

# A SAINT IN SWINDON

by Alice Jolly

- The author employs a circular narrative structure to present the story. What effect does that have? How would your perception of the story differ if the narrative were more linear? Which style would you have adopted?
- What is the purpose of mentioning so many of the books the characters are reading? How is the discussion/criticism of the books woven into the narrative?
- Throughout the story, there are also more subtle literary references. Can you spot any and how are these used to advance the story?
- Who is the saint in Swindon? Is their identity ever revealed? Can you think of any other titles for the story?
- What techniques are used to create and develop the mystique surrounding the character of the reader? Is the author's use of these techniques effective?
- What is the role of the supporting characters? How do they influence Janey and the reader's story?
- Janey finds reading an absorbing distraction from the crisis developing in the outside world, but at a certain point this goes too far and she stops caring about external events at all. How do you see the role of fiction in difficult times? Is it an escape from the outside world or a way to engage with it?

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## WRITING EXERCISES

A) This story was born from a collaboration between a reading group and the author. Pair up with someone from your group and present to each other a story idea. Write a story of 1,000 words based on your partner's idea.

OR

B) Write a passage of 1,000 words that includes literary references to some well-known books.

## NOTES

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