



JASMINE WARGA

A STRANGE
THING HAPPENED
IN CHERRY
HALL

EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

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ABOUT THE BOOK

A painting has been stolen . . . !

When Rami sees a floating girl in the museum, he knows he has seen her somewhere before. Then he realizes: She looks just like the girl in the painting that has gone missing. But how does her appearance connect to the theft?

Agatha the turtle knows—she has been watching from the garden. But she can't exactly tell anyone . . . can she?

Will Rami, with the help of his classmate Veda, be able to solve the mystery? The clues are all around them, but they'll have to be brave enough to really look.

This is a whimsical, moving story about the universal desire to be seen and understood and how art can help us find connection, even when we are at our loneliest.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jasmine Warga is the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of middle grade novels *Other Words for Home*, *The Shape of Thunder*, and *A Rover's Story*. *Other Words For Home* earned multiple awards, including a John Newbery Honor, a Walter Honor for Young Readers, and a Charlotte Huck Honor. *The Shape of Thunder* was a *School Library Journal* and Bank Street best book of the year, was a finalist for the Barnes & Noble Children's and YA Book Award, and has been named to several state award reading lists. *A Rover's Story* was an instant *New York Times* bestseller, an Indie Next List and a Junior Library Guild selection, and named a best book of the year by *Publishers Weekly* and *The Washington Post*. She is also the author of the young adult novel *My Heart and Other Black Holes*, which has been translated into over twenty different languages. Originally from Cincinnati, she now lives in the Chicago area with her family in a house filled with books.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Loneliness/Sadness

- In school, Rami feels alone. How exactly does he describe the experience of middle school and being alone? To Rami, what parts of middle school seem unfair and unreasonable?
- When Rami talks about the empty chair that didn't bother him until a few months ago, what is he actually referring to? Why do you think the chair is bothering him now?

Friendship

- How are Rami and Veda different? How do their personalities complement each other on their mission to solve the mystery at Cherry Hall? How do their personalities sometimes clash?
- How does Rami gain more confidence through Veda? With Veda's help, how does Rami carry out some of the mission for the unsolved mystery at Cherry Hall?

First Generation/Multiculturalism

- What do Rami's mom and Veda's mom have in common? How do the commonalities influence Rami and Veda's friendship and interaction?
- What is the term of endearment Rami's mom uses for Rami? What does the word mean?

Visibility/Invisibility

- What does Agatha's presence at Cherry Hall offer Blue? What small gift does Agatha give Blue and why is it called a gift?
- Why does Blue scratch the wall and leave marks? What do these marks symbolize for Blue?
- In what ways does Rami feel invisible? As the mystery unfolds at Cherry Hall and he becomes part of the investigation, how does Rami become to feel more visible? Who helps him?
- Interestingly, the stolen painting is called *Untitled*. What are your thoughts on the painting's title? What are the layers of symbolism in this name? Do you think any of the characters in the book can relate to feeling "untitled" or "overlooked," and how does that connect to the general theme of the book?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

A-Hunting We Will Go

Create a scavenger hunt around your school or classroom leading toward something that is your idea of a treasure. Create written context clues (bonus points: write a rhyming riddle!) and plant them around. Remember, give strong clear clues that lead toward the treasure.

Comic Strip

Create a comic strip that illustrates some of the scenes from Rami and Veda's adventures. What scenes in *A Strange Thing Happened in Cherry Hall* stood out to you? Create the dialogue and frames for the comic strip that you envisioned through the details in the book.

Dear . . .

Write a letter to one of the characters in the book. In your letter, consider the motivations of the character. What would you say to them? Are there any questions you would ask? What advice you would give to help solve the mystery?

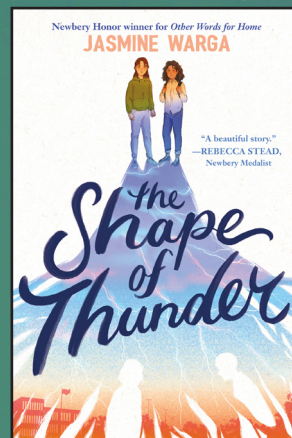
Hidden Gems

Rami's mom and Agatha in *A Strange Thing Happened in Cherry Hall* both enjoy painting and drawing. Paint or draw a picture with hidden gems—figures or images—for the viewer to discover. What kind of learnings can you depict in your drawing or painting?



Educator's Guide created by Esther H. Ra, Ed.D., CCMC, CELDC, lecturer, career coach/consultant, writer, literacy specialist, and certified teacher.

ALSO BY
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