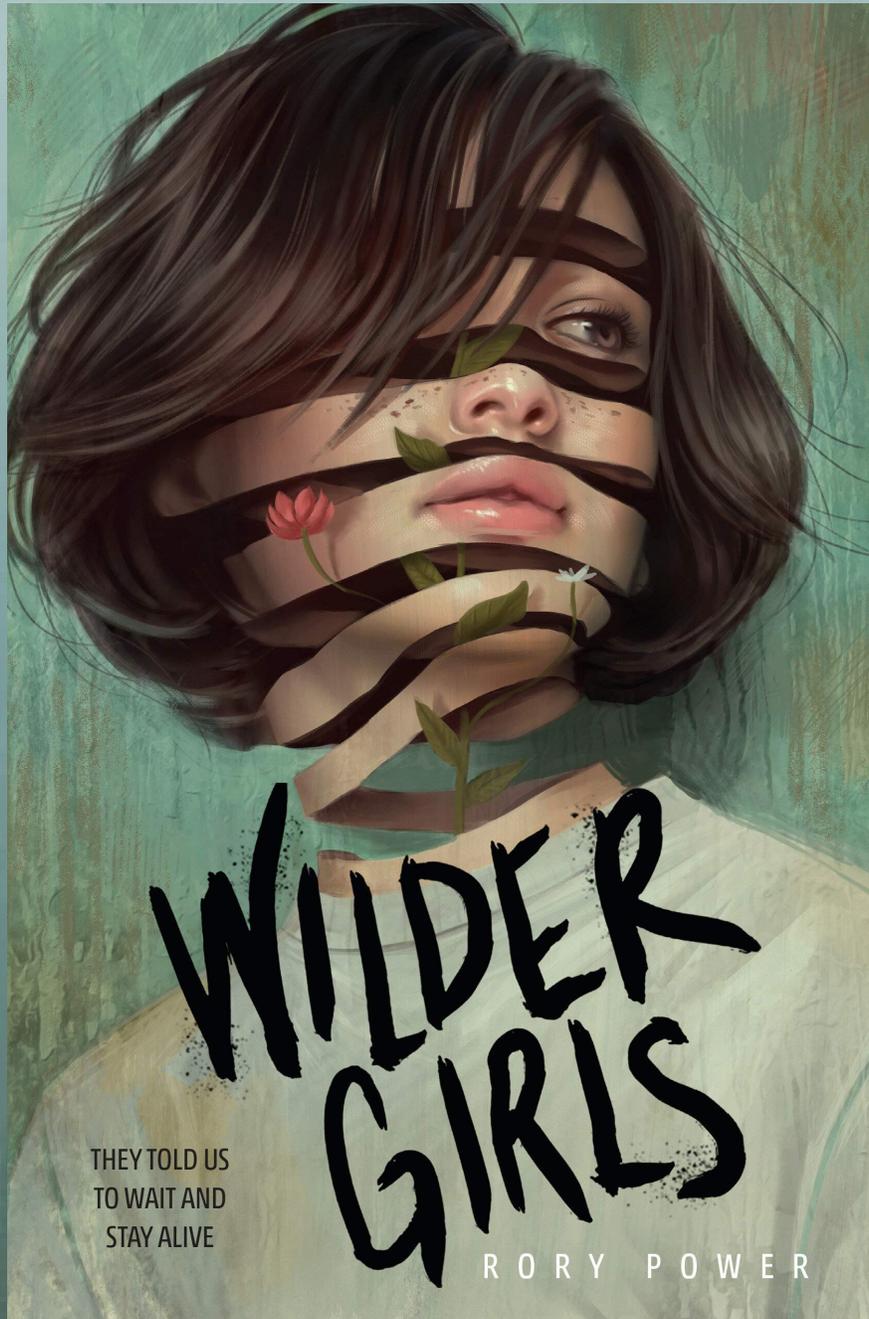


BOOK CLUB KIT



**EVERYTHING YOU NEED FOR A BOOK CLUB MEETING
ON WILDER GIRLS BY RORY POWER**

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AUTHOR INTERVIEW

How do you feel about *Wilder Girls* being called a feminist *Lord of the Flies*?

