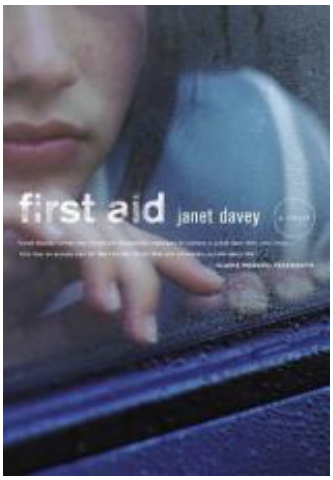
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First Aid: A Novel

by Janet Daveyovel



About the Book

A novel of breathless literary suspense in which a mother's love for her daughter is tested by an act of domestic violence.

After the incident, Jo's impulse is to run away, to escape the small town where her marriage has dissolved and a love affair has apparently soured, and to return with her children to the house in London where she herself grew up. But it is Jo's teenage daughter who actually runs away, jumping from the London-bound train between stations, turning up briefly at the home of her oblivious father and his unsympathetic new wife, then continuing to run, on her own and increasingly at risk.

Why Jo doesn't give chase, why she doesn't seek help or even report her missing daughter, becomes gradually clear in a novel distinguished equally by its startling perceptiveness and its consummate artistry, a novel that challenges our notion of what a good mother is and does.

Discussion Guide

1. Were you surprised by Jo's seeming indifference when Ella leaped from the train? Did you feel differently about Jo's response after you learned more about her way of relating to her teenage daughter?

2. First Aid takes place over one summer weekend. Did the economy of this time frame allow you to know the novel's principal characters well enough? Why or why not?

3. Vince tells Ella that "People our parents' age don't have birth or death to gee them up. . . . They need something in the middle of life. I'd give them an ordeal" (page 105). Do you think Jo was courting drama to involve herself with Felpo? Or do you think Vince's opinion is naive?

4. How is Jo's grandparents' home a sanctuary for Jo and her family? In what ways is it also a painful and trying place?

4. Peter asks Jo what she will say to Ella when they meet again, and Jo's response-"I'll know what to say when I see her"-strikes him as ridiculous (page 173). Jo knows that Peter "saw in her replies a travesty of calm rationality." Do you think that Jo's avoiding confrontation with Ella is justifiable?

5. After Ella revealed the cause of Felpo's anger, did you gain faith in the potential he had to be a good partner for Jo? Or do you consider his violence inexcusable?

6. When Jo thinks, "The car spinning off the road, the hands round the throat, the tide coming in too fast. This was what passed for concern, love even. It was the way mothers thought" (page 174), do you agree with her? Do you feel that Jo's undemonstrative way of loving her children is the product of her temperament and philosophy, her own upbringing, or her tumultuous current situation? Is Jo a good mother?\

7. Why do you think Trevor and Jo are so compatible? Do you think their expectations of life are too low, or that they are adept at adjusting to fate?

8. How does Jo relate to the idea of rebuilding a home? Do you think she will succeed in maintaining one for her children and herself?

Author Bio

Janet Davey lives in London, where she taught for many years, and is the mother of two grown children. **First Aid** marks her American literary debut.

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