

Third Wish (2-Volume Boxed Set with CD)

By Robert Fulghum

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In fairy tales, the third wish is the last one left when the first wish was foolish, and the second wish was used to undo the first wish. Now the remaining wish must be used wisely and well--with the help of co-conspirators. The main thread of *Third Wish*--like Ariadne's string guiding Theseus into the labyrinth with the Minotaur--begins at a table on a terrace on the Greek Island of Crete, winds its way into the center and back out to the same table, passing through Greece, Japan, France, England, and Seattle. Its main characters are Alice, Max-Pol, Aleko, Wonko, Zenkichi, Polydora, Alice-Alice, and Dog. Woven into the fabric of the novel are cultural history, art, philosophy, archeology, poetry, theater and music. The mode of the novel is contained in the words Slowly, Surprise, and Witness. More than anything else, *Third Wish* is a long love story--not in the usual sense--but the story of people who love life and will go to great lengths to find a flourishing Way onward.

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Third Wish (2-Volume Boxed Set with CD) By Robert Fulghum Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

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| 3. The Jumwillies' Fight Song | 11. The Saddest Waltz | 17. The Queen of Queen Anne Hill |
| 4. Alice and Alex | 12. Waltz Of Strangers | 18. Sweet Sunday Morning |
| 5. Vasliev Ouranie | 13. Eros & Psyche | 19. Left_Right Surprise A Cappella |
| 6. The Really Really Green Waltz | 14. Three Wishes | 20. Left_Right Surprise |
| 7. Wonko's Waltz | | 21. Walk On |
-

Amazon Vine Voices on *Third Wish* by Robert Fulghum

We asked customer reviewers participating in Amazon Vine to answer four questions about Robert Fulghum's *Third Wish* after reading an advance copy. We've included excerpts of reviewers' responses below to give readers an opportunity to learn more about the book (and get excited to read it themselves) before it releases in February 2009.

How would you describe *Third Wish* to a friend?

"*Third Wish* is like an erudite travelogue, filled with vivid descriptions of real places and things that an educated tourist would love to see, and well-traveled tourists will recognize."

"*Third Wish* is, above all, a journey. A journey of history, friendship, laughter, love, peace, sadness, and finally, understanding and acceptance."

"An odd and thought-provoking book that penetrates into the minds and lives of the characters in the book with simplicity and yet complexity."

"*Third Wish* may be classifiable as a novel, but it really isn't just a story. It is perhaps better to characterize it as a quest, or an expedition. The subject is humanity, human identity, and relationships. It isn't a psychological study, but is certainly a look at life. The characters meander through a series of events in a stream that permits easy excursions that form eddies and gentle whirlpools without disrupting their course."

It's a fictional, and metafictional, exploration of how one learns and understands one's life through interactions with others. It's about trust, and loss."

"This is an epic, sweeping story about several unique and unforgettable characters which is told in the past, the present, as fiction, fable, history, mythology, geography, culture, intrigue and romance. It is not an easy or a quick read. You don't and won't want to simply skim through paragraphs or descriptions because you really might miss something."

"*Third Wish* is a novel about falling in love, not with someone else, but with life itself. It's a story that takes place in various locations, with each location offering a distinctive backdrop to the narrative that adds to the emotional impact of the story. Although infused with philosophical concepts of impermanence and the nature of change, it's not preachy."

"I'd say it's a different kind of human story, not about love so much as what it means to be human, a story of three friends haunted by mystery. The reader becomes ravenous for the author to explain things, which he obliges, but slowly. Along the way are lessons in history, philosophy and religion, on art and Japanese tattoo that enrich the characters without slowing the story. It's a book of surprises."

"*Third Wish* is an epic story about a group of unusual characters who meet by accident, or hand of fate, and find strength in each other's company. The first part is a story within a story, with other smaller stories along the way."

Would you recommend *Third Wish* to a friend?

"I would definitely recommend this book to a friend!"

"I would recommend this book to my friends if they were of the intellectual type that would enjoy seeing into the minds and hearts of people and places."

