



BOOK CLUB  
RESOURCE GUIDE

Contemporary Fiction

A watercolor illustration of a cozy living room. In the center, a wooden chair with a curved back sits on a light-colored rug. To the left and right are tall wooden bookshelves filled with books. A small table with a plant on it is in front of the chair. The background shows a window with light streaming in. The overall style is soft and artistic.

THANK YOU FOR  
CONSIDERING FAITH AMONG  
FRIENDS FOR YOUR NEXT  
BOOK CLUB READ

BOOK CLUB  
RESOURCE GUIDE

VERA JANE COOK

Vera Jane Cook's *Faith Among Friends* is a captivating novel that masterfully blends the suspense of a mystery with the emotional depth of women's fiction. The story unfolds slowly, meticulously revealing the complex relationships and long-held secrets of five friends whose lives are irrevocably intertwined. Cook's characters are richly drawn and deeply flawed, making them both relatable and compelling. The narrative expertly weaves together past and present, creating a sense of mounting tension that keeps the reader guessing until the very end. While the plot is intricate and layered, the emotional core of the story—the enduring power of friendship and the struggle for forgiveness—resonates deeply. This isn't just a suspenseful read; it's a deeply moving exploration of the human condition. *Faith Among Friends* is a must-read for anyone who enjoys character-driven stories with intricate plots and surprising twists.

WORD COUNT: 93,300

PAGE COUNT: 484

KEY WORDS: Women's Fiction | Mystery | Friendship Fiction | Family Drama

DEMOGRAPHICS: Women aged 35-55 | Readers of Women's Fiction/Mystery | Ideal for Book Clubs & discussion groups

COMP BOOKS: *Big Little Lies* by Liane Moriarty | *Where'd You Go, Bernadette* by Maria Semple | *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo* by Taylor Jenkins Reid

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# Unmasking the Past: A 70s Mystery

## **Design invitations:**

Use vintage postcards or mystery novel covers. Include the book title and a cryptic tagline like, Unravel the secrets. Relive the memories. Join us for a night of mystery and intrigue. Specify the date, time, location, and request guests to come dressed in 70s attire.

## **Decorations - 70s Vibe:**

Decorate with 70s-themed elements: disco balls (even small ones), lava lamps, vintage posters, records, maybe a boombox playing mellow 70s music in the background.

Mystery Elements: Use dim lighting, incorporate shadowy silhouettes, perhaps some faux crime-scene tape (playfully), and candles.

## **Memory Lane Place Cards:**

Ask each member to bring a favorite photograph representing a cherished memory or friendship. They can use these photos as place cards, sparking conversation about shared experiences.

# THEMED PARTY SUGGESTIONS

## Activities:

### Unmasking the Past Game:

Create a fun game where guests are given clues related to the book's characters or events, and have to guess who or what the clue is about. The person with the most correct answers wins a prize (perhaps a copy of the book or a 70s-themed gift).

### Friendship Bracelet Making:

Provide materials for guests to make friendship bracelets, symbolizing the strong (or fractured) friendships in the book.

### Mystery Character Guessing:

Before the party, ask guests to create a short biography of a mystery character based on clues from the book (avoid main characters, focus on supporting characters). Each guest presents their character; the book club votes on the most convincing.

### Favors:

Give each guest a small gift bag containing a 70s-themed item (like a retro candy, a small disco ball, or a vintage-style bookmark) and perhaps a fun fact card about friendship.

# THEMED PARTY SUGGESTIONS

# A Taste of Memories: A Culinary Reunion

The menu encourages members to prepare dishes representing different aspects of the novel – either inspired by the food mentioned or by the emotional tone/themes.

## Drinks:

**The Feisty Five Punch:** A vibrant, fruity punch.

**Non-Alcoholic Options:** Offer a selection of interesting non-alcoholic beverages, such as sparkling cider, flavored iced teas, or gourmet sodas.

## Appetizers:

**The Feisty Five Dip Trio:** Three different dips (hummus, spinach artichoke, French onion) represent the unique personalities of the five friends. Serve with pita bread, crudité, and tortilla chips. (Members can be assigned a dip to make, bringing a personal touch.)

**Hidden Truths Stuffed Mushrooms:** These are savory and slightly mysterious, reflecting the hidden secrets within the story.

THEMED PARTY MENU SUGGESTIONS

## **Main Course:**

**Summer Stock Salad Bar:** A vibrant salