

READING GROUP NOTES

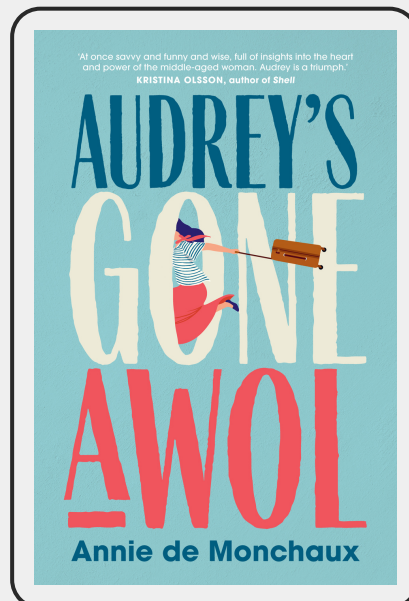
AUDREY'S GONE AWOL
ANNIE DE MONCHAUX

A funny and beautifully observed story about losing yourself, finding yourself, and discovering joy.

'Shirley Valentine for the new millennium. This is my book of the year.' – Louise Allan

'At once savvy and funny and wise, full of insights into the heart and power of the middle-aged woman. Audrey is a triumph.' – Kristina Olssen

'Deeply engaging, witty and warm, Audrey is an absolute delight!' – Louise Wolhuter



1.

At the start of the novel, Audrey attributes much of her situation to the fact her grown-up children no longer need her in the same way - do you think empty-nest syndrome is real?

2.

If you were Audrey's friend, what would you have said to her when she found out her husband was thinking about having an affair?

3.

You see, I'm busybodying in other people's lives because I can't stand my own. If, instead of seeing a therapist, Audrey had talked with you about feeling invisible and how meaningless her life had become, what would you have recommended?

4.

If I'd spent my child-rearing years painting, studying, learning the piano, anything - I might have become quite good. But it's as though other people were leading my life during those years. Why do you think Audrey chose to take the backseat during her years as a wife and mother?

5.

It's all the times the word yes came out when I would have preferred to decline. My head is still packed tight with the threads of other people's lives, and I need to cut through the Gordian knot I'm living in. Do you think prioritising other people's needs over their own is a universal problem for women?

6.

Did you see any aspects of your own life in Audrey's story?

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7. I'm unfamiliar with being nurtured and need all the practice I can get. How would you like to be nurtured?

8. Audrey walks, experiments with tap dancing and jam combinations, making bits of furniture and art, and gardening: what activity would you choose to restore yourself?

9. Metaphors are a great language tool because they explain the unknown in terms of the known. Like the garden. A garden is one of the great metaphors for humanity. You could also use the river, of course ... Do you think the author moved Audrey from Australia to France as a metaphor for change? How did Audrey change or grow?

10. If I'd spent my child-rearing years painting, studying, learning the piano, anything - I might have become quite good. But it's as though other people were leading my life during those years. Why do you think Audrey chose to take the backseat during her years as a wife and mother?

11. The story spans seven months, do you think this is a realistic time frame to begin to change yourself?

12. Which character or moment prompted the strongest emotional reaction in you and why?

13. What scene do you think was pivotal for Audrey's transformation? Did your opinion of Audrey change over the course of the book?

14. What do you think will happen next for the main characters?