"I have friends who really like to read slowly, to lose themselves, to think and ponder. Those friends would love it. I also think it might be a perfect book club book for a group who maybe wants to take a summer break, and read a longer book during that break."

"I think it would appeal to someone who has a sense of wanderlust. Not just because it starts off on a train, or that it involves characters who meet while traveling. But rather, those who enjoy the mystique of adventure, of traveling to new places where you sometimes feel on edge, or very aware of how foreign you are, those people would be perfectly suited to this book."

"Unequivocally, yes. Several of my friends have expressed impatience with the fashion for metafiction; I would ask them to refrain from classifying *Third Wish* in any particular way. Structurally, this book works extraordinarily well."

"I would only recommend *Third Wish* to friends who could fully appreciate the experience. This means only readers who are interested in myth, awakenings, riddles, and the variety of stories woven into one in this book."

"If someone likes allegories, riddles and personal stories that involve multiple cultures and various geographical settings with a historical backdrop, this is THE book to read."

Does *Third Wish* remind you of other books you've read? Which ones?

"*Third Wish* stands alone among the hundreds of books I have read. It is unique in many ways, and the level of intertwining of characters and stories is rare in my opinion."

"It does remind me of *Catcher in the Rye*, except *Third Wish* is much more in depth with regard to the thoughts, feelings, and interactions of the characters."

"I would say by comparison, if you joined Odysseus on his return to Ithaca, or followed Leopold on his walk

about in Dublin, skipped down the yellow brick road with Dorothy, or followed a hare down a hole in your garden, *Third Wish* has a place in your life. Indeed, it may alter your view of it."

"It evokes strong feelings, which are associated with other books I've read, by Gerald Durrell, Graham Greene, Kenneth Grahame.... But *Third Wish* is *sui generis*."

"*Third Wish* reminds me of three, very different types of books: The first ones that came to mind and stayed with me throughout were the Griffin and Sabine trilogies. The next books that came to mind were by Gabriel Garcia Marquez. His books are certainly labyrinthine. And finally, *Travels with Charlie: In Search of America*, by Steinbeck.

"It reminds me of T.H. White's *The Once and Future King*, not because of story similarities, but rather on account of the way I felt when I was reading the book."

"I was really reminded of Will Durant's *History of Civilization*, especially of the volume on Greece. The genre is different obviously, but it had the same feel of moving from music, to architecture, to philosophy, to religion, etc. While obviously this is not a cultural history, the author managed to get a great deal of elements to it that touched on all these issues."

"Most assuredly, *Atonement*, as well as *Don Quixote*. The Alice books (*Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* are frequently invoked in the story, and the heroine is named Alice) play a role, as does the work of Edward Lear."

"Some of the humor and word play reminds me of Tom Robbins. The geographical and historical parts remind me of James Michener."

Imagine you are at a bookstore reading for *Third Wish*. What would you like to ask the author? What would you like to tell him?

"I loved everything about your work. It was so unique, and it drew me completely in. Brilliant use of all five senses. I have to say if more books were written this way, and were this interesting, and different, I would definitely take the time to step out of my comfort zone and read books of other genres."

"As a story teller, you took me on a journey that I have really enjoyed. I think of visiting Crete one day, and enjoying the simple pleasures that Alex and Max-Pol experienced. I think of the many simple pleasures that in a busy world are forgotten."

"This book has touched me more deeply than any other work of creative imagination. (I won't say "work of fiction", because that understates the metafictional, poetical, and documentary aspects of the work.)"

"I am curious as to how long this book took to write. Was it based on journals, or was it created entirely from imagination? I'd like to know what the author envisions as his audience, as his perfect reader."

"Thank you, from the bottom of my heart. It's a wonderful book. And, in the spirit of *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*, I would encourage him to revisit *Third Wish* at some point, to add or change things without hesitation. It's a never-ending story."

"My only sadness was that I could not appreciate the CD of music as much as the books. The melodies are beautiful and even haunting, but I prefer a more fuller sound than just a violin or a guitar by themselves."

"The addition of music to the experience is like taking a reader's mind into a film setting without the help of

actual video, so the reader must rely heavily on one's own imagination, it's wonderful!"

