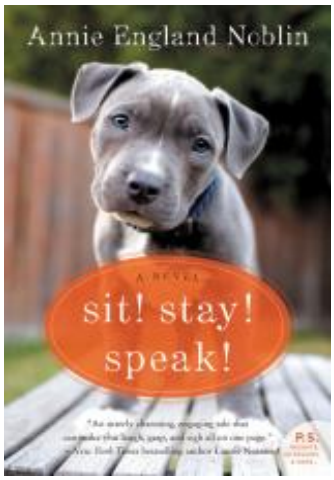
Sit! Stay! Speak!

by Annie England Noblin



About the Book

Addie Andrews is living a life interrupted. Tragedy sent her fleeing from Chicago to the shelter of an unexpected inheritance --- her beloved aunt?s somewhat dilapidated home in Eunice, Arkansas, population *very* tiny. There she reconnects with some of her most cherished childhood memories. If only they didn?t make her *feel* so much!

People say nothing happens in small towns, but Addie quickly learns better. She?s got an elderly next door neighbor who perplexingly dances outside in his underwear, a house needing more work than she has money, a best friend whose son uncannily predicts the weather, and a local drug dealer holding a massive grudge against her.

Most surprising of all, she?s got a dog. Not any dog, but a bedraggled puppy she discovered abandoned, lost and in desperate need of love. Kind of like Addie herself. She?d come to Eunice hoping to hide from the world, but soon she discovers that perhaps she?s finding the way back --- to living, laughing and loving once more.

Discussion Guide

1. This novel deals with issues of home, family and remembrance. At one point Addie thinks that if Jonah, her late fiancé, were with her he would have ?picked through each piece of furniture? in her late aunt?s home. ?He would have asked for stories about each one, stories Addie had long forgotten.? Are there any mementos or heirlooms in your life that tell a story?

2. Addie saves Felix from certain death, but Felix is not just a cuddly dog; he?s a pit bull, a breed that often has a bad reputation. What do you think about the author?s choice in making Felix a pit bull? Does this make Felix?s gentle disposition more of a surprise to you?

3. Many people attribute human characteristics to their pets, especially to dogs. In fact, Addie thinks that Felix ?looks a

lot on the outside like she felt on the inside. She had a feeling that Felix wasn?t the only dog to have been dumped bleeding and struggling for his life.? Do you think that dogs and pets can feel things the way humans do?

4. Addie resists telling Jasper that Jonah is dead, although she does say he is her ?ex-fiancé.? What do you think holds her back from telling him the entire truth at first?

5. Food means a lot in this novel. At one point Addie finds her aunt Tilda?s recipe box and remembers her saying, ?A woman?s recipes are like her diary. They aren?t meant for anyone else?s eyes but hers.? Do you agree? Disagree? Why?

6. At one point Addie enters Redd?s room. Redd is a criminal and yet his room is clean and well-furnished. Does this surprise you? Why do you think Redd has such a well put-together place in such a disorganized and filthy house?

7. Although the United States is one country, there are regional differences even in today?s highly connected world. Jasper accuses Addie of trying to change ?an entire culture,? saying, ?That?s why people like you never last very long down here.? Do you think that it?s true that you can?t change an entire culture? Should Addie be trying to change things or not?

8. Jasper tells Addie that ?Memphis is my home. Eunice?the farm?that?s where I was born. That?s likely where I?ll die. But it isn?t my home.? What is the difference between home and where you live? Can they really be two different concepts?

9. Addie?s neighbor Augustus says that ?acting crazy is easier than everything else.? Is this true?

10. Why do you think he has chosen to act crazy all these years? Has it made his life easier? Or has it actually cut him off from other aspects of life that could have brought him joy?

11. In the end, we discover that while crimes against animals are very real, the true crime being investigated is meth. Did this surprise you? And do you think that television shows such as ?Breaking Bad? have actually glamorized meth production as we root for the criminals there to succeed?

Author Bio

Annie England Noblin graduated with an M.A. in creative writing from Missouri State University and taught English and communications for Arkansas State University in Mountain Home, Arkansas. She spent her free time playing make-believe, feeding stray cats, and working with animal shelters across the country to save homeless dogs.

Critical Praise

?Noblin?s fish-out-of-water story combines food, family, suspense and romance into one delightful read. [...] a comfort read that?s perfect for a summer night. The dog-centered plot will earn points from all animal lovers. A cozy read that?s full of dogs, romance and small-town charm.?

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