

# Eleanor Jones Can't Keep A Secret

AUTHOR  
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**RECOMMENDED FOR:** Lower to Mid Secondary  
(Violence, Language)

## SYNOPSIS

Things have settled down in Coinda and Eleanor Jones is getting used to her new normal—spending time with her friends, going to school, and working on a project at the local old age home. But just as things start to feel calm, a series of events once again rock Eleanor's world: Troy's ex-girlfriend is back in town and, during a visit to the old age home, Eleanor's buddy, Nance, admits to witnessing a murder, swearing Eleanor to secrecy.

In an effort to definitely not be concerned about Troy's ex, Eleanor throws herself into solving the mystery of the murder Nance spoke about. Enlisting the help of new friend, and genealogy expert, Jem, to research Nance's past, Eleanor soon realises that digging into old secrets can sometimes be incredibly dangerous indeed.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Amy Doak is a lifelong lover of books, reading and writing. Following a career in media—advertising, radio, television and magazines—she continues to work as a freelance writer and is excited to see her non-fiction writing career evolve into a fiction one.

Amy lives in regional Victoria with her husband, teen, tween, dog and a very grumpy cat.

## THEMES

- Friendship
- Murder mysteries
- Challenging assumptions and biases

## STUDY NOTES

### BEFORE READING

- Look at the cover. What can you tell about the book from the images used?
- How has the designer used the typography and colour to communicate what the book is about, and what genre or category it might fit into?
- Do you think the cover would be as affective with a different font? Why or why not?
- Look at the back cover of the book and study the cover, for the first book in the series, *Eleanor Jones is Not a Murderer*. How has the designer established a 'look' for the series?

**WHILE READING****Writing Style**

- How would you describe the author's writing style?
- Do you think the text would have the same impact on the reader if it had been written in the past tense? Why or why not?
- Eleanor's voice is quite strong and drives the narrative forward. Do you think this works well for the type of story it is?
- Can you think of other genres where a strong narrative voice would be effective?
- Rewrite the opening scene of the novel from a different character's point of view. Which point of view do you think is more effective for hooking the reader into the story? Why do you think this is so?
- Select a character from the story, who isn't Eleanor. Then, select one of your favourite scenes from the book. Rewrite that scene from your chosen character's point of view. What changes have occurred in the story because of this change in point of view. Would the story be the same or different if your chosen character was the main voice in the narrative?

**Crime/Mystery Genre**

- What typical tropes has the author used to make *Eleanor Jones is Not a Murderer* and *Eleanor Jones Can't Keep a Secret* fall into the murder mystery genre?
- A key murder mystery trope is the red herring. Can you think of any red herrings that were used in the story of Nance witnessing the murderer? (Don't forget this could be a plot element or a character.) Were any used for the robberies' storyline?
- Nance's story, of witnessing a murder, would be considered a 'cold case'. Do you know of any cold cases in real life? What do you think makes something a cold case?
  - Find other stories in literature that are based on cold cases. Why do you think this is a popular storyline within the crime genre?
- The interpretation of information is important when solving a murder. Can you find moments in the story where information has been misconstrued or interpreted the wrong way? Do you think this happens in real life?
- 'Foreshadowing' is also used a lot in crime fiction. Find moments in the story where the author, Amy, has used this technique to create tension?
- Compare *Eleanor Jones Can't Keep a Secret* with another crime book you have read. What are the similar themes, tropes or examples of symbolism that you can find? Why do you think these are recurring elements?

**Friendship and Relationships**

- How would you describe the dynamic between Eleanor and her friendship group in this story? If you've read book one, how do you think it has changed and developed?
  - How has Eleanor's relationship with Min changed and developed since book one?
  - Do you think Eleanor's relationships with her friends has developed since the first book? Find a passage in the text that demonstrates this.
- Look at Namita and Eleanor's relationship throughout the story. In what ways is their relationship different to Eleanor's relationship with Troy, Ethan and Alfie? Why do you think this is so?
- Eleanor and her friends are volunteering at the old age home in Coonda. Have you ever done this type of volunteer work? What do you think some of the positives would be by getting to know an older person?
- Angus was mainly seen off the page in *Eleanor Jones is Not a Murderer*. How do you think his return to school has affected Eleanor and her friends? Has this changed the group dynamics? Do you think this is a good thing or a bad thing?
- Take a look at the first scene at the old age home (p 2). Eleanor is busy with Nance but the others are all talking to residents. Choose one of the others in the group and write a description or script outlining their interaction. Try to get inside the heads of the characters you've chosen and create an authentic scene given the surrounds and environment they are in.
- Interview an older person in your life. Ask them about what life was like when they were your age. What was their school day like? How important were their friendships and romances? Was it more important to get a job after

school or go to university?

- Then, write a short report about the differences and similarities of your lives.
- Compare the experience of Eleanor with Jem, vs Laura with Victor. Can you see many correlations? How do you think this ties in with the quotes from *Little Women* that different characters quote in the story?
- Discuss in groups the options that Laura would have had dealing with Victor back in the sixties. Do you think she should have told her family and friends? Why do you think she chose not to do this?

### AFTER READING

- Would you call Eleanor Jones a reliable narrator? Why or why not? Can you find places in the text which demonstrates this?
- In book one, Eleanor mentions and reads a lot of books throughout the narrative. How do these texts link to the novel *Eleanor Jones Can't Keep a Secret*? Are they linked by themes? By the plot? Or by the characteristics of the main characters? Or is there no link at all?
  - Write a brief synopsis for each of Eleanor's ESBs. Choose which of these you'd like to read . . . Feel free to add a couple of titles of your own to the end of the list.
- Once you have read the book, think about how Eleanor handled the situation with Jem. Why do you think she felt pressure to ask him to go to the play with her? Have there been times you've felt the same way?
  - Looking back at the story, can you find examples of Jem potentially showing his true nature? Do you think it is reasonable that Eleanor didn't pick up these moments of foreshadowing?
  - Were there warnings from other characters?
- In today's society, where social media is everywhere, do you respect Eleanor's decision to not be on her phone all the time? Do you think this is a sustainable attitude for her to have? Why or why not?
- How much do you think that the media, friends, family or just your own ideas about when certain things should happen in life, effect a person's decision about when to start dating? Do you think this is different from person to person?
- Find moments in the story that describe how Eleanor feels when she is with Jem, compared to when she's with Troy. What are the main differences between the ways Troy and Jem treat Eleanor? Do you think Eleanor is aware of these differences?
- Go back and look at the cover elements—how has symbolism been used to plant seeds about the action within the narrative?
- Women who grew up in the 60s and 70s were pioneers for women and feminism. Research a famous woman from the sixties or seventies and learn how they influenced modern life. Make a clear connection between them and how we live life today.
- Read the passage on p 145. Research women's rights in Australia. How have things changed legally for women since the 1950s?