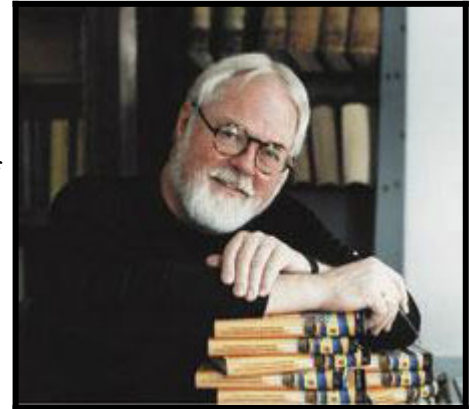
"I'd tell the author that I appreciated his love of lists and wordplay, but that I found it difficult--since this is no ordinary love story--to engage viscerally with the characters."

From the Author

A Letter from Robert Fulghum

Hello. Addressing the reader is an old tradition in literature, though currently out of fashion. But since I consider the relationship between a reader and a writer a personal one, I wish to revive the tradition. Moreover, this gesture is appropriate because, in the final part of *Third Wish*, a reader—a stakeholder now in the completion of the novel—addresses the author. This is as it should be. A successful novel must be a conspiracy between the writer and the reader—the creative imagination of both is required.

As with consulting a guidebook before travel, some access before beginning a critical review of a long novel may provide useful in the reading.



The bedrock of the story I will tell you is the 6,000 years of human history piled up in myth and fact on the Greek island of Crete. Since this is not common active knowledge, you may better appreciate my story and the actors onstage if you know the fundamentals of this history. Though I have sought clarity amidst complexity, previous readers tell me that having a few tools close by has been rewarding: an atlas, a dictionary, an encyclopedia, and even a short compendium of Greek myth and drama, for example.

There is a book within the novel: The Chronicles of Max-Pol Millay—a journal written for Alice-of-Many-Names to reveal the history and on-going affairs of Alexandros Evangelous Xenopouloudakis—(a.k.a. Alex Evans). This reflects real life experience—much of what we know about another comes mostly from what others tell us—and in the telling they both reveal and mask much about themselves.

The Crete and Oxford portions of the novel are illustrated, but not in the most direct sense—but by way of a sketchbook containing drawings, paintings, maps, and notes by a member of the cast—Louka Mahdis—expressing her own experiences as a gift to Max-Pol.

There is music in the novel—both written and recorded. Since this feature is somewhat unique, many early readers of the manuscript have not given the music much attention, alas, if any. But the music is very important. Every human being contains music in their mental jukebox. This music reveals primary history, fundamental character, and states of being. We choose it—sometimes it chooses us. Music commissioned for the novel is meant to express what words cannot. Please listen.

My category for myself is not writer or novelist but storyteller. *Third Wish* is a long story containing many short stories about those who enter the labyrinth of imagination and return. All of the main characters are themselves story-tellers—and they will tell you tales to answer questions you have not asked but only considered as you have experienced the unfolding of the play. However, in the end, it is the story told by the

reader that matters most of all.

Four seminal notions define *Third Wish*: Slowly. Surprise. Witness. Passion.

Finally, when all is said and done, *Third Wish* is a wide-ranging love story of a specific kind: It's about loving life and tying it up with a scarlet ribbon of memory as a keepsake. One of the characters says: "Love is not a noun, after all. Love is an active verb. Love is a chance we have taken – No wins, no losses – lots of ties." The nature of those ties binds the actors, the novel, the writer and, if all goes well, the reader together.

Robert Fulghum

About the Author

Robert Fulghum is the bestselling author of *All I Really Need To Know I Learned in Kindergarten*, *It Was On Fire When I Lay Down On It*, *Uh-Oh, Maybe (Maybe Not)*, *From Beginning To End*, *Words I Wish I Wrote*, *True Love*, and *What on Earth Have I Done?* *Third Wish* is his first novel, published originally in Czech, Slovak, and Hungarian. He lives in Seattle, Washington and on the Greek island of Crete.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Cheryl Stone:

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Stewart Ramirez:

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Daniel Rhoads:

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Lorraine Vargas:

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