

All the Children Are Home

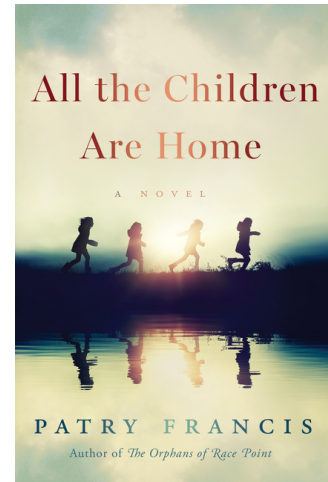
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Introduction

A sweeping saga in the vein of *Ask Again, Yes* following a foster family through almost a decade of dazzling triumph and wrenching heartbreak—from the author of *The Orphans at Race Point*.



Set in the late 1950s through 1960s in a small town in Massachusetts, *All the Children Are Home* follows the Moscatelli family—Dahlia and Louie, foster parents, and their long-term foster children Jimmy, Zaidie, and Jon—and the irrevocable changes in their lives when a six-year-old indigenous girl, Agnes, comes to live with them.

When Dahlia decided to become a foster mother, she had a few caveats: no howling newborns, no delinquents, and above all, no girls. A harrowing incident years before left her a virtual prisoner in her own home, forever wary of the heartbreak and limitation of a girl's life.

Eleven years after they began fostering, Dahlia and Louie consider their family complete, but when the social worker begs them to take a young girl who has been horrifically abused and neglected, they can't say no.

Six-year-old Agnes Juniper arrives with no knowledge of her Native American heritage or herself beyond a box of trinkets given to her by her mother and dreamlike memories of her sister. As the years pass and outside forces threaten to tear them apart, the children, now young adults, must find the courage and resilience to save themselves and each other. Heartfelt and enthralling, *All the Children Are Home* is a moving testament to the enduring power of love in the face of devastating loss.

Questions for Discussion

1. After enduring horrific abuse and neglect, Agnes not only survives; she becomes the extraordinary girl/young woman we meet in the novel. What character traits allow her to overcome so much? Have you ever known anyone like that?
2. Like many foster children, Agnes and Jimmy both enter the system because of their parents' addictions. Discuss how that legacy affects each of them. How does Dahlia try to prevent them from repeating the pattern? And how can we as a society do more to break the generational cycle?

3. In her valedictorian speech, Zaidie writes about the Moscatelli Way. What is it and how did it change their lives?
4. The foster care system has changed greatly since the fifties and sixties when the novel is set. For one thing, they were far less likely to terminate parental rights in those days. Do you think it has improved or gotten worse? What changes still need to be made?
5. How does Zaidie's connection with her aunt and with her heritage provide her with a ballast that Jimmy, and especially Agnes, don't have?
6. Dahlia's trauma and the secret she keeps impacts her family in both positive and negative ways. How does it make her a better foster mother? How does it cause additional pain for her children?
7. Agnes is stalked by Mr. Dean both in her mind and in actuality for many years. Why does he refuse to let her go? And how does she ultimately free herself from him?
8. How does Dahlia's relationship with her girls, and with the girl she herself once was, develop over the course of the novel?
9. How would you characterize Louie and Dahlia's relationship at the beginning of the book? How does it, and your perception of it, change as the novel goes on?
10. How is the subject of race addressed in the novel?
11. In keeping with a central theme in the novel, the story ends with the unanswered questions foster children often live with: What became of Jon? Did he ever read Zaidie's letters? And where is Maud Marie? Did the records tell the truth about her? Would you be interested in reading a sequel about these characters?