

New York Times Bestselling Author of *Big Summer*

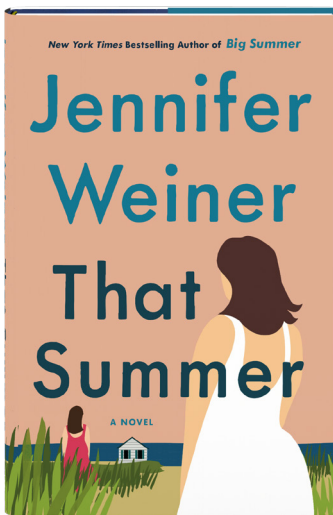
# Jennifer Weiner That Summer

A NOVEL



**BOOK CLUB KIT**





This reading group guide for *That Summer* includes an introduction, discussion questions, and ideas for enhancing your book club. The suggested questions are intended to help your reading group find new and interesting angles and topics for your discussion. We hope that these ideas will enrich your conversation and increase your enjoyment of the book.

**The #1 *New York Times* bestselling author Jennifer Weiner returns with a timely, twisty, and emotionally explosive novel of intrigue, secrets, and the transformative power of female friendship.**

## Topics & Questions for Discussion

### SPOILER ALERT!

1. Daisy and Diana are originally framed as opposites—Daisy as the timid housewife and Diana as the woman about town. However, the two end up having more in common than they could have ever imagined. Compare and contrast these characters and what they learn from each other.
2. From *That Summer*'s onset, Weiner draws a connection between appearance, status, and perception; Diana even calls her executive get-up “drag” (p. 96). What are some other ways that characters signal their status? Across the book, do you think clothes are used more as a form of personal expression or as performance? In particular, you might think about Beatrice's style and how it differs from her mom's or Diana's.
3. Our two main characters first meet as the result of a name mix-up. What is the importance of other names in this novel? In what ways do they serve as protective shields, or possibly burdens?
4. Various characters struggle with society's suffocatingly narrow definition of success. In high school, Beatrice observes that “all the kids bragged about how little sleep they'd gotten and how much coffee they'd consumed” (p. 44). Daisy creates her own dichotomy of better/worse life outcomes (“Instead of a college graduate, she'd become a mom” [p. 32]). Does this novel argue that success should be equated with happiness? Which character is ultimately presented as the most “successful?”

5. Diana still thinks about what her life would have been like if she'd never been raped; "sometimes, the sorrow of the road not taken would overwhelm her" (p. 240). How are other characters haunted by the past, and how do they struggle to retain control of their lives and decisions? Does the novel ultimately offer hope for how to move forward?
6. How is social class portrayed in this novel? What is the effect of having characters in relationships with people of different backgrounds? What is meant to be our takeaway about the concept of an "institution?"
7. Age is a major theme in *That Summer*: Diana was robbed of her youthful innocence, while Daisy was slotted into a maternal role usually inhabited by older women. Hal's horrific actions are mostly dismissed under the guise of his "manly needs" (p. 28), and Beatrice's actions are rejected due to teen stereotypes ("Teenage girls. They get emotional. As I'm sure you know" [p. 41]). How do gender and age intersect here? What is Beatrice's role in the novel, given that she is almost the same age that Diana was when she was raped?
8. Why do you think the author chose to set the novel on Cape Cod? What are some other important locations that inform or reflect these characters? Consider their homes, as well. How does Weiner evoke the power of both nostalgia and trauma in her descriptions? Is there a home you would want to live in?
9. Diana has had decades to imagine what she will do upon seeing her attacker. After she meets Brad she concludes, "I think that this is what I needed. Just to see him, and have him see me" (p. 301). What exactly does this mean? Did your feelings about Diana's quest change after Brad's death?
10. Diana describes a "world where being born female meant spending years of your life at risk, and the rest of it invisible, existing as prey or barely existing at all" (p. 375). Do you think that Beatrice's short-lived flirtation with Cade is proof that this principle still holds true, or is this a more generational concept? How do the women in the novel defy this idea? How does Michael fit into this viewpoint?
11. What is the effect of the novel's different points of view? What do we learn about Beatrice and Daisy in being able to see the two from each other's perspectives? How about Daisy and Diana? What did you think about Hal's final section, and did it change your opinion of him?
12. *That Summer* asks complex questions about who needs to be held responsible for assaults, and what it means to be a bystander. According to the book, what actions are considered irredeemable, and how has the internet affected the answer to this question? Do you agree with Katrina, Teddy's high school girlfriend, when she says, "I guess anyone's capable of anything, right?" (p. 289) How does this idea play into your idea of how severely actions should be punished, or whether they should be forgiven? Does the novel offer a definitive conclusion about who should be punished? How do the characters of Brad, Danny, and Daisy further complicate this question?



## Enhance Your Book Club

1. If your group hasn't already read Jennifer Weiner's novel *Big Summer*, consider reading it together and comparing its themes of complicated and enduring friendship with those of *That Summer*. What similarities do you notice between the women in these two novels? What ideas and feelings does Jennifer Weiner explore in both?
2. Consider donating to or volunteering with RAINN, the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, the nation's largest anti-sexual violence organization.
3. Beatrice loves making her beloved mouse crafts; Diana decoupages shells. Together with your book club, create a craft featured in the novel, garnering inspiration from creations on Etsy and Pinterest.
4. Visit Jennifer Weiner's website at [JenniferWeiner.com](http://JenniferWeiner.com) to learn more about her and her books, and follow her on Twitter [@JenniferWeiner](https://twitter.com/JenniferWeiner), on Instagram [@JenniferWeinerWrites](https://www.instagram.com/JenniferWeinerWrites), and on TikTok [@JenWeinerWrites](https://www.tiktok.com/@JenWeinerWrites). Tag your book club posts using #ThatSummerBookClub.



# A Conversation with Jennifer Weiner



***That Summer* follows *Big Summer*, is it true you're planning a Cape Cod Trilogy?**

**JW:** It's true. I'm like a quarter of the way into the third book. And then I'm saying goodbye to summer. I'm going to have to pick a new season.

**But other than the fact that they both take place at least partly on Cape Cod, and that the new book briefly alludes to some of the events of *Big Summer*, they seem to be very different.**

**JW:** The working title for *That Summer* was *The Two Dianas*. In my head, that was always what the book was called. And then when I turned in the draft, they were like, "We love it. But we want a more summery title." I can't complain. The marketing people know much more than I do about what's actually going to sell. But, yeah, they're different books.

***Big Summer* was, as you've said yourself, one of your lighter books, even if it involved murder. And *That Summer* is evocative enough of a Cape Cod summer to have me checking out Airbnbs in Truro.**

**JW:** Oh, then I've done my job.

**But the subject matter isn't quite as escapist. Were you in a different head space writing this?**

**JW:** This book was written, start to finish, during the pandemic. I think I definitely was in a different headspace. I think *everyone* was in a different headspace. But I think, honestly, what's going on is that my older daughter is going to college in the fall. Did I give her the tools to be OK in the world? Which got me thinking about what the world is like, and whether it's changed enough since I was a young woman and leaving my hometown to go to college.

**Any conclusions?**

**JW:** I think I've done my best. But I think the world is the world, and it's still a place where young women get chewed up and spit out regularly. I hope that I've taught my daughter everything that she needs. I hope that she's self-possessed enough and self-aware enough to navigate the obstacles that she'll have to navigate. But I've thought a lot about why—why are they all still there?

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**One woman receiving emails that appear to be meant for another is the kind of situation that could have taken you in any number of directions. Which came first, that idea, or the decision to tackle #MeToo and the consequences of sexual assault?**

**JW:** The email thing had been kind of bouncing around in my head for a while because there are other Jennifer Weiners out there in the world, and I do occasionally get their emails. This one woman, she must've been an avid tennis player because she was constantly [receiving emails], "Hey, there's a tournament!" or "There's a round-robin!" or a dinner party, and I was just like, boy, I wonder what her life is like.

I knew that I wanted to write about a woman who was where I am, generationally. You've got aging parents, you've got kids leaving the nest, you've got the obligations of your own life. There was [that article that went viral about why Gen X women can't sleep](#) and I thought about that a lot, about the way things have shaken out for Gen X women and where we find ourselves. And it all just kind of bounced around until it coalesced.

**The closest thing you have to a romantic hero in this book is Michael, who's not only emotionally supportive, but who builds things. And one of the most memorable characters, Beatrice, is a teenager who's into needle-felting, knitting, and mouse taxidermy. Is there something about the times we're living in that makes working with our hands particularly appealing?**

**JW:** I think so. So much of what we do now is virtual, and that was even before the pandemic. All of the social media, the ways that we're interacting now, it's all intensely virtual. And I think there really is something grounding about carpentry or gardening or knitting or sewing or needle-felting.

