

# *Jean Harley Was Here*

by Heather Taylor Johnson

**ABOUT THE BOOK:**

*Jean Harley Was Here* is one of the six books shortlisted for the 2017 Readings Prize for New Australian Fiction.

A woman opens her car door, knocking a passing cyclist into the path of an oncoming van. That cyclist is Jean Harley, but this is not her story. It is the stories of the people she leaves behind – her husband, her mother, her friends, her son, her former lover and the man who was driving the van.

**JUDGES' COMMENTS:**

'Heather Taylor Johnson explores the aftermath of a death. While the subject matter is grim, the author maintains a light touch, infusing the book with humour, soul, and most importantly, hope.'

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

Heather Taylor Johnson was born in the United States and relocated to Australia in 1999. She currently lives in Adelaide. *Jean Harley Was Here* is her second novel.

**DISCUSSION POINTS:**

1. Does *Jean Harley Was Here* do justice to the life of Jean Harley through its multiple voices? Do you feel like you have a sense of who she was?
2. Would you have preferred a single voice instead of many perspectives? If so, which character would you have liked to narrate?
3. The chapter from the dog's perspective has been contentious. Did it work for you, or should it have been omitted?
4. Grief is the central theme of this novel. Do you think the grief of different characters is depicted accurately? Whose grief seemed the most realistic to you?
5. How does *Jean Harley Was Here* compare to other novels that tackle grief in interesting ways?
6. Reflect on the roles of chance and destiny in this novel.