

JILLY GAGNON

SCENES OF THE CRIME

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

WARNING: The following discussion questions contain spoilers for *Scenes of the Crime*. If you haven't finished reading it yet, please come back to this page later.

1. *Scenes of the Crime* explores a number of themes, including toxic friendship, family, wealth and privilege, secrets, and truth versus fiction. Which theme resonated with you the most, and why?
2. As the narrator, Emily's motivation for the weekend is clear to the reader from the beginning: She wants to "get answers" about what happened leading up to Vanessa's disappearance, and to get inspiration for a blockbuster movie script that will break her out of her unsatisfying job. Given the lack of contact between the former friends and the amount of time that had passed, why do you think the other women agreed to this reunion weekend? What were their motivations?
3. Vanessa and Brittany are cousins, but grew up experiencing their family dynamic very differently, as their grandparents "approved" of Brittany's family but Vanessa's mother was treated as the black sheep of the family and was disowned. This favoritism and unequal treatment was particularly highlighted through money and inheritance. What did this storyline add to the novel for you?
4. Between the fallibility of memory and Emily's self-aware crafting of the screenplay, *Scenes of the Crime* is a novel full of unreliable narration. Did you trust Emily's narration, or were you skeptical of her story?
5. How did the script sections throughout the novel, and the editing notes that Emily left for herself, impact your experience reading *Scenes of the Crime*?
6. Fifteen years ago, each of the friends made bad decisions that would have lasting impacts for all of them. Which, if any, did you empathize with, and why?
7. Towards the end of the novel, we learn that Vanessa did not get swept out to sea or "disappear," but is living under a new identity. Did you see this reveal coming? If yes, how did you come to that conclusion?
8. In order to pull off Vanessa's disappearance and create a new life for her, Vanessa and Lydia worked together to skirt the law, including buying a social security number and lying to police. Discuss the conflicting motivations and the resulting power dynamic between the two, and how those came to a head during the winery confrontation.
9. Over the course of the novel, we learn about the secrets and pressures each girl was navigating at the time of Vanessa's disappearance, including academic pressure, financial pressure, and secret relationships. Discuss how these factors led to each girl's actions (and non-actions) over the fateful weekend and ensuing years.
10. The epilogue reveals that Emily did write her blockbuster script based on the events, working closely with Vanessa to pull off this movie and bask in the rewards. How did you feel at the end of the novel? How do you imagine the characters' lives after the story ended?