**I don't know what atonement looks like, but I know it doesn't look like that.**

When I was writing Beatrice, I talked to my daughters. What should she be into? I want to give her something specific, with comic possibilities. And they were both like, "Make her [cottagecore](#)." And they showed me. This is like a teenage girl back-to-the-land movement type of thing, in a very gauzy, romantic way. It just interested me.

**Do you know of anyone who's actually practicing taxidermy on mice? Because I'll admit I was stunned, after reading your book, to discover that [it's a whole thing on Etsy](#).**

**JW:** It is a whole thing. Truth really is stranger than fiction in most cases.

**Did you pick up any new hobbies during the pandemic?**

**JW:** I went back to old hobbies, really. Like I started riding my bike again. All the gyms were closed. I started taking piano lessons again a couple of years ago, so I did a lot more practicing. And I baked, but I always baked.

I started gardening. I'd never really gardened, and I got a bunch of seeds from Amazon and I grew my own vegetables last summer, and I'm attempting to do it again.





**Have your daughters read this? Do you run things by them when you're writing about present-day teenagers?**

**JW:** I made them read the Beatrice chapters, to make sure I got it right. But they tend to stay away from my fiction because, I think, the sex scenes upset them. It's fine. I think it works out better for everyone.

**Brett Kavanaugh's name is never mentioned in this book, but the accusations against him and many other prominent men are. Is there a legal or practical reason for not naming names?**

**JW:** There's no legal reason. I think, though, that if I made it specific, I don't know in ten years, or twenty years, if it's still going to resonate.

**One of your characters mentions the idea of atonement. Do you have ideas about what atonement should look like for offenders who, for one reason or another, are beyond the law's reach?**

**JW:** That is something that I've thought a lot about, and especially with, like, Louis C.K. There were these [sexual-harassment] accusations and everyone found them to be quite credible and he sort of slunk off in disgrace for about a year. And then he just came back, as if nothing had happened, and didn't address it, didn't try to do any kind of work to repair the careers of women he'd derailed, didn't try to improve things for the women who are coming up on the comedy circuit now. It was just sort of, "Well, I've spent my time in purgatory, and now I'm back." I don't know what atonement looks like, but I know it doesn't look like that.

I think that we're going to have to figure it out. I feel like the #MeToo movement isn't over. I think the hits will keep on coming. It seems like right now it's either [we] quote-unquote cancel them forever, or we just act like nothing ever happened. I don't think either of those is particularly helpful in terms of moving the conversation forward or changing the world so that men don't act that way anymore.

Originally appeared in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*



# Spotify Playlist

 **LISTEN HERE** [bit.ly/ThatSummerPlaylist](https://bit.ly/ThatSummerPlaylist)

**Songs to listen to while cruising the Cape (or any beautiful coast near you) courtesy of Daisy and Bea.**

## **Fast Car**

Tracy Chapman

## **Island in the Sun**

Weezer

## **Summer of '69**

Bryan Adams

## **Dreams (2004 Remaster)**

Fleetwood Mac

## **Soak Up the Sun**

Cheryl Crow

## **Mr. Jones**

Counting Crows

## **Take it Easy (2013 Remaster)**

The Eagles

## **Best Day Of My Life**

American Authors

## **My Girl**

The Temptations

## **Cruisin'**

Smokey Robinson

## **You Get What You Give**

The New Radicals

## **End Of The Line**

Traveling Wilburys

## **Cape Cod Kwassa Kwassa**

Vampire Weekend





# Make dinner (and dessert!) with Daisy

## EASY ROAST CHICKEN (READ MORE ON PAGE 190)

### INGREDIENTS

1 kosher chicken  
Olive Oil  
Salt and pepper  
Lemon  
Rosemary  
Garlic

### DIRECTIONS

Get a kosher chicken. Put crushed garlic cloves and rosemary between the skin and the breast meat, and between the skin and the thighs.

Cut a lemon in half and put that in the cavity. Pour olive oil all over the chicken, sprinkle with kosher salt and pepper, and use butcher's twine to tie the legs together. Bake at 450 degrees for an hour.

## BUBBE'S ALMOND COOKIES (READ MORE ON PAGE 192)

### INGREDIENTS

1 cup of butter, room temperature  
 $\frac{2}{3}$  cup sugar  
1 teaspoon of vanilla extract  
1 teaspoon of almond extract  
2  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups of flour  
1 cup of almond flour  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of powdered sugar for sprinkling

### DIRECTIONS

Beat the butter and sugar together, producing a fluffy, light mixture. Add vanilla and almond extracts to your mix.

Adding flour and almond flour, thoroughly mix all ingredients together.

