

BEFORE YOU WERE ANNE

BY EMIKO JEAN



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The novel is told from the braided perspectives of Chelsey, Rika, and Naomi. How do the multiple narrations shape the novel, especially in terms of its genre?
2. Chelsey is pregnant with her first child when the case begins. In what ways does this affect how she approaches the investigation?
3. Discuss two of the novel's settings, Seattle and Japan. How do location, language, and cultural heritage shape the way characters understand home?
4. What role does Montoya play in Chelsey's life, both professionally and personally? How is this different from the role Chelsey's husband, Noah, fulfills?
5. The title, *Before You Were Anne*, places emphasis on the significance of one's name. How can a name be both a refuge and a burden?
6. What does the novel suggest about the inheritance from mother to daughter—not just biologically, but also emotionally and psychologically?
7. Why do you think Emiko Jean chose to tell Rika's perspective in the second person? How did it shape the way you understood or connected with her character?
8. Discuss the theme of abuse in the novel. What does the narrative suggest is necessary to break cycles of fear and silence?
9. How does the novel portray Mayumi's character by the end? Does the narrative seem to condemn or sympathize with her choices—and do you agree with this verdict?
10. Were you satisfied with the reunion of Naomi and her father, Hiroshi? Do you think it is the ending Rika would have wanted?
11. At the end of the novel, Chelsey learns more about her biological parents, but there are still lingering questions. Do you think it is necessary for her to learn the truth of her lineage, especially considering her soon-to-be child?