in Central Park, hung out with friends on Broadway, and the pizza in New York is sold by the slice.

As for how I write my books and what the best thing is about being an author – I think I’ll answer the second question first. The best thing about being an author is that I get to spend all day doing what I like best – writing. From the time I was a little girl, the two things I enjoyed most were playing music and writing. I studied music composition in college and was a singer songwriter before I became an author. I don’t write much music anymore, I’m too busy writing books!

Sometimes when I’m working on a book I completely lose track of time and when I finally stop writing I look out the window and am amazed to find that it’s dark outside. Other times, when I feel blocked and the ideas aren’t coming, I do my housecleaning instead, or bake cookies, or okay, I admit it, veg out in front of the TV for a while until I feel like writing again.

I’m one of those writers who believes in the idea that it’s best to write what you know. I love animals, and I know a fair amount about them, so a lot of my picture books are about animals and the environment. I love kids – the way they talk to each other and the things they think are funny, so my novels are about kids.
Describing how I write is not an easy thing to do. I’m not ever sure where the ideas come from. Sometimes they seem to pop into my head out of thin air, and other times I see something, or hear something, or read something that triggers a story idea. Once I have an idea, the story doesn’t always come out right away. Sometimes it has to sit in my head for a long time, being turned over and over again until I understand it well enough to start putting it down on paper. I work at the computer, but I edit with a pencil. I print out whatever I’ve written one day, and start the next day by reading it over and making corrections.

Every book I write goes through many drafts. With each draft I get comments from my editor and then I rewrite and rewrite and rewrite until we both feel the book is as strong as it can possibly be. I don’t love rewriting, but it’s just one of those things you have to do if you want to be a good writer. I work with several different editors because my books are published at several different publishing houses. I am very lucky because they are all wonderful to work with!

Besides writing I like to bake, hang out with my friends and family, talk to my 97 year old mother on the phone, go to the movies, watch little league games (even though my boys are too old to play in them anymore), and visit classrooms around the country talking to kids about my books. It’s nice being able to write both picture books and novels because it means that I’m always shifting around, doing different things. One day I might be working on a rhyming book about a clothesline the day after that a serious book about a girl who goes on a long journey in search of herself. Variety. That’s what keeps life interesting.

My favorite place to be is home. I live in a little green and yellow house in a town called, Nyack, New York. I am married to a wonderful man named Jim Fyfe. He’s a television segment producer. I have a step-daughter named Hailey who lives in Chicago and a beautiful daughter-in-law named Kim.

Okay, okay, you’ve been very patient. I know what it is you really want to know so I won’t keep you in suspense any longer. Yes, I have a pet. Mia is a Labrador Retriever/Pitbull mix. I am so crazy about this dog it's, well, crazy. She has many nicknames including: Mama, Meems, Mimi Van Peebles, Judge Judy, Maccah and Brindle Girl.

http://sarahweeks.com/bio-pages/about-me/
Interview With Sarah Weeks
THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 2015

Here is an interview that Scholastic had with the author of PIE, Sarah Weeks.

Book Box Daily: If you had to describe your new book, PIE, in five words, what would they be?


BBD: PIE is set in a small, close-knit community in which everyone knows their neighbors. Was this inspired or influenced by a community you’ve lived in, personally?

SW: I spent my summers as a child on an island in Lake Michigan. Now I spend my summers in a little town in the Catskill Mountains. So yes, I have had some personal experience with living in a close-knit community. Ipswitch, PA, is a fictional place, and one of the things I loved about creating it was developing the feel of the town and inventing the people who would live there.

BBD: In PIE we learn a lot about the pie preferences of a number of the book’s characters. Did their personalities easily dictate their taste in pies? How many different kinds of pie did you bake before settling on the recipes you included in the book?

SW: I knew right from the start that Alice’s favorite pie would be peach. To me, nothing tastes more like summer than peach pie. I began collecting pie recipes from friends and family while I was still working on my first draft. As the recipes poured in, it was fun to try to match the pies to the characters in the book. I love to bake so I often make pies, but last summer (2010) I only baked pies that I was considering for the book.

BBD: Lardo the cat is not what most people would consider an “ideal” companion. Was he inspired by any pets you’ve known?

