



# LOOKING FOR JANE

## READING GROUP GUIDE

### TOPICS & QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Did you know about the postwar maternity homes and the underground networks offering illegal abortions before reading this book? How do these chapters of history inform your understanding of women's rights in Canada?
2. Due to an unfortunate mistake, the letter addressed to Nancy doesn't arrive to her in 2010. What do you think might have happened if she had received it then?
3. St. Agnes's Home for Unwed Mothers is not a welcoming place for the women who are sent there. How are the girls made to feel small or powerless? Where and how do they find joy, despite their situation?
4. The power of a mother's love is a central theme throughout the novel. How do the women in the novel express their love for their children, either adopted or biological, or during pregnancy? When does that love help heal relationships? When does it cause unintentional harm?



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5. The novel also explores the mother-daughter relationship, particularly through Nancy, but also Angela. How are these women shaped by their mothers' decisions, and how do those choices affect their own attitudes toward pregnancy and motherhood?
6. Similarly, why is it so important to Angela to reunite Nancy with her biological mother?
7. What are the social expectations of women during the 1960s and onward, and how do the women in the novel fulfill or circumvent these expectations? For example, what barriers does Evelyn overcome while pursuing medical school or working as a doctor? What pressures might Frances also experience?
8. Dr. Morgentaler warns Evelyn that the costs of illegally providing abortion are high. What risks do Evelyn—and others fighting for women's rights—face? Why are the risks worth it?
9. Describe the impact that witnessing Clara's illegal abortion has on Nancy. How does it change their relationship as cousins? How does it help set Nancy on the path to Jane?



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10. Contrast the experience Nancy has at Clara's abortion against her own. What do their stories highlight about freedom of choice and the importance of accessibility?

11. How does Angela's storyline illustrate the evolution of women's rights? In what ways do they still need to advance?

12. Consider the ways friendship and family are portrayed in the novel. What brings people together? What do these examples say about our need for human connection?

13. Discuss the role of secrets through the characters of Frances, Sister Agatha, Nancy, and Evelyn. What is accomplished when they share their stories or secrets with one another? What happens when they don't?

14. The novel underscores that time as a force can drive the characters' decisions and regrets. How does the passage of time influence Evelyn, Nancy, and Frances as their lives unfold?



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15. Were you surprised by the revelation about Evelyn and Maggie's final days at St. Agnes's?
16. In the author's note, she says that more than 300,000 mothers in Canada are estimated to have been forced into the postwar-era maternity home system. What do you make of the government's lack of apology or interest in reparation to the survivors of these homes?
17. What is the significance of the title Looking for Jane?