Take generous tablespoons of the dough (it will be slightly crumbly in consistency) and roll it into a small ball, about an inch in diameter. Shaping into small crescent shapes, place them onto parchment paper (on your baking sheet)—and bake at 350 degrees for 15–20 minutes. Dust with powdered sugar to your heart's content, and enjoy with your guests!



## THE DAISY

### INGREDIENTS

2 ounce gin  
1 ounce lemon juice  
1/2 teaspoon simple syrup  
1/2 teaspoon grenadine  
Cracked ice  
Soda water (optional)  
Citrus wheel  
(recommended: grapefruit,  
orange, or lime)

### DIRECTIONS

Fill a cocktail shaker 2/3 with ice and combine gin, lemon juice, simple syrup, and grenadine.  
Vigorously shake what your mama gave ya and strain into rocks glass filled with cracked ice.  
Top with soda water, if desired.  
Garnish with a citrus wheel of your choice. Add rosemary or mint sprigs for a little extra pizzazz.  
Sip, sigh, and enjoy!

## THE CAPESIDE COOLER (MOCKTAIL)

### INGREDIENTS

2 ounce fresh grapefruit juice  
1 tablespoon fresh lime juice  
1 teaspoon sugar  
Cubed ice  
Club soda  
Citrus wedge  
(recommended: grapefruit or lime)

### DIRECTIONS

Combine grapefruit juice, lime juice, and 1 teaspoon of sugar in rocks glass.  
Stir until sugar is dissolved, then add ice.  
Top with club soda and garnish citrus wedge of your choice!



# Our favorite quotes from the book! What are yours?

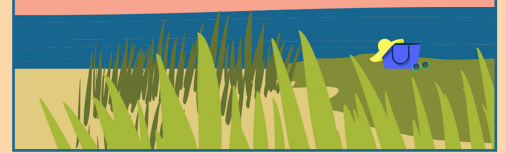
"The moon is full and shining, and the stars are brilliant pinpoints in the sky, and she can hear the wind, the churn of the waves, the heave and toss of the dark water, the endlessness of it. As she raises the cup to her lips, she thinks, *I will never be happier than I am, right now, in this moment.*"



"Daisy had worn a pink dress with a tulle skirt and silver paillettes stitched into the bodice, and had gotten her hair permed. She'd never felt more pretty, or more grown up."



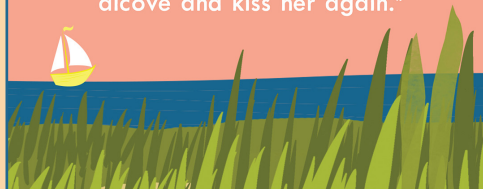
"Diana loosened a sliver of halibut with her fork and slipped it into her mouth. She closed her eyes, tasting the sweetness of the fish; the tart, juicy tomatoes; oil and butter and garlic and thyme."



"...the white-painted walls, the ledge lined with brightly patterned decoupage seashells and dried starfish, framed postcards hung from bright bits of ribbon, paintings of flowers and landscapes in frames made from driftwood."



"Then he cupped the back of her neck, and her mouth opened, seemingly on its own. His tongue touched hers, then slid into her mouth, a shockingly intimate invasion. Beatrice waited for him to approach her again, to hand her a note, to pull her back into the alcove and kiss her again."



"Michael stroked her hair as the cottage shook with peals of thunder, and rain rattled against the windowpanes. When he spoke, her head was on his chest, and his voice was a warm rumble in her ear."



Download and share some of the best quotes from the book!

**#ThatSummer**

# How to Spend the Perfect Weekend in Cape Cod

Stroll down historic Main Street toward **Chatham Light** and stop by **Where the Sidewalk Ends Bookstore**.

If you're visiting the Outer Cape, **Provincetown Bookshop** and **East End Books** are perfect places to pick up your next beach read!

Take a breezy ride down the scenic route along the **Cape Cod Rail Trail**, one of the best bike trails in New England.

Spend the day soaking up the sun at **Long Nook Beach**, then catch one of the most picturesque sunsets on the New England coast.

Head to **Wellfleet**, where you can explore Cape Cod's biggest and best flea market and be spoiled for choice between mini golf or the drive-in theatre with nightly double features.

Indulge in the fried clams and onion rings at **Arnold's** before treating yourself to refreshing homemade ice cream at **Sweet Escape**.

Check out the eclectic art featured in the **Left Bank Gallery**.

Enjoy unforgettable live entertainment (drag brunch, anyone?) at the **Crown & Anchor** in Provincetown.

