

BOOK CLUB KIT



Dutton

Dear Reader,

When I was a child I had hearing problems, which delayed my speaking as well as my reading and writing. Because of these issues with communication, I was a dreamy child, very much in my own head. When I could finally write, long stories poured out of me. They were often quite scary and intense, and remained so when I went on to become an author!

The Ones We Love is no exception. It's filled with twists and turns, a puzzling mystery, and moments of heart-pounding suspense. However, what I'm most proud of is the family of characters at the heart of the novel. *The Ones We Love* was originally told through just the eyes of twenty-two-year-old Australian Olivia, as she navigated her new life in Los Angeles with her parents and brother. I started working on this version of the novel from my tiny apartment balcony at dawn each morning, writing as the sun rose and sometimes not stopping until it began to set. But then I had my daughter, and both my writing practice and the novel changed completely. The night I got back from the hospital, I opened my laptop again at four a.m. I wrote a new chapter of the novel, but this time I wrote from Olivia's mother's perspective, Kay. The next night I wrote from her father Janus's. Then, finally, from her younger brother Casper's. I redrafted the novel during my baby's naps, clutching any tiny shred of time I could. I think this added to the urgency of the pacing in the second half, things had to move quickly because I knew I would have to stop writing at any moment! Slowly, through the first year of my daughter's life, the novel morphed from a coming-of-age story into a family-led psychological thriller.

From the beginning, this story was entirely driven by the characters. Kay, Janus, Olivia, and Casper are very different but also have been integrally shaped by one another. Keeping on top of all these points of view was tricky sometimes, since this novel is mostly set over the course of one week. I ended up having to create a spreadsheet so I knew exactly where every member of the family was at all times!

Reading enriches my life in profound ways. It's part of my identity as a human, as well as how I understand the world. It gives me insight into other lives, cultures, and ways of living. It helps me communicate better and understand myself more. Reading makes my world bigger and more beautiful, and I'm sure that it does so for you, too. I hope, dear reader, that you enjoy getting to know this family. I hope that it makes you think deeply about the ways you love the people you hold close.

With all my gratitude,
Anna Snoekstra

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: These discussion questions contain spoilers!
We suggest you finish the book before you read through them.

1.

Who was your favorite character's perspective to read in *The Ones We Love*? Why?

2.

Each of the Jansens react to stress in different ways. Olivia avoids it, Kay is quick to action but self-destructive, Janus gets overwhelmed, and Casper is clear-headed. Which member of the family do you think is the most similar to you?

3.

Why do you think the novel is called *The Ones We Love*?

4.

This novel explores complicity. What do you think is more important, ethics or loyalty? How far would you go to protect your family?

5.

Do you think Kay and Janus did the right thing in covering up for Olivia? What would you have done?

6.

Why do you think Kay began drinking too much and not eating again?

7.

How did Kay's relationship with her mother impact the kind of mother she became?

8.

Casper is shocked to find out his mother has been texting him from Hélène's phone. Why do you think Kay did this?

9.

At the end of the book, the Jansens manage to keep their secret hidden. Do you think that was right or should they have been exposed?

10.

Do you think Kay and Janus's marriage will last?

11.

What do you think of the character of Austin in the book? Were his actions justified? Do you think Olivia should trust him?

12.

The last scene of the book echoes the very first scene, with a couple going to bed at the end of the day. Why do you think the author did this?

CHARACTER COCKTAILS

Take your book club to the next level with these character cocktails! Each one makes minor changes to the classic “Olivia” cocktail recipe. So you can pick your favourite and mix up a jug for the whole group, or let each member pick their character for some individual flair.



THE OLIVIA *Classic Margarita*

“Liv licked the salt from the rim of her margarita, sucked on the lime.”

1 lime wedge, plus 2 lime wheels for garnish

1 tablespoon coarse salt, for glass rims

4 ounces (120 ml) blanco tequila

2 ounces (60 ml) Cointreau

Fresh juice from 2 limes

Rub lime wedge around the rims of two glasses and then dip rims in salt.

In a cocktail shaker, combine tequila, Cointreau, and lime juice. Fill with ice and shake until thoroughly chilled (around 15 seconds).

Fill glasses with fresh ice and strain margarita into both glasses. Garnish with lime wheels and serve. This recipe makes two drinks. For more, double or triple it.

THE KAY *Spicy Margarita*

"Kay was so angry she could barely even breathe."

A spicy margarita for Kay's boiling hot rage. Follow the Olivia recipe, but chop up a jalapeño and add it to your cocktail shaker. Then combine some tajin seasoning with the salt for the rims of the glasses. Add one of the jalapeño slices to the drink if you want to take the spice up a notch!



THE JANUS *Smoky Margarita*

"Janus lit a cigarette and took a long, slow drag. The nicotine filled his veins, and God, how had he been a non-smoker for so long?"

A smoky margarita for Janus's not-so-secret new habit. Follow the Olivia recipe, but add 1 ounce (30 ml) of mezcal to your cocktail shaker for that hit of smoky flavor.



THE CASPER *Fruit Cup Margarita*

"They'd bought fruit cups from the street vendor who was always set up with a rainbow umbrella, and now they sat under a tree eating ice-cold diced watermelon, mango, and jicama with chili and lime juice."

Inspired by the fruit cup that Casper eats with Tye in the park, add a dash of pure watermelon juice and mango juice to your cocktail shaker. Then combine some tajin seasoning with the salt for the rims of the glasses. (To take it to the next level, puree fresh watermelon and mango instead of using juice.)



THE ONES WE LOVE

Playlist

Does your book club session need a playlist? The songs below will set the mood.

Space Song – BEACH HOUSE

The Book Lovers – BROADCAST

The Less I Know The Better – TAME IMPALA

Collide – SAPPHO

You Can Have It All – YO LA TENGO

I Found The F – BROADCAST

Desire Lines – LUSH

California – MAZZY STAR

Sweetness and Light – LUSH

The Blue of Distance – ELORI SAXL

Total Control – THE MOTELS

Accelerate – SAPPHO

Silver Soul – BEACH HOUSE

Sometimes He's In My Dreams – MARY LATTIMORE

Kangaroo (Remastered) – THIS MORTAL COIL

Afraid of Nothing – SHARON VAN ETTEN

California Dreamin' – THE MAMAS & THE PAPAS

The Rite of Spring – IGOR STRAVINSKY, LEONARD BERNSTEIN,
LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Scan in Spotify to listen

