



Daisy Darker by Alice Feeney

Book Discussion Guide

Summary

After years of avoiding each other, Daisy Darker's entire family is assembling for Nana's 80th birthday party in Nana's crumbling gothic house on a tiny tidal island. Finally, back together one last time, when the tide comes in, they will be cut off from the rest of the world for eight hours. The family arrives, each of them harboring secrets. Then at the stroke of midnight, as a storm rages, Nana is found dead. And an hour later, the next family member follows... Trapped on an island where someone is killing them one by one, the Darkers must reckon with their present mystery as well as their past secrets, before the tide comes in and all is revealed. With a wicked wink to Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None*, Daisy Darker's unforgettable twists will leave readers reeling.

About the author



Alice Feeney is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *SOMETIMES I LIE, I KNOW WHO YOU ARE*, *HIS & HERS*, *ROCK PAPER SCISSORS* and *DAISY DARKER*. Her novels have been translated into over 25 languages and have been optioned for major screen adaptations. Alice was a BBC journalist for 15 years and now lives in the Devon countryside with her family.

Discussion Questions

1. “I was born with a broken heart.” That’s the first thing we learn about Daisy Darker at the start of the novel. What were your first impressions of Daisy and how did you feel about her by the end of the book?
2. “Pieces of blue-green glass still decorate some of the exterior walls, sparkling in the sunlight and gifting Seaglass its name.” The story is set on a tiny tidal island just off the Cornish coast, in an old Victorian house with a turquoise roof. Did you enjoy the setting in this novel?
3. Who was your favorite character and why?
4. The Darker family has gathered to celebrate Nana’s eightieth birthday. Beatrice Darker is an eccentric author of books for children who has stopped paying her phone bill because she doesn’t want to be disturbed. She has a sweet tooth and lives in a crumbling old house with a library, a hallway full of clocks, and a dog called Poppins. What did you think of Nana?
5. “Daisy Darker’s family were as dark as dark can be. When one of them died, all of them lied, and pretended not to see.” Nana likes to write poems in her books and on the chalk wall in her kitchen. What did you think of the poems about the Darker Family?
6. There are a lot of references to the 1980s in Daisy Darker, especially when the family is watching old home movies. Did you enjoy the nostalgia?
7. Nana has eighty clocks “as a reminder to herself and the world that her time is her own.” Time is a big theme in this book. When the tide comes in, the characters are cut off from the rest of the world for eight hours. Did you feel the constant sense of a ticking clock throughout the story? Did it inform your reading experience?
8. Alice Feeney has described this novel as her own little tribute to Agatha Christie, one of her favorite authors. Did you notice the nods to *And Then There Were None*? What did you think of them?
9. Daisy Darker is a locked-room mystery. How does it impact the tension when all of the characters are trapped together, including the possible perpetrator(s)?
10. “Every family is a fortress that few outsiders get to see inside.” Let’s talk about the Darker family. Who was your least favorite? Do all families have secrets?

11. “It’s always important to have adventures, even if only in your imagination. Sometimes those are the best adventures of all.” Daisy enjoys reading and says that her childhood friends were Agatha Christie and Stephen King. There are recurring themes of isolation and loneliness in the book (which was written during the Covid pandemic), but is being alone the same as being lonely?
12. All of the illustrations in this novel are bespoke. From the Seaglass floorplan at the start to the chapter headings and Scrabble drawings included throughout. Alice Feeney has had illustrations in some of her other novels, too. Have you ever seen drawings in a psychological thriller before? Did you like them?
13. “Don’t waste your life wishing to be like someone else, decide who you are and be you.” It can be hard being the youngest child in a family, but Nana gives Daisy a lot of good advice growing up. What did you think about Rose and Lily and the sibling rivalry in the novel?
14. Have you read any of Alice Feeney’s other novels? (Sometimes I Lie, I Know Who You Are, His & Hers, Rock Paper Scissors). If so, which of her books did you enjoy best and why?
15. What was your favorite twist in the book? And let’s talk about the ending.

Questions courtesy of the publisher.

Reviews

Booklist Reviews

Starred Review Take one crumbling Victorian mansion, the only habitation on an island edged with treacherous cliffs off the Cornish coast. Fill it with warring relatives and murderous motives. Stir in a ticking clock in the form of a tide that cuts everyone off from the mainland for eight hours. Result? A sinisterly satisfying play on Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None*, as crafted by Feeney (*His & Hers*, 2020). The guests (narrator Daisy Darker, her two vicious older sisters and half-sister, her niece, her divorced parents, and one long-time friend of the family) all assemble for matriarch Nana's eightieth birthday, many of whom are attending for the purpose of not alienating Nana and, thus, being left out of her will. Nana chooses to read her spectacularly insulting and vindictive will after the party, and—no surprise to mystery readers—she is found dead the next morning. But the surprises escalate, as, one by one, the guests are murdered in ways fitting their particular vices, each accompanied by a Christie-style foreboding nursery rhyme. Readers will be intrigued by the setting, the action, and the question of whether or not they can trust narrator Daisy. Copyright 2022 Booklist Reviews.

Library Journal Reviews

Feeney (*Rock Paper Scissors*) returns with another dark, twisty tale about a dysfunctional family. Daisy Darker, her siblings, and her estranged parents all gather at her grandmother's house on a tiny tidal island to celebrate Nana's 80th birthday. Nana's quirky behavior and the strained relationships within the family all conspire to create an air of unsettledness that wraps around the Darkers like the high tide that laps at the base of the house, preventing anyone from leaving. When Nana announces she's going to read her will (she's convinced her death is around the corner), tensions rise even further as family members turn on one another. At the stroke of midnight, with a storm raging outside, Nana is found dead in the kitchen. Trapped on the island with her killer, the Darkers begin to fall one by one. **VERDICT** Feeney's nod to Agatha Christie's classic mystery *And Then There Were None* adds a delightful twist to this quirky thriller. Aficionados of locked-room stories and family dramas (plus Feeney's large fan base) will enjoy this highly recommended title.—Cynthia Price

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Publishers Weekly Reviews

Daisy Darker, the sheltered, 29-year-old narrator of this tempestuous homage to Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None* from bestseller Feeney (*Rock Paper Scissors*), and her dysfunctional kin—divorced parents, two older sisters, and 15-year-old niece, Trixie—rarely gather thanks to an incident nobody will discuss. Regardless, Daisy's grandmother, Nana, maintains she'll die this year, so the group grudgingly visits Nana's Cornish tidal island estate on her 80th birthday. The mood sours after Nana reads her new will, which bequeaths almost everything to Trixie, but since the island's causeway is accessible only at low tide, everyone must stay put. When Trixie finds Nana dead in the kitchen, most assume it's an accident—never mind the macabre poem on a nearby chalkboard. Then Nana's body vanishes, and someone murders another family member, leaving the trapped survivors distrustful and terrified. Feeney elevates a familiar setup with evocative prose, fully realized characters, and an intimate, insightful first-person narrative. Flashbacks add depth while expanding the suspect list, and twists abound. Sarah Pinborough fans, take note. Agents: Jonny Gellar and Kari Stuart, Curtis Brown. (Aug.)

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