

"A riveting tale about love, loyalty, and secrets that will sink into your bones and leave you breathless!" –WENDY WALKER

Everything

We

A NOVEL

Didn't

Say

AUTHOR OF *LITTLE BROKEN THINGS*

NICOLE BAART

Reading Group Guide

Everything We Didn't Say

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1.

At the beginning of *Everything We Didn't Say*, Juniper pulls into Jericho and we see the small town through her eyes. What can you infer about her childhood and her complicated connection to her hometown in these first few pages?

2.

Juniper's relationship with her mother is fraught to say the least. Rebecca makes her feel exiled from Jericho and unworthy of a meaningful relationship with her own daughter. But on page 324 Reb refutes that belief by explaining why she pushed Juniper away: "Don't you see? I saved you. I wasn't going to let you repeat my mistakes." What do you think? Was Juniper banished? Or did Reb save her by ensuring that she went to college, finished her degree, and led a successful, independent life?

3.

Fatherhood also plays an important role in *Everything We Didn't Say*. Juniper never knew her biological father, and her stepfather was often stiff and aloof. How do you think this affects her as both a teen and a grown woman?

4.

They say that opposites attract and that's certainly true in *Everything We Didn't Say*. Lawrence and Rebecca and Sullivan and June are a couple of obvious mismatches. What makes their relationships work? Or do you think they were doomed from the start? Are there other unexpected pairings?

5.

When they were teenagers, June knew that her best friend, Ashley, had a significant crush on Sullivan. Still, June allows herself to fall in love with him. Do you think her actions are unforgivable or understandable?

6.

When talking with Cora, teenage June wonders: "What are Jericho's ideals?" Cora says: "Community. Family. Faith." June counters: "Tradition. Uniformity. Compliance." Who do you agree with? Why?

7.

Although the specifics of the situation surrounding the Tate and Murphy feud are fictional, there truly are more than 750 impaired waterways in Iowa alone (meaning they fail to meet state requirements for supporting aquatic insects, fishing, swimming, or boating). And the United States is crisscrossed with bodies of water that do not meet pollution control standards. Do you think enough is being done to keep our environment clean? Why or why not? How should we balance agriculture and industry with environmental concerns?

8.

Willa isn't sure what to do with her mother when Juniper returns, and Juniper doesn't know how to act like a real mom. What do you think Juniper could have/should have done differently? Do you think her absence is understandable and forgivable? Explain.

9.

In chapter eleven, adult Juniper finds herself in the Murphy's old coop during a snowstorm with Sullivan. They embrace, and he kisses her. How does this interaction make you feel? Can you forgive them for their indiscretion?

10.

Talk about Juniper's relationship with Jonathan. How did it change over the years? Do you think Jonathan should have come clean about the Murphys and the Tates to Juniper when they were teenagers? How do you think that might have affected things?

Everything We Didn't Say

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11.

People sometimes do inexplicable things for love, and the characters in *Everything We Didn't Say* are no different. Talk about this in relation to Law, Reb, Jonathan, Juniper, and Sullivan. Do you think their actions were justified? Why or why not?

12.

In the first chapter we read: "Maybe it was all her [Juniper's] fault that a killer in Jericho walked free." At the end of the book we learn that Juniper, Jonathan, and Sullivan all kept secrets about that night. Do you think their deceit was justified? Do you think it would have changed anything if they came clean right away?

13.

Juniper wants Willa to have a relationship with her father and she's determined to make it work. Do you think that there's hope for Willa and Sullivan? How do you think Ashley will react? How would you like to see their story end?

14.

How much do you believe Reb knew about the night that Cal and Beth were killed? Do you think she suspected (and covered up for) her husband? Give evidence to support your beliefs.

15.

Everything We Didn't Say is told in alternating viewpoints (June as a teenager and Juniper as an adult). In some ways, these are opposite and opposing perspectives: summer and winter; beginning and end; innocent and jaded; unknowing and worldly wise. Discuss the differences in Juniper, past and present. How does she change? How does she stay the same? Do you like June or Juniper better? Why?

Enhance Your Book Club

1.

Everything We Didn't Say alternates between past/present and winter/summer chapters. Embrace the winter theme with hot drinks, baked goods, and cozy candlelight. Or, opt for a sunnier motif by serving iced drinks, Fourth of July fare, and queuing up a summery playlist.

2.

A wannabe true crime podcaster forces Juniper into action in *Everything We Didn't Say*. Set the stage for a great discussion by listening to an episode or two (or an entire season!) of a true crime podcast before book club. Come ready to debate the ethics of what might be our biggest cultural guilty pleasure. Can someone else's tragedy be our entertainment? Discuss.

3.

The summer of Juniper's nineteenth year was one she will never forget. Do you remember the summer after you graduated from high school? Who were your friends? Where did you work? What were your future plans? Look up some stats from that summer and surprise your book club buddies with a blast from the past trivia game.

4.

Cal and Beth Murphy ran a little roadside stand and sold farm fresh eggs, flowers, soaps, and jams to lucky passers-by. Where can you buy locally sourced and made goods? Take a trip with your book club to a local farm or winery, or simply make an intentional purchase from an artisan in your area. Perhaps a small treasure from a local craftsman would make the perfect hostess gift for your next get-together.

My mother-in-law makes the most delicious Dutch pancakes, and when I married her son she shared the family recipe with me. Pannenkoeken are much thinner than traditional American pancakes, but not quite as thin as French crepes. They can be made sweet or savory, and are perfect for rolling up with delicious fillings. Because they take a bit of effort, my family saves them for special occasions: holidays and birthdays. And like Juniper in *Everything We Didn't Say*, our favorite combo is hazelnut spread and fresh raspberries or raspberry sauce (or both!). I like to gather my kids around the counter and serve each pannenkoek as soon as it comes out of the pan, but they can be made ahead and kept warm in a covered casserole in the oven.

Dutch Pancakes (Pannenkoeken)

3 eggs, room temperature

1 cup of milk

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup flour

Pinch or two of salt

1 tbsp melted butter, cooled

Butter or nonstick cooking spray

(Recipe can easily be doubled—we almost always make a double batch.)

In a large bowl, whisk together 3 eggs, milk, and salt until foamy. Slowly incorporate flour, whisking until the mixture is smooth and there are no lumps. Whisk in the butter. It may separate just a bit. Let the batter rest while heating up a large skillet (10–12 inches). Spray with nonstick cooking spray or add a little butter and rotate the pan to coat evenly. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of batter to the pan and swirl it to cover the bottom completely. Cook over medium heat until it is just starting to get dry on the top and it releases easily from the pan. Flip the pannenkoek and cook for 1–2 minutes on the second side, until lightly golden.

Raspberry Sauce

2 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups fresh or frozen raspberries

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup water

1 tbsp. lemon juice

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp. cornstarch

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp. water

Add raspberries, sugar, water, and lemon juice to a small saucepan. Cook over medium heat, stirring often, until the mixture comes to a boil. In a small bowl, combine cornstarch and water. Stir mixture into boiling raspberry sauce. Remove from heat and allow sauce to cool.