

Book Club Guide

Dr. Beare's Daughter* *Growing Up Adopted, Adored, and Afraid

Interview with Janice Jones

Q: What made you decide to write your story?

A: When I turned 76, I felt time moving so quickly that I might sneeze and find myself to be 80. I realized that if I wanted to tell my story, I'd best get to it.

Q: How long did it take to write?

A: It took me fifteen months to finish the first draft.

Q: How did you get past the hardest parts of your book while writing it?

A: Sometimes I had to leave the computer, go into another room, and cry. Other times I went for a walk or hopped on my ebike for a ride. Then I went back to work.

Q: How were you able to remember events and so many specific details from so long ago?

A: The traumatic scenes from my early life were so imprinted on my brain that I could remember what people were wearing and sometimes their exact words. Other things had grown fuzzy over the years, but I was able to get them back by creating a timeline and looking at old photos.

Q: The subtitle of your memoir is: *Growing Up Adopted, Adored, and Afraid*. What was the "Afraid" part of your story?

A: As an adoptee, I feared that if I failed to be the child they really wanted—*their own*—that they would no longer love me.

Q: At the end of the book, you set out to find your birth family? Were you successful?

A: My search and my birth parents' stories are told in *Conceived in a Canoe*, the sequel to *Dr. Beare's Daughter*, which will be published in late 2025 or early 2026.

Questions for Discussion:

Young Janice silenced her own voice while she was growing up in her hometown. It was only her little, inner voice, that sometimes reminded her, "I'm here, waiting." Why do you think it took the author until she was seventy-seven years old to put her young self's voice out there in the world?

How did Janice feel about her name that her adopted parents gave her?

What was the significance of Janice introducing herself as “Jan,” when she went away to camp?

Why do you think Mother was cruel to Janice on Mother’s Day?

Mother sometimes stood up for Janice to Daddy, and at other times, she forced Janice to stay silent or do things she didn’t want to do, to placate him. How did this affect Janice’s relationship with her mother?

Who was the better parent to Janice, Ralph or Lou? Why?

How do you imagine Ralph and Lou would have been different as parents if they had, indeed, had “their own?”

Why do you think that Janice tried to shush her little voice?

Janice lost a lot of people she loved while still a young girl. How do you think these losses affected the way she viewed life?

What were some of the turning points in young Janice’s life?

How did Jones portray the other people in the book? What was their influence or impact on her life?

How did the first-person narrative shape your understanding of young Janice’s emerging self?