



The Summer Place

‘This is the feel-good novel
we all need right now’
RACHAEL JOHNS

JANETTE PAUL

Reading Group Notes



Blurb

As three women return to the summer place of their youth for a beach wedding, each is grappling with the cards life has dealt them.

Erin, recovering from a near-fatal cycling accident, is the reluctant maid of honour. Still coming to terms with her devastating injuries, will she find what she needs to walk down the aisle with all eyes on her?

Years ago, Jenna fell in love with the groom at his family's treasured holiday spot. Will watching him marry someone else finally allow her to get over him?

Cassie, living in Barcelona and recently widowed, is desperate to move on from her grief. The invitation to return to Australia for the wedding will give her a chance to step away from her life – and come to terms with more than she bargained for.

Emotions run high as each woman faces a crossroad, yet they will find that the place at the coast offers all of them a chance to learn to heal, love and belong . . .

About The Author

Janette Paul is an internationally published author of contemporary women's fiction and romantic comedy, and is the alter ego of award-winning suspense author Jaye Ford. Her first novel won two Davitt Awards for Australian women crime writers and her books have been translated into nine languages.

Janette is a former news and sport journalist, was the first woman to host a live national sport show on Australian TV and ran her own public relations consultancy before turning to fiction. She now writes from her home in Newcastle, New South Wales.



Discussion Questions

1. *'Home is where you feel like yourself,'* Scott Bainbridge tells Cassie on pages 163 and 178. This suggests the idea of home is about more than physical places, but activities and people too. How does the idea of home affect the stories of our three protagonists, Jenna, Erin and Cassie? Where and how are you most at home?
2. *The Summer Place* explores many different relationships including close friendships and the idea of chosen family. Who in your life is like an extension of your family, and why?
3. *'Life's too short for bitter endings, don't you think?'* (Page 149) Jenna's colleague Will says this to her when he tells her he's resigning to go travelling. How could this sentiment apply to the stories of each of the three protagonists?
4. Scott Bainbridge remembers Cassie quite differently from how Cassie remembers herself, and at first she finds it unsettling. But in what ways does it also help Cassie see how far she has come? Do you think people really change as they grow older or do we stay the same at our core?
5. Family relationships can be complicated and turbulent as well as supportive and life-affirming. Compare some of the family bonds in the novel, for example Ashley's nuclear family unit in contrast to Blake's; Cassie's three marriages and her daughter Sophie in contrast to Jo and Rod's more conventional family unit; Cassie and Jo's lifelong friendship. What are some of the factors that create a strong family connection, do you think? Or the opposite?
6. *'She'd been so frightened of letting go, she hadn't realised she didn't know how.'* (Page 156) What do you think it is that finally helps Erin learn how to let go of the anger and resentment she is holding about the accident?
7. Setting plays an important part in this novel with many characters feeling ties to a particular place. Who has a strong connection to place in the novel, and what effect does it have on them? Do you have a connection to a place and what does that feel like?
8. Cassie's painting has caused her great joy as well as great anguish in her life. What do you think drove her away from painting for so long, and why does Cassie find it so hard to return to the pastime she loves? Do you have a passion that you gave up on? Does the story make you reconsider it?



9. At one point Rhys says to Erin, ‘...*survival and being alive aren’t the same thing. Here is survival.*’ He tapped a foot on the sand. ‘*Out there,*’ he lifted a finger to point at the water, ‘*is alive.*’ And later: ‘*It takes courage to be alive.*’ What does he mean? What do you think the difference is?
10. Clifford the three-legged dog plays an important role in Erin’s story. How is his presence helpful and why do you think this is?
11. Often someone else can have a better understanding of who you are than you do yourself. Which characters in the book do you think see each other more clearly than the character does him- or herself? Why might this be?
12. Weddings can dredge up complicated emotions from many people, as Jenna and Erin discuss on page 264. Why do you think this is? Why is it the case for Jenna and Erin?
13. How do you think past experiences, both positive and challenging, shape lives in ongoing ways? How do past experiences affect Cassie and Erin, in particular? What are some examples you can think of from your own life?
14. Janette Paul has written *The Summer Place* from the perspectives of three women, in the third person past tense, who tell their stories alternately. Do you like the way the novel is structured? What aspects of this structure work (or don’t work) for you?