

Book Club Questions for The Night She Disappeared by Lisa Jewell

1. In "The Night She Disappeared," the narrative unfolds primarily through the perspectives of Tallulah, Kim, and Sophie. Whose voice resonated with you the most? Did you find yourself favoring one narrator over the others? Are there additional characters whose viewpoints you wished the story had delved into?
2. "The Night She Disappeared" weaves a tapestry of intrigue with elements like concealed passageways, an imposing abandoned mansion, and an enigmatic boarding school. These elements draw upon the traditions of Gothic literature, reminiscent of timeless works such as "Jane Eyre" and "Rebecca," while also aligning with modern favorites like "The Secret History." How does Lisa Jewell skillfully manipulate these literary conventions, infusing her unique signature into the genre?
3. After stumbling upon the engagement ring and prompting a renewed search of the woods, Sophie reflects on Kim's enduring conviction: "Not once has Kim imagined that possibility to be anything other than a sliver of a bad dream that she could easily chase away with the power of her own thoughts" (page 173). How does Kim's unwavering faith fuel the relentless investigation? How does her profound understanding of her daughter guide her towards unveiling the truth?
4. Lisa Jewell is known for her intricate character development. How did the author's portrayal of the characters' flaws and poor life choices impact your connection with them? Were there particular characters you found yourself empathizing with despite their shortcomings?
5. The Dark Place, the dense forest near the estate, serves as a central setting in the story. How does the forest itself become a symbolic element within the narrative? In what ways does it contribute to the overall atmosphere of suspense and mystery?
6. Scarlett's artistic creations depict her adorned in regal attire, juxtaposed against a backdrop of unsettling imagery. Liam confides in Sophie that Scarlett never disclosed the symbolism behind her art. How do you interpret Scarlett's paintings? What do these visual expressions unveil about her character and innermost emotions?
7. "The Night She Disappeared" showcases an array of mother-daughter relationships, ranging from the nurturing bond between Kim and Tallulah to the intricately twisted dynamic between Joss and Scarlett, and the more laid-back connection shared by Kerryanne and Lexie. Despite the diverse spectrum of women and relationships, do you discern any overarching themes related to the exploration of the mother-daughter relationship that Lisa Jewell deliberately delves into?

8. A palpable socioeconomic divide permeates the seemingly idyllic village of Upfield Common. As Sophie muses about the students at Maypole, she observes, "It's not just their youth that glitters . . . it's their backgrounds, their innate privilege . . . They come from places that aren't like the places most people come from and they have the high-gloss veneer of money that shines through the scruffiest of exteriors" (page 92). In what ways does class stratification exert its influence on the narrative's progression, and how do different characters respond to the enigma of Tallulah's disappearance within this context?

9. The use of profanity and controversial themes like sexuality is a notable aspect of Lisa Jewell's writing. How did these elements enhance or detract from your engagement with the story and the characters? Did you find that they contributed to character development and uniqueness as mentioned in the reviews?

10. Throughout "The Night She Disappeared," Lisa Jewell weaves poignant moments of Kim's sorrow as she grapples with the absence of her daughter. Which specific details resonated with you the most, evoking a profound emotional impact?

12. Despite Scarlett's initial charm, it becomes evident that she wields a level of control akin to Zach's. Instances such as Tallulah's enticement at the school party, the TM tattoo (which hints at possessiveness, whether signifying Tallulah's initials or "trademark"), and her influence over Tallulah's breakup foreshadow her dominion throughout the narrative. Was there a pivotal moment when you started to harbor concerns about Scarlett's grip on Tallulah?

13. Love and control intertwine not only within Zach and Scarlett's dynamic but also among other characters. Who else grapples with striking a balance in their relationships? Which characters demonstrate a healthy comprehension of genuine love?

14. Sophie, a writer of cozy mysteries, becomes embroiled in a plot reminiscent of her own novels. How do Sophie's sections mirror the structure of a classic mystery, evoking the essence of an Agatha Christie tale? In what ways do her experiences diverge from traditional mystery narratives?

15. Tallulah is drawn to Scarlett due to the persona she can embody around her. Reflecting on her text exchanges with Scarlett, Tallulah contemplates, "Scarlett believes Tallulah to be your average eighteen-year-old girl, the type who can come and go at her own pace, the kind with no commitments. And now Tallulah thinks of this other version of herself, the one with no commitments... Suddenly, she wants this other Tallulah's life more than anything in the world" (page 185). How does this alternate version of Tallulah manifest throughout the story? How does Tallulah's yearning for an alternate life give rise to complications? Do any other characters exhibit dual identities?

16. Liam's concealed truth remains shrouded until the story's final pages. Were you able to conjecture his hidden reality before its revelation?
17. As the novel nears its conclusion, Kim acknowledges her inability to muster sympathy or concern for Scarlett, despite the latter's confession and potential legal consequences: "Kim cannot feel sorry for her or care about her fate, as young as she is, as much as Scarlett may claim to love her daughter. She simply cannot" (page 392). Having gained insight into Scarlett's character over the course of the narrative, do you find yourself empathizing with her? When considering culpability, who bears greater responsibility—Scarlett or Joss Jacques?
18. Some reviewers mentioned an "off" feeling about the ending, suggesting that it felt rushed and could have been integrated differently. Without revealing spoilers, do you agree with this assessment? How did the ending impact your overall satisfaction with the book?