

The Toymakers

by Robert Dinsdale



It is 1917, and London has spent years in the shadow of the First World War. In the heart of Mayfair, though, there is a place of hope. A place where children's dreams can come true, where the impossible becomes possible – that place is Papa Jack's Toy Emporium.

For years Papa Jack has created and sold his famous magical toys: hobby horses, patchwork dogs and bears that seem alive, toy boxes bigger on the inside than out, 'instant trees' that sprout from boxes, tin soldiers that can fight battles on their own. Now his sons, Kaspar and Emil, are just old enough to join the family trade. Into this family comes a young Cathy Wray – homeless and vulnerable. The Emporium takes her in, makes her one of its own. But Cathy is about to discover that while all toy shops are places of wonder, only one is truly magical...

Discussion Questions

1. When Cathy was pregnant and living in the Wendy House, do you think she should have told Kaspar and Emil that she was seeing the other one, rather than keeping it a secret?
2. Which of the toys was your favourite and would have most appealed to you if you'd shopped in the Emporium?
3. How did your feelings towards Emil change throughout the course of the novel?

4. Throughout the book, we're told that magic has to do with perspectives. To what extent did you buy into the magic in the story?

5. Papa Jack says that "a toy can't save a life but it can save a soul". Do you agree?

6. How did you feel when the Emporium finally closed?

7. Cathy says that she felt sure Kasper died after he 'left' her. Did you have hope that he was still alive? Were you surprised by the ending?

8. How do you feel about the decisions that Cathy made, e.g. her decision to run away as a teenager, and her decision to stay at the Emporium even after Kaspar had gone?

9. How do you imagine the story continuing with the next generation, with Martha's children?

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Thank you to our volunteer Katy, for choosing this title and creating this resource.