Rory Power: On a basic level, the comparison makes a lot of sense, considering the elements the books share (an island, a gender-specific group, utter chaos). And I think that both books explore what people are willing to do to survive. But where to me *Lord of the Flies* always felt like commentary on the human psyche—I think we all had to write that paper about Freudian symbolism in high school—*Wilder Girls* is something I approached on an individual level. It absolutely talks about broader concepts, like girlhood and beauty, but it's also deeply rooted in these particular girls and their choices.

How did you decide which Tox symptoms to assign to each character? How would the Tox affect you?

Assigning symptoms to characters was partly based on personality and partly random. Reese, for instance, is a very guarded person, so it felt only right to give her actual armor-like scales. But for other characters, I used their symptoms as a chance to explore some of the research I did into evolutionary adaptations found in animals. Byatt's vocal symptom is based on the pistol shrimp, for no other reason than that I thought it was really cool. If I had the Tox, I'd like to say I'd be bioluminescent the way Reese's hair is, but I don't think I'd be that lucky—I'd probably have fangs coming out of my ears or something equally unfortunate.

What kind of environmental message did you want to convey with this story?

Wilder Girls is obviously a speculative take on things, but it points to dangers that are very real. With this story, I wanted to look at the risks of ignoring climate change and its effects. Raxter Island has become hostile, and the girls suffer intensely because of it. But I also think the book portrays how interconnected we are with the natural world, and how what happens to one species happens to the others.



AUTHOR INTERVIEW

The government sends supplies to Raxter, but they quarantine the girls on the island and do not try to rescue them. Do you feel like this book is about society failing girls and women?

Hetty ostensibly has a lot of help in *Wilder Girls*—she has the government sending supplies, she has her teacher looking out for her, and she has friends who care about her well-being—but almost none of it is the kind she needs. At the end of the day, it's just her. I think for a lot of girls and women, that's a familiar feeling.

Your female characters are all of the things society tells girls not to be: loud, selfish, and in-your-face. Is there a message in *Wilder Girls* that teenage Rory needed to hear? What message do you hope female-identifying readers take away from the book?

For me, the biggest message in the book and the one that I think would've been most meaningful to my teenage self is just the power of our instinct to survive. Just keeping on, even when it feels like there's no reason to or like it's impossible. Sometimes that's the only agency we have in our own lives. Of course, that's something I think a lot of young people can relate to, regardless of gender identity. But especially for those who identify as female, the world expects such a performance of beauty. I hope readers leave *Wilder Girls* feeling the weight of that expectation a little bit less.

You've written some very intense friendships in this book. What were you hoping to convey about female relationships?

There are a number of female friendships in *Wilder Girls*, not all of them healthy, but what they have in common is a deep sense of devotion and an incredible power. Our friendships can make us better people; they can also consume us. In *Wilder Girls*, the line between those two sides is particularly narrow, but walking it is what keeps Hetty going. I hope that the book conveys the sheer power of the connections we build with other people, for better or worse.



AUTHOR INTERVIEW

How did the dangers of the world around Hetty and Reese shape the blossoming romance between them?

Hetty and Reese both come into their relationship with no sense of stability. Their lives are at risk every day, and their world is changing constantly—they've learned that to survive, they have to be willing to let go of things. Taking that into account as I wrote their relationship meant leaning into that fragility. Hetty and Reese mean a lot to each other, but they're put under incredible stress. And when push comes to shove, they would both rather be alive than be together.

“Gross” is a word you love to use on social media when talking about this novel, and sure enough, there are some effects of the Tox that are horrifying, and the details are uncomfortable to read. When writing the gore, how did you find the balance between showing the horror without overdoing it?

