



Far From Home

By Anne DeGrace
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Introduction

After a shocking family betrayal and an unexpected pregnancy, Jo leaves home, college, and everything she knows. Far from home, she finds her way to Cass's Roadside Caf', an isolated diner on a mountain pass. Cass's seems as good a place as any for Jo to get her bearings, as near to nowhere as it is possible to be. Here, Jo finds a rough sort of kindness in diner regulars such as Archie, the long-haul trucker, and Bob, a cop with a secret. But Cass's is also a way station through which an odd assortment of travelers blow: the water witcher, coming to terms with a talent he'd denied; the old woman who expected to die, and didn't; and the hippie whose rule of the road is to let the wind blow him where it will. The stories of these strangers open Jo's eyes to life lessons, and what it really means to follow your heart—and, ultimately, give Jo the strength to face her past, and find the direction she needs to step into her future.

Questions for Discussion

1. Being true to an era means, for a writer, including small details that set us firmly in time. A CB rather than a cell phone for a trucker; an urn-style coffee percolator rather than an espresso machine in a restaurant. What are some other details in *Far from Home* that set us clearly in the 1970s?
2. Eamon is a poser, pretending to be something he is not in order to get what he wants. What are some other examples of people pretending to be what they are not: in the novel, in the news, and in people you've encountered in your own life?
3. Jo opts for adoption rather than abortion. Why? Why doesn't she choose to keep the baby? What might the times have to do with her decision?
4. Sometimes it is a particular event that sets us on the road, or changes our direction. Eunice has a near-death experience; Evelyn's husband is having an affair; Carson is framed. What sets Pink on the road to Canada? Is it one thing, or an accumulation? What makes him alter his rule of the road? What have been the turning points in your life?
5. The people we encounter in our lives change the way we see the world. Sometimes it comes by way of advice, sometimes it's a negative experience, and sometimes it's so subtle we can't see it at all. What advice does Jo receive, either subtly or overtly? What's the best advice you've ever received, and where did it come from?
6. Eccentricity plays a large role in *Far from Home*. Aunt Bea collects cut-out eyes from magazines; Evelyn is a floral kleptomaniac; Granny lives in the woods; and Pixie brings her food in exchange for stories. These characters are all based on real people. Eccentric people color our lives, but when does eccentricity cross the line to become mental illness? How do we know? Discuss eccentric people you have known.
7. Evelyn collects hitchhikers. Pink collects rides. The seed for *Far from Home* took root when the author was swapping hitchhiking stories with friends. How has the culture of hitchhiking changed since the 1970s? Have you ever hitchhiked? Picked up a hitchhiker? Would you? Swap your own stories.
8. Kindness is doing a good turn for its own sake. It's being empathetic to the feelings of others, perhaps recognizing or anticipating a need. What are some examples of kindness in *Far From Home*?
9. *Far from Home* features a disparate cast of characters, some more likeable than others. What characters do you like? Not like? Why? What do you think was the author's intention?
10. What decision does Jo make at the end of the novel? Where will she go now? Suggest what might happen to Jo in the next month, or even year. Compare outcomes with other members of your book group.

About the Author

Anne DeGrace is a librarian, journalist, writer, illustrator, volunteer, mother, and multitasker. She lives in the mountains near Nelson, British Columbia.