

Desire Lines

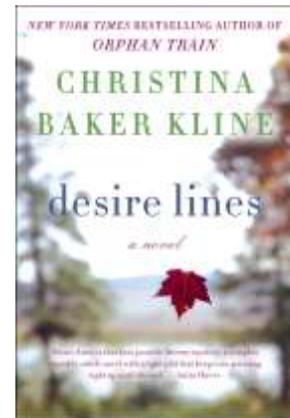
William Morrow Paperbacks

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ISBN: 9780007149827

Introduction

From the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *Orphan Train* comes a novel about friendship and the memories that haunt us.



On the night of her high school graduation, Kathryn Campbell sits around a bonfire with her four closest friends, including the beautiful but erratic Jennifer. “I’ll be fine,” Jennifer says, as she walks away from the dying embers and towards the darkness of the woods. She never comes back.

Ten years later, Kathryn has tried to build a life for herself, with a marriage and a career as a journalist, but she still feels the conspicuous void of Jennifer’s disappearance. When her divorce sends her reeling back to the Maine town where she grew up, she finds herself plunged into a sea of memories. With nothing left to lose, she is determined to answer one simple question: What happened to Jennifer Pelletier?

Questions for Discussion

1. “Desire lines” – the paths we take in life – play a major role in the narrative. Each character has an idea of where his or her path will lead. How does the reality differ from the paths they imagined in high school?
2. Kathryn and Jennifer are very different. Jennifer is mercurial, beautiful, and self-centered, while Kathryn is quiet, unassuming, and somewhat lacking a sense of self. What do you think it is that draws them towards one another?
3. Hunter tells Kathryn that she is better off with Jennifer gone. Is this true? How might Kathryn’s life have been different if Jennifer never disappeared? What did she gain from the experience of loss?
4. The author does a fantastic job of detailing the complex and nuanced interpersonal dramas of high school, and how they continue to influence us into adulthood. Can you recall an incident or a person from high school that still affects you?
5. How does the author use music to evoke a sense of time and place? The music of Kathryn’s adolescence resonates throughout her emotional journey. What affect does

this have on you, the reader? Why do you think music is so important during our formative years?

6. How does Kathryn's relationship with her mother evolve over the course of the book? Do you think the shift in their dynamic has anything to do with Kathryn's investigation?
7. Do you think Kathryn's burgeoning relationship with Jack signifies a positive change or a return to bad habits? How will this relationship be different from those she's had in the past?
8. Rosie, the therapist, believes that Jennifer's disappearance put Kathryn in an arrested state of development. She has been afraid to make any choices, or move on, because moving on means giving up. Do you agree with this assessment? Why or why not?
9. We don't spend many pages actually observing Jennifer in scene, but the interviews Kathryn conducts paint a very intriguing portrait. At the end of the book, what impression of Jennifer are you left with?
10. Of the six friends, who do you most identify with, and why? Do you agree with Hunter's theory that people don't change? In what ways have you changed since high school?
11. The choices we make, and the consequences they have, are a major theme in the book. Which of Kathryn's choices do you agree with? What were some instances when you thought she should have chosen differently?
12. Just for fun: if you had to come up with yearbook superlatives for each of the characters in the book, what would they be?