I tried to be pretty matter-of-fact for the most part and to remember that Hetty has seen a lot of the gore before and isn't surprised. Most symptoms of the Tox are run-of-the-mill for her now. There are absolutely moments that come as a shock to her, and for those I tried to lean in and really go for the horror, but overall, I approached the details of the Tox as an everyday thing for the characters.

Why did you write the ending the way you did? What do you hope readers take away from it?

Wilder Girls definitely has an open ending. I wanted readers to get the sense that though we might not know where Hetty, Reese, and Byatt are going, we know they're going somewhere. They're continuing on, even though what's ahead of them is completely unknown. That's something I think I needed to hear when I was a young adult—I might be leaving things behind, and I might not know where I'm going, but it's worth it to continue.



BOAT SHIFT DELIVERY:

WHAT TO SERVE AT YOUR WILDER GIRLS MEETING

Food

The food on Raxter Island is delivered by the government. It consists of expired canned goods and the occasional piece of fruit, and every once in a while the Boat Shift split a bar of chocolate.

Go along with the book's pre-packaged culinary theme by hanging up your chef's hat and buying ready-made snacks. Trail mix and gummy worms are a fun way to channel the wilderness of the island, while a fruit bowl or veggie platter can highlight what the girls missed. And you certainly need to have some chocolate. Just make sure to check those expiration dates!

If your group usually organizes potluck meals, ask everyone to bring an item that they'd miss if they were trapped on Raxter.

Drinks

On Raxter, the girls have one option when it comes to drinks: bottled water delivered by the government. This makes your job as book club host easy, but we recommend giving your water bottles a Wilder Girls makeover. Flip to the next page for a custom label.

If you want to add a bit of flavor, try making a pitcher of lemonade! Use food coloring or flavored syrups to make three batches: Raxter Blue (for the irises and the crabs found on the island), Potential RAX009 (for the vial Hetty discovers in the forest), and the Tox.

For your Raxter Blue lemonade, we recommend making this blueberry lemonade recipe. For an easy fix, use blue food coloring. For your Potential RAX009 lemonade, we recommend making this strawberry lemonade recipe. For an easy fix, use red food coloring. For your Tox lemonade, we recommend making this mint lemonade recipe. For an easy fix, use green food coloring.

Decor

Transporting your book club to Raxter Island is easier than you think. First, consider holding your meeting outdoors in a local park or near the water. Being in nature is certain to make you feel closer to the characters and setting.

If your meeting will be indoors, you can still give your space a Raxter feel with terrariums or mini plants like succulents. As a bonus, members can take them home at the end of the meeting.



WILDER GIRLS WATER BOTTLE LABELS

Water bottled for
book clubs discussing
Rory Power's
Wilder Girls.

