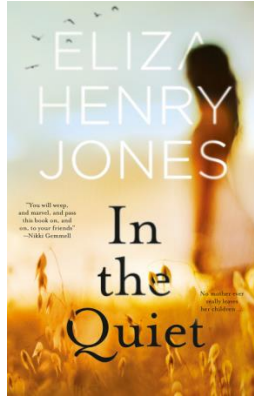


## HARPERCOLLINS READING GROUP GUIDE

### *IN THE QUIET*, by ELIZA HENRY JONES



#### **About the Book:**

A moving, sweet and uplifting novel of love, grief and the heartache of letting go, from a wonderful new Australian author.

Cate Carlton has recently died, yet she is able to linger on, watching her three young children and her husband as they come to terms with their life without her on their rural horse property. As the months pass and her children grow, they cope in different ways, drawn closer and pulled apart by their shared loss. And all Cate can do is watch on helplessly, seeing their grief, how much they miss her and how - heartbreakingly - they begin to heal. Gradually unfolding to reveal Cate's life, her marriage, and the unhappy secret she shared with one of her children, *In the Quiet* is compelling, simple, tender, true - heartbreaking and uplifting in equal measure.

*In the Quiet* was shortlisted for the NSW Premier's Literary Awards, the Readings Prize for New Australian Fiction and longlisted for the ABIA and Indie Book Awards.

#### **About the Author:**

Eliza Henry-Jones was born in Melbourne in 1990. She was a young Writer-in-Residence at the Katharine Susannah Prichard Writers' Centre in 2012 and was a recipient of a Varuna residential fellowship for 2015. She has qualifications in English, psychology and grief, loss and trauma counselling. She is currently completing honours in creative writing – exploring bushfire trauma – and works in community services. She lives in the Dandenong Ranges with her husband and too many animals.

## Reviews:

*'In the Quiet* is **an accomplished first book from an exciting new talent. I fell in love with it slowly**, over the course of many chapters. It's a quiet book (appropriately named) and **an utterly lovely** one.' *Readings*

**'Uplifting and heartwarming** ... a beautiful depiction of Australian rural life' *Better Reading*

'This hearttugging first novel is a beautifully paced mixture of romance, family saga and mystery' Adelaide Advertiser

**'A glorious book that will make you cry, guaranteed. But it's also uplifting and tender. A surprise find.'** Canberra Times

'You will weep, and marvel, and pass this book on, and on, to your friends.' Nikki Gemmell

'This sad, gentle story explores love, grief and family; the nature of time and memory; the destructiveness of secrets; and the pain of letting go. It's **an impressive debut.**' – *Bookseller+Publisher*

'I happened to be reading this novel at a time of remembrance of a big love in my life. It tapped into that beautiful and very sad core of grief in me. Rather than being upset by this, I **treasured how Henry Jones wrote about loss. It was a gift.**' – *The Big Book Club*

'There are two ways of reacting to a person with a quiet voice. You can either demand they speak louder, or you can lean in closer. Both of these reactions perfectly sum up the way in which I responded to *In the Quiet*. At first, I wanted something to happen. I demanded it, and then realised the futility of such a response. So I leaned in and started listening. Really listening. I invaded the book's personal space and **by the end, I was so engrossed** that my children's pleas for food were being ignored ... This is **a beguiling** book that reminds us that life is not a solely external experience; it doesn't only exist in what we say and do, but in the many gaps in between.' *Book Birdy*

## Eliza Henry Jones on writing *In the Quiet*:

I started writing *In the Quiet* when I was twenty-two. I was tucked into a little cabin at the back of Katharine Susannah Prichard's house, which is now run as a wonderful writers' centre in Western Australia. It was November. The streets I'd been wandering along were hot and filled with jacaranda petals.

It was the last part of my residency at the writer's centre and I was staring at my computer, at the blinking cursor of a fresh word document. All I could think of was the jacaranda I'd been walking through. The thick twists of their branches and vibrant, bruised flowers. And I thought of an unhappy, furious little girl sitting on a verandah, being showered with jacaranda flowers. I started typing. The first words I typed that day ended up being the first words in the finished novel, which I understand more and more to be a very rare thing, at least in my own writing.

I've been asked many times why I decided to write the story from the perspective of a dead mother. Whether I'd written from other perspectives in drafts and found them lacking; whether it had been a conscious choice. The narrator of my story, Cate, was not a conscious

decision. As soon as I typed that first word, her voice was in my ear. Everything else I write is heavily debated – first person or third person? Past tense or present tense? One narrator or many? *In the Quiet* always felt very solid; I didn't debate with myself. I felt connected with the family I was writing about because they were viewed from the perspective of Cate, who loved them. There was an intimacy that came from writing from Cate's perspective that I was unwilling to discard.

Having spent the last few years working with families at a drug and alcohol centre when I was started *In the Quiet*, I was preoccupied with what families were. I was preoccupied with what parenting was and the sort of hole it left. What shape families took and how they shifted when confronted with loss and trauma. I wanted to explore the ways people often connect and comfort each other without words.

My animals have been so wonderful at comforting me throughout my life when I've grieved and raged. My horses have followed me around their paddocks, my dog has brought me a pile of socks and sat curled by my side for hours. My animals have been witness to the worst times in my life and I was curious about the role that animals, particularly horses, might play in the shape of Cate's aching, rural family.

I wanted to explore the different ways that people grieve; how someone who presents as fine can be hurting and struggling as much as the person who falls to pieces. I wanted to explore how tidal grief can be – receding one moment and crashing heavily the next. I wanted to write about how grief can make you tired and furious and hysterical and exhausted. I wanted to write about how joy can be found, even in sadness.

### **Reading Group Questions:**

1. All of Cate's family grieves in their own unique way. Is there a character's response that most resonated with you?
2. Why do you think Eliza Henry Jones chose to have Cate narrating the novel as a ghost? Do you think this worked?
3. What role does setting play in this novel? Would it have been very different set in the city?
4. Rafferty and Cameron grieve very differently. Why do you think that is?
5. What is the significance of Opal in this story?
6. Why do you think Henry and Jessa had sex? Would it have happened if Cate was still alive?
7. Jessa refuses to let Rafferty shoot Opal and instead shoots Opal herself. What would have happened if Jessa had given the gun to Rafferty? Would the story have been very different?

8. Why did Rafferty start sleeping in the paddock with the horses?
9. Is the community where the family lives one that you would like to visit?
10. Do you believe that the therapy sessions helped Cameron and Jessa? Why/Why not?
11. Why did Beatrice move to the town? To be close to Cate or for other reasons?
12. What do you think of Cate and Bass's marriage? What were the strengths and what were the weaknesses?
13. Who do you believe has stepped up into Cate's shoes? One of the children, or someone outside the immediate family?
14. How would you describe Sylvia and Henry's relationship?
15. Steve does everything he can to support the family. Do you think Bass sees this?

Eliza would love to hear your thoughts on *In the Quiet*. Get in touch with her via Instagram at [elizahenryjones](https://www.instagram.com/elizahenryjones) or on Twitter [@ehenryjones](https://twitter.com/ehenryjones).

#### **Additional Resources:**

An interview with Eliza on *In the Quiet*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1BO6pcT62hA>

A Creative Life Podcast: Writing and the value of reading with Eliza Henry Jones:

<http://vanessacarnevale.com/podcast/eliza-henry-jones-in-the-quiet?rq=eliza%20henry%20jones>

Eliza Henry Jones on writing about Grief and Loss:

<https://meanjin.com.au/blog/grief-loss-and-australian-fiction/>

