



Book Club Questions

The Secret Lives of Murderers' Wives by Elizabeth Arnott

1. Beverley, Elsie and Margot have each reacted in very different ways to the discovery that their husbands were killers. Which of the women do you most relate to in that sense? What do you think you would do in the same situation?
2. Beverley has a complex relationship with her mother. How much do you think one's upbringing informs their choice of romantic partner?
3. Elsie is attempting to climb the ranks in the newsroom but finds herself battling sexism and snobbery. Have you ever experienced prejudice at work? Did it make you more determined to succeed, as it did Elsie?
4. Beverley is unable to fully let go of her ex-husband even though he committed terrible crimes. Do you understand why she felt connected to him?
5. The book is set against a backdrop of police misconduct and prejudice. Do you think our modern society's general opinion of the police has changed over the years?
6. Throughout the novel, Beverley worries that her son, Benjamin, might have inherited the same "rotten core" as his father. Where do you stand on the nature vs nurture debate? Is 'evil' something that is inherited, or learned?
7. Margot insists on partying her way through the echoes of her husband's crimes. In your experience, how important have you found humor and escapism to be in dealing with difficult circumstances?
8. The novel features lots of music references from the 1960s, from the Rolling Stones to Dusty Springfield. Are there any songs that you would add to a The Secret Lives of Murderers' Wives playlist?
9. At one point, Margot comforts Beverley by telling her: "We cannot keep bad people from doing bad things." Do you believe this is true today? What do you think about the sense of responsibility Beverley felt?
10. Are there any likable male characters in the novel? Do you think the women could be accused of disliking all men?
11. Do you think the families of the murderers in The Secret Lives of Murderers' Wives are treated fairly by the press and the general public? Were you surprised that Elsie, Beverley and Margot didn't completely retreat from the public eye?
12. How much do you relate to the passage "Being a murderer's wife gifted Elsie something—a layer of armor that, until then, she'd been lacking"? Do you think we can be made stronger by the most traumatic things that happen to us? Have you had that experience?
13. Did you judge Beverley, Elsie or Margot at any point in the story? Did your opinions of them change as the book progressed? Did you have a favorite character in the novel?
14. Beverley, Elsie and Margot are all very different, but their friendship is incredibly strong. Do you think our differences can make us closer? What did you admire most about their friendship?

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