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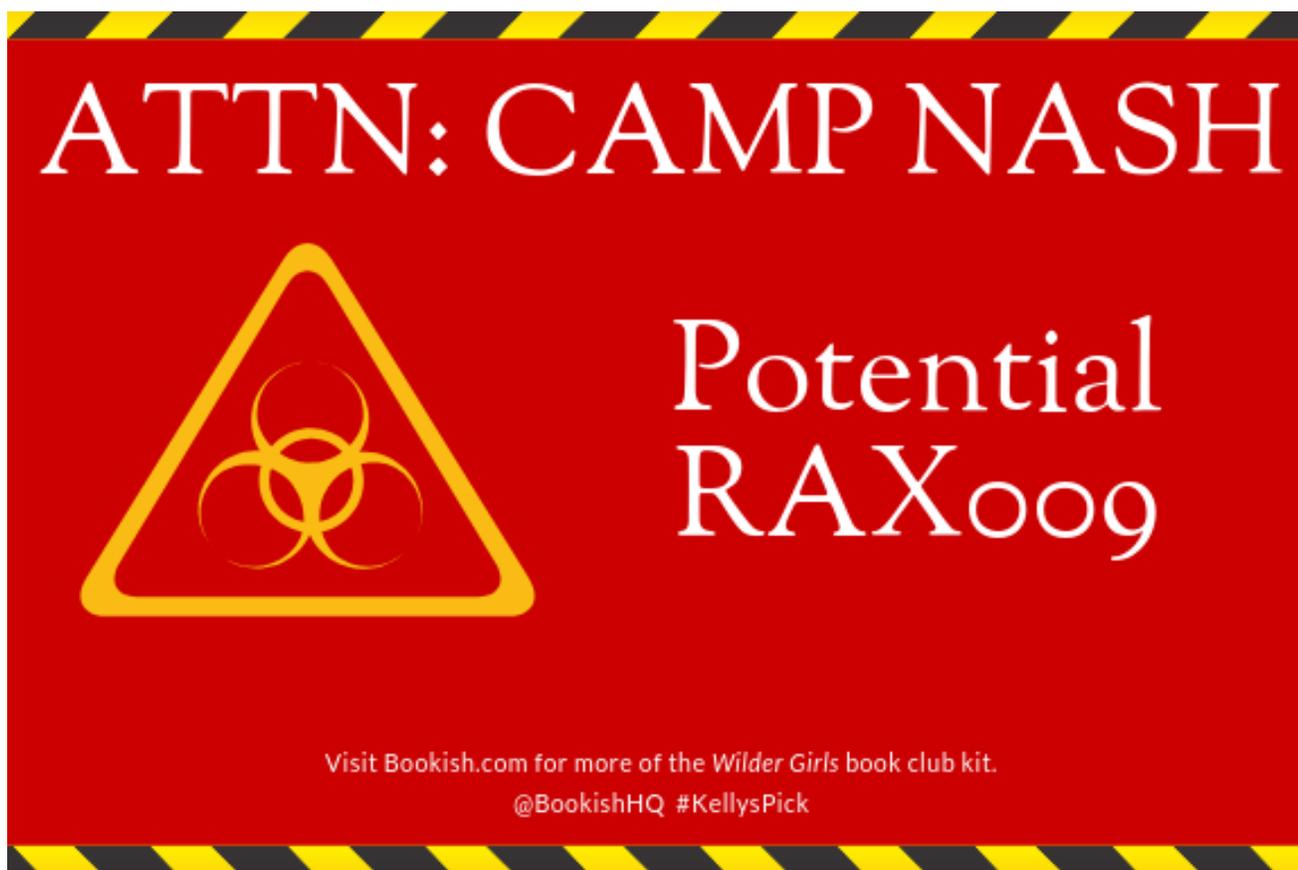
THE TOX

ONE SIP
AND YOU'LL
BE
INFECTED



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WILDER GIRLS WATER BOTTLE LABELS



GLORY AND GORE:
SONGS TO LISTEN TO WHILE DISCUSSING WILDER GIRLS

Looking for some tunes to play during your meeting?
We're here with the perfect playlist.

- “Glory and Gore” by Lorde
- “Paint It, Black” by Ciara
- “Monsters” by Ruelle
- “Desire” by Anna Calvi
- “Toxic” by Britney Spears
- “Like a Girl” by Lizzo
- “Seventeen” by Sharon Van Etten
- “Closer” by Tegan and Sara
- “My Blood” by Ellie Goulding
- “Girls Like Girls” by Hayley Kiyoko
- “Anthem” by Superchick
- “Fools” by Lauren Aquilina
- “Pynk” by Janelle Monáe
- “lovely” by Billie Eilish and Khalid
- “Alive” by Sia



DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. *Wilder Girls* has been compared to *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding. Do you see the books as similar? In what ways are they different?
2. Why do you think each girl had different Tox symptoms? Do you see the symptoms as symbolic?
3. If you had the Tox, what symptoms do you think you would have?
4. How did you feel about the gore in this novel? What do you feel it contributed to the story as a whole?
5. At one point in the novel, Mona says that she would choose to keep her Tox symptoms even if the disease were cured. Why do you think this might be?
6. Why do you think the author showed the Tox affecting men and boys differently than it did the girls on the island?
7. What do you think of the environmental thread in this novel? What statement do you feel like the author is making?
8. How did you feel about the shift in Byatt's narration later in the novel? Do you believe Hetty knew the real Byatt?

