

Book Club Discussion Questions
The Night She Disappeared
By Lisa Jewell

1. The novel is written primarily from Tallulah, Kim, and Sophie's points of view. Whose voice were you most captivated by? Did you prefer one narrator over another? Are there other characters whose points of view you would have liked to read?
2. With secret tunnels, a grand abandoned mansion, and a mysterious boarding school, *The Night She Disappeared* plays with many of the conventions of Gothic novels, from classics like *Jane Eyre* and *Rebecca* to contemporary favorites like *The Secret History*. How does Lisa Jewell play with the genre's tropes and make it her own?
3. After Sophie finds the engagement ring, the police search the woods again. Despite having gone missing over a year ago, Kim never believes that Tallulah has died and thinks to herself "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 faith keep the investigation going? How does her deep understanding of her daughter lead her to the truth?
4. Scarlett's paintings depict her wearing a crown and royal regalia and have violent imagery in the background. Liam tells Sophie that Scarlett never explained the meaning to him. How do you interpret her art? What do her paintings reveal about her character?
5. There are a variety of mother/daughter relationships on display in *The Night She Disappeared*, from the loving one between Kim and Tallulah to the downright twisted one of Joss and Scarlett to Kerryanne and Lexie's more relaxed one. Despite all the very different women and relationships, are there any general themes related to mothers and daughters that Lisa Jewell seems keen to explore?
6. There is a clear class divide in the picture-perfect village of Upfield Common. As Sophie describes the students at Maypole, "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 influence the plot and how various characters react to Tallulah's disappearance?
7. Lisa Jewell includes many heart-wrenching moments in which Kim grieves the loss of her daughter. What details did you find the most poignant?
8. Although at first Scarlett seems very charming, in many ways she is just as controlling as Zach. From luring Tallulah away at the school party to getting the TM tattoo (which, whether interpreted as Tallulah's initials or as "trademark," indicates possessiveness) to influencing Tallulah's break-up, Scarlett's ultimate control over her is foreshadowed throughout the novel. Was there a specific turning point when you began to worry about Scarlett's hold over Tallulah?

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9. Zach and Scarlett are not the only two characters who confuse love and control. Who else struggles to find balance in their relationships? Which characters have a healthy understanding of what real love entails?

10. Sophie, a cozy mystery writer, finds herself caught up in a plot straight out of one of her own novels. In what ways do Sophie's sections feel similar to a traditional mystery, like an Agatha Christie novel? In what ways do they differ?

11. Part of what attracts Tallulah to Scarlett is the person she can pretend to be around her. After texting with Scarlett, Tallulah thinks to herself "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 and where does this "other Tallulah" appear throughout the novel? In what ways does this desire for another life cause problems? Do any other characters have double selves?

12. Liam's secret remains hidden until the last pages of the book. Did you guess what he was hiding from everyone?

13. Toward the end of the novel, Kim tells herself that despite Scarlett's confession and possible imprisonment "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). After getting to know Scarlett over the course of the novel, do you feel sorry for her? Who do you think is more at fault, Scarlett or Joss Jacques?

Discussion questions by the publisher.

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