



# The Wonders

## PADDY O'REILLY

### Book Club Discussion Questions

1. *The Wonders* asks what makes someone a celebrity. Why do we follow the exploits of celebrities?
2. Paddy O'Reilly has created a world that seems very much like the world we live in now, but with characters whose bodies have been radically altered. She says that some of these procedures are not so far from what some people already undergo. What do you think will happen with medical technology in the future?
3. The animals in *The Wonders* are retired circus performers that have been given sanctuary. Consider how in today's world some animals are used for scientific research and commercial product testing, and yet others are our beloved pets. What are your thoughts on our treatment of animals?
4. Leon is a shy man who must learn to present a confident public face when he is thrust into the world as a Wonder. We all have places where we 'curate' our image, such as Facebook or LinkedIn or online dating sites. How has the internet changed the way we present ourselves?
5. Kathryn has been reviled, then both adored and feared. O'Reilly has stated in an interview that the reaction to Kathryn is specific to her being a woman. Discuss.
6. In *The Wonders*, Christos is an artist who uses his own body to express his artistic vision. Average people are also permanently altering their bodies to express themselves more than ever before. Why have body modifications, such as tattoos and piercings and implants, become so popular?
7. Leon asks himself about the disability activists who question the role of the Wonders, 'Were he and Kathryn and Christos, the beautiful monsters, making everything worse for the different ones who were not beautiful?' What do you think?
8. Public figures, like the Wonders, are always the subject of gossip and rumours about their private lives. Is this fair and acceptable?
9. The novel explores many ways in which we look at each other. Sometimes we are encouraged to look, sometimes we are told not to stare. Television allows us to look closely at people in ways we could never do in person, and the rise of shows such as *Embarrassing Bodies* demonstrates our desire to do this. Why are we so interested in looking at strangers?
10. The three Wonders begin the book as disparate people thrown together by chance. By the end, they feel like family to each other. How do we make family?