



NEW FROM
PENGUIN
AUSTRALIA

READING NOTES

Listen by Kate Veitch

Summary

On Christmas Eve in 1967, a London woman unhappily transplanted to the Australian suburbs makes a decision that will change forever the lives of her four young children.

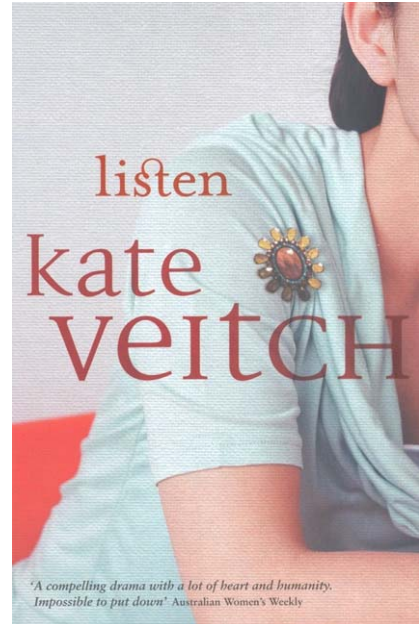
Forty years on, those children are adept at concealing their shared pain. Deborah has a demanding political career; James is a successful artist, Robert a respected school principal. Only Meredith, the baby of the family seems stuck. But as their father begins to lose his grip on reality, they find themselves floundering in an unfamiliar sea. And their past is about to read into the present in ways that will shock and challenge them all...

A spellbinding contemporary novel, *Listen* draws us deep into the intensely private world of family life and brilliantly illuminates the joys, sorrows and sustaining comfort that we find there.

About the author

Kate Veitch was born in Adelaide in the mid-1950s and left home and school early, eager for colour and movement. Her work over the years includes writing articles and reviews for the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Vogue*, collaborating with other mothers on *Feeling Our Way*, a book about becoming parents, and producing a series on women writers, *Their Brilliant Careers*, for Radio National. She lives sometimes in Manhattan, sometimes in Melbourne, while she and her partner build a home for themselves in northern New South Wales. *Listen* is her first novel.

To read more about Kate, go to www.kateveitch.com



Questions

1. Why do you think is the significance of the title, *Listen*? While you were reading, was there an 'A-hah!' moment for you about the title, and if so, what was it?
2. To what extent were the lives and personalities of each of the children shaped by their mother's departure and absence? Do you think they would have had similar personalities and traits if she hadn't gone?
3. What might Rosemarie's life have been like if she had stayed?
4. Did you find Rosemarie's abandonment of her family believable? Forgivable?
5. Do you believe perfect parental love exists? If so, what shape does it take?
6. There are many instances of secrecy in *Listen*. Does every family have secrets? What is their role?
7. What value does truth have to the Macdonald family? What value does truth have to you?
8. Why does Olivia have so few friends her own age? What do you think of this?
9. After James finds his mother, his sexual relationship with his wife Silver blossoms. Why was it so lacking before this? And why did his mother's reappearance make such a change?
10. Does Alex's dementia cause further rifts within the family, or draw them together? How do you think they will cope as it worsens?
11. Would Angus have entered into the affair with Marion if his home circumstances had been different? Who is responsible for this – Angus? Deborah? Marion?
12. Do you believe the characters in *Listen* are held accountable for their faults and misdeeds? If not, how does this make you respond?