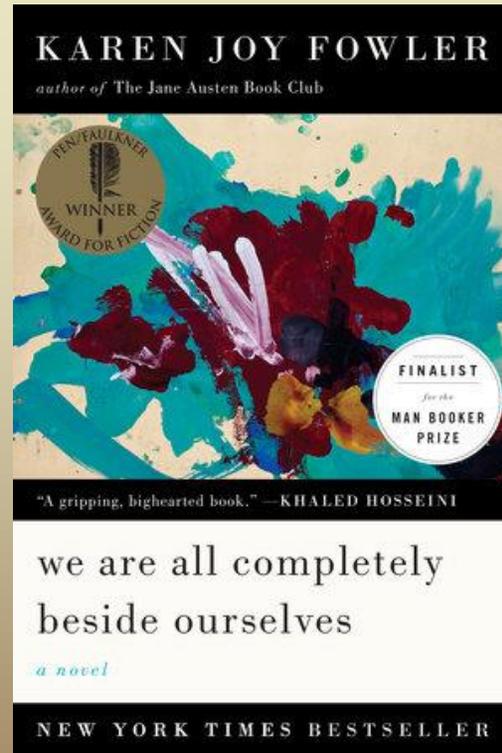


We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves

Meet the Cooke family: Mother and Dad, brother Lowell, sister Fern, and narrator, Rosemary, who begins her story in the middle. She has her reasons. Rosemary was not yet six when Fern was taken from her life. Over the years, Rosemary's managed to block a lot of memories. She's smart, vulnerable, innocent and culpable. With some guile, she guides us through the darkness, penetrating secrets and unearthing memories, leading us deeper into the mystery she has dangled before us from the start. Stripping off the protective masks that have hidden truths too painful to acknowledge, in the end, "Rosemary" truly is for remembrance.



Karen Joy Fowler is the author of six novels and three short story collections. Her most recent novel, *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves*, won the PEN/Faulkner Award as well as the California Book Award for Fiction for 2013, and was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize the first year the prize was open to Americans. She is also the author of *The Jane Austen Book Club*, which was on the *New York Times* bestsellers list for thirteen weeks and made into a major motion picture. Her novel *Sister Noon* was a finalist for the PEN/Faulkner Award. Consistently acclaimed by critics, most of her titles have been *New York Times* Notable Books and named to many best-of-year lists. She is the co-founder of the James Tiptree, Jr. Award and the current president of the Clarion Foundation. Born and raised in Bloomington, Indiana, she holds an undergraduate degree from the University of California, Berkeley and a graduate degree from University of California, Davis. She lives in Santa Cruz, California. Fowler is the 2016 National Author winner of the Eugene & Marilyn Glick Indiana Authors Award.



Karen Joy Fowler

The Eugene
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Authors

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Useful Links

Additional “We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves” reading guide:

<http://bit.ly/2gBjNjXV>

Karen Joy Fowler interview with NUVO:

<http://bit.ly/2gJU9QA>

Eugene & Marilyn Glick Indiana Authors Award:

www.indianaauthorsaward.org

The Indiana Authors Award

The Eugene and Marilyn Glick Indiana Authors Award was established when **The Indianapolis Public Library Foundation** received a generous grant from **The Glick Fund, a fund of Central Indiana Community Foundation**. This program seeks to recognize the contributions of Indiana authors to the literary landscape in Indiana and across the nation. The Award is divided into four categories: Emerging, for new writers of one or two books that show great promise; Genre Excellence, for writers who excel in a specific literary genre; Regional, for writers well known and respected especially in Indiana and the Midwest; and National, for writers of widespread acclaim. Each winning author receives a cash prize and a \$2,500 grant for the Indiana public library of his or her choice.

Discussion Questions



1. Early on in *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves*, Rosemary tells the reader that she will start her story “in the middle.” Why is it important to her to skip the beginning?
2. Think about the significance of memory and storytelling in the novel. How is Rosemary’s memory – and, consequently, her narrative – affected by the emotional trauma she has experienced?
3. What is the inciting incident in the story – Fern’s disappearance, Harlowe’s entrance, or something else? How would you plot the narrative arc of a story that jumps around in time as often as *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves*?
4. How would the story be revealed differently if told from another character’s perspective, like Lowell or Harlowe?
5. Fowler is an outspoken animal rights activist and this novel gives readers plenty to ponder about humans’ relationships with animals. Did this story change your views or teach you something thought-provoking?
6. Much of the characters’ actions are morally ambiguous. Does Fowler impart a lesson to the reader through *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves*?

Questions 1 and 2 and book summary adapted from the We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves Reading Guide through Penguin Random House.