SW: Um, I know this will be an unpopular answer with many, but I’m not a cat lover. I’m a dog person. I grew to love Lardo in the course of writing PIE, but I wouldn’t really want to own him.

BBD: PIE fits into so many different categories—it’s a story about friendship and family, it’s a story about inspiration, it’s a classic “whodunit” mystery. Are these the types of books you enjoyed reading as a kid? Can you tell us what books were your favorites?

SW: I was a huge fan of Freddie the Detective Pig when I was a kid. I’ve always loved mysteries, though I find them kind of hard to write. My editor can attest to the fact that I did a lot of rewriting. Jane Quizzenberry was not the original cat-napper; it was the mayor’s wife. The tricky thing about mysteries is dropping the clues at the right time, and making sure not to leave any loose ends.
BBD: The importance of family is a recurring theme in your novels. In each, the central character has a loving (if sometimes complicated) relationship with at least one key relative. Is that a conscious choice on your part, and if so, why?

SW: I have to say, it’s not a conscious choice. I’ve always been attracted to things that are surprising. I was very close to both of my parents, and I’m very close to my children. Family is the most important thing in my life, so I guess it’s not surprise that I like to write about it.

BBD: The kids you depict in your books tend to be smart, resourceful, and brave (at least eventually!) about confronting their fears. Do you think that you, personally, were such a kid?

SW: Brave? Who me? As a kid I was goofy and creative and sensitive. I like to think I’m all of those now too—just with wrinkles.

BBD: When you begin writing a novel, which usually comes first—a character or a plotline?

SW: I always start with characters. I make them talk to one another and as wacko as it sounds, they often tell me what the story should be about.

BBD: How has your background as a singer and songwriter influenced the way you approach your writing?

SW: In _PIE_ I got to write song lyrics for Alice to sing. I studied piano and viola and voice in high school and music composition in college. For many years before I became an author I was a singer songwriter, writing for Disney and Sesame Street. I believe in perfect rhymes—no cheating! It was really fun to make up the songs for Alice and also to write the Lardo jingle.

BBD: You’ve written more than 50 books for young people—picture books, beginning reader books, chapter books, and middle grade novels—but so far no young adult novels. Do you think you’ll ever write anything specifically aimed at a teen audience?

SW: Maybe. If the right idea comes along I’d love to write a book in the voice of a teenage girl.

BBD: How (if at all) does your process for writing a chapter book or novel differ from your process for writing a picture book?

SW: The process for writing a picture book is completely different from the process of writing a chapter book or novel. For one thing, most of my picture books rhyme. Also, when I write a picture book I’m always thinking about the role the pictures will play in the telling of the story. It can take me several months to write a picture book, but it takes me several years to write a novel. I usually have a couple of things going at the same time, so that I can change it up a little. I might spend the morning working on a serious novel and then switch over to something lighter in the afternoon.

BBD: You are one of the esteemed authors who founded Authors Readers Theatre. Can you tell us what your group does and how that idea came about?
**SW:** ART was started about six years ago by Avi, Walter Dean Meyers, Sharon Creech, and myself. We love the format of reader’s theatre so much—putting together scripts made up from scenes in our books, rehearsing together, editing together, and then performing at conferences of librarians and teachers. It’s so much fun! The group has expanded and changed over the years to include other wonderful authors such as Brian Selznick, Pam Munoz Ryan, Katherine Patterson, and Bruce Coville to name a few.

**BBD:** Can you share with us an especially memorable question or comment you’ve received from one of your readers?

**SW:** I get a lot of letters and e-mails from kids—all of which I answer. Most of their messages are very sweet and complimentary, but sometimes they’re funny. Those are the ones I tend to remember. For instance, someone recently wrote to say “I was looking for Twilight in the library, but it was checked out so I read your book So B. It instead. It was pretty good—but you could use some vampires.”

**BBD:** Finally, what are your top five favorite pies?

**SW:** Blueberry, peach, pumpkin, lemon chess, and chocolate angel pie. The last one is not one of the recipes in the book, but anyone who wants to know how to make it can write to me on my BLOG and I’ll be happy to share the recipe!

We’d like to thank Sarah one more time for taking a moment to talk with us.