Find more questions on the next page!



DISCUSSION GUIDE

9. If Reese had narrated a section of the novel, what might it have looked like?

10. How do you feel about the ending of this novel? Do you like that it left room for reader interpretation?

As an added bonus, here are two questions suggested by author Rory Power:

11. Consider Ms. Welch, a former teacher at Raxter who now runs Boat Shift. Do you feel bad for her? Looking at her actions in the novel (keeping secrets from the girls, making decisions about what supplies to bring back, etc), do you think she was doing the right thing? What do you think she could've done differently?

12. What do you think is at the heart of the friendship between Reese and Byatt? And what do you think Reese sees that Hetty doesn't?



BOOK CLUB QUIZ:

WHAT WOULD YOUR TOX SYMPTOMS BE?

What do people tend to notice first about you?

- A) Your posture
- B) Your voice
- C) Your eyes
- D) Your hair
- E) Your kind nature
- F) Your eagerness to help

Which of these best describes your personality?

- A) You stand up for what is right
- B) You always speak your mind
- C) You're super observant
- D) You never have a hair out of place
- E) You have a big heart
- F) You always want to lend a hand

What is your biggest fear?

- A) Losing your moral compass
- B) Being silenced
- C) Overlooking something important
- D) Being imperfect
- E) Losing your relationships
- F) Feeling powerless

What do you look for in a friend?

- A) Someone with the same values
- B) Someone to talk to
- C) Someone who sees you for who you really are
- D) Someone who will tell you if there's something stuck in your teeth
- E) Someone kind
- F) Someone to help out on big projects

If you were a superhero, what would your super power be?

- A) Super strength like Captain Marvel
- B) Ultrasonic scream like Black Canary
- C) Telepathy like Jean Grey
- D) Light manipulation like Sailor Venus
- E) Psychic empathy like Mantis
- F) Retractable claws like Wolverine

Which of these activities is most appealing to you?

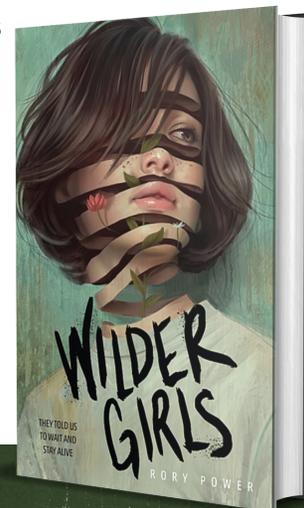
- A) Hitting a yoga class
- B) Going to a concert and singing along
- C) Bird watching
- D) Rocking a new haircut
- E) Getting in some cardio
- F) Petting cute animals

What would you do if you encountered a Tox-infected bear in the woods?

- A) Stand up for yourself and fight
- B) Yell for help
- C) Look for an escape route
- D) Distract the bear with something shiny
- E) Take a minute to slow down your heart rate and think
- F) Throw something at the bear

What food would you miss if you were quarantined?

- A) Steak
- B) Potato chips
- C) Salads
- D) Pizza
- E) Chocolate
- F) Sushi



BOOK CLUB QUIZ:
WHAT WOULD YOUR TOX SYMPTOMS BE?

RESULTS

Mostly As:

You'd grow a second spine on the outside of your body.

Mostly Bs:

Your voice's frequency would be damaging and painful.

Mostly Cs:

One of your eyes would fuse shut.

Mostly Ds:

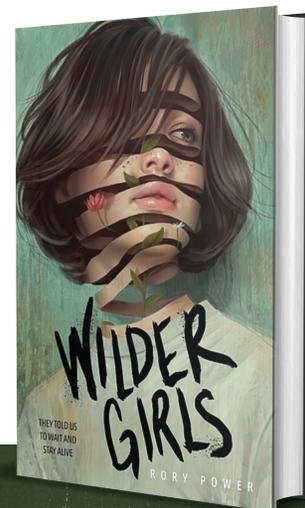
Your hair would turn silver and glow.

Mostly Es:

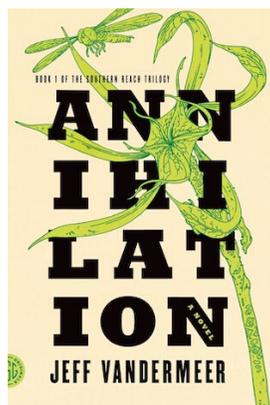
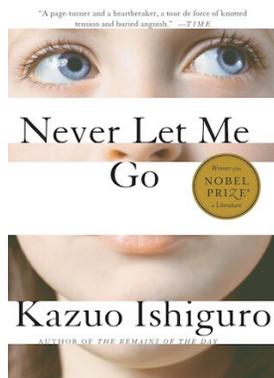
You'd grow a second heart.

Mostly Fs:

One of your hands would develop scales.



LOVE THIS, READ THAT: WHAT TO READ AFTER YOU FINISH WILDER GIRLS



***Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro**

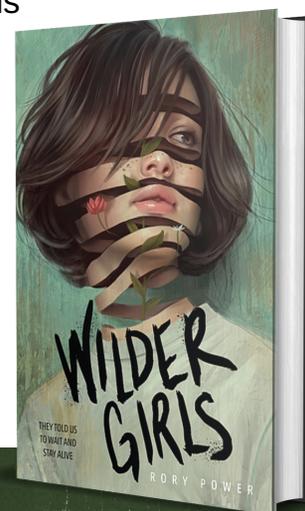
In *Never Let Me Go*, students attend a boarding school called Hailsham that might remind you of pre-Tox Raxter. Both novels will leave readers with a sense of horror, although Kazuo Ishiguro's novel invokes a creeping dread leading to a dark epiphany (as opposed to *Wilderness Girls*, which has more outright thrills and chills). If you love boarding school novels with a sinister twist, *Never Let Me Go* is a great book to pick up next.

***Annihilation* by Jeff VanderMeer**

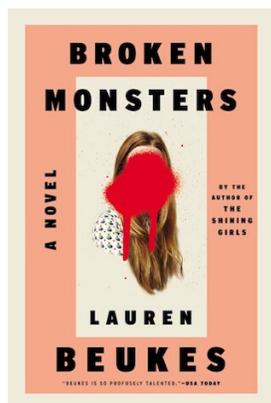
One of Power's inspirations for *Wilderness Girls* was Jeff VanderMeer's *Annihilation*, and we'd be remiss not mentioning it here. Eleven expeditions have ventured into the mysterious Area X to catalog their findings and all have been infected in strange and different ways by what they encountered there. Now, four women find themselves on the 12th expedition, and readers get to go along for the ride. We also recommend checking out the movie adaptation!

***Sawkill Girls* by Claire Legrand**

If you were instantly hooked by *Wilderness Girls*' feminist horror, we'd suggest diving into *Sawkill Girls*, one of our book club picks from 2018. Set on the island of Sawkill Rock, this young adult novel follows Marion's hunt for her missing sister. She soon discovers that girls have been disappearing on the island for years, and some think the local legend of the Collector has something to do with it.



LOVE THIS, READ THAT: WHAT TO READ AFTER YOU FINISH WILDER GIRLS

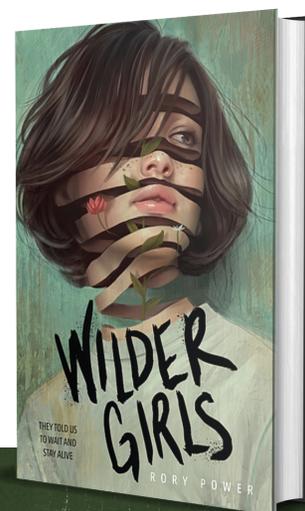


***Broken Monsters* by Lauren Beukes**

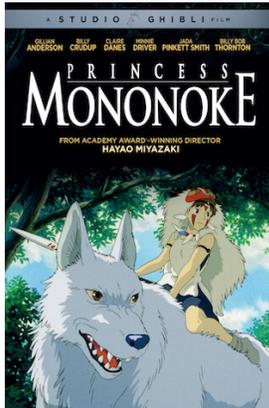
Readers looking for another book that blends realism with elements of science fiction and fantasy should check out this gripping thriller by Lauren Beukes. The book kicks off with Detroit detective Gabriella Versado discovering a strange body: half of a boy and half of a deer fused together. As more bodies begin to turn up, Gabriella will track down the killer and attempt to protect her daughter.

***Lumberjanes* by Noelle Stevenson, Grace Ellis, Brooke A. Allen, Shannon Watters**

Those looking for a story with less horror and gore and more queer girls exploring a weird world can dive into the *Lumberjanes* comics. Set at a camp for “hardcore lady-types,” this series is fun, dynamic, and addicting. You’ll meet campers Jo, April, Ripley, Molly, and Mal as they explore the forest, discover magical creatures, face off against monsters, and forge everlasting friendships.



LOVE THIS, WATCH THAT: WHAT TO WATCH AFTER YOU FINISH WILDER GIRLS



Princess Mononoke

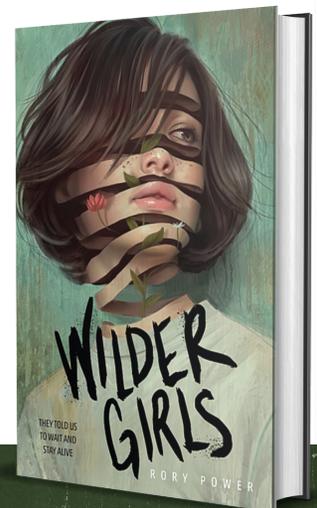
If you connected with the environmental message at the heart of *Wilder Girls*, we recommend sitting down to watch Hayao Miyazaki's animated movie *Princess Mononoke*. This fantasy is set in Japan during the Muromachi period, where the gods of the forest are fighting back against the humans taking over their land. Like the happenings on Raxter Island, things do get weird and gross, plus there's a female lead who shares Hetty's determination to protect those she loves.

Mad Max: Fury Road

This action-packed movie is set in a post-apocalyptic desert wasteland where Charlize Theron's Imperator Furiosa is on a mission to save a group of women from the leader holding them hostage. From body horror to a world altered by a changing environment, this story touches on many of the same themes as Power's novel. If the final chapters of *Wilder Girls* had you hooked, you'll love *Fury Road*'s focus on escape, survival, and rebellion.

Lost

If you enjoyed piecing together clues and trying to discover the cause of the Tox, we think you'll love getting into the bonkers world of *Lost*. The setup is simple: A plane crashes and the survivors find themselves on a mysterious island. As they explore, they begin to uncover the island's deadly secrets. *Lost* was a cultural phenomenon when it first aired, and while it's true that the final season divided viewers, it's guaranteed to keep you talking and theorizing.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

RORY POWER

Rory Power grew up in Boston, received her undergraduate degree at Middlebury College, and went on to earn an MA in prose fiction from the University of East Anglia. She lives in Massachusetts. *Wilder Girls* is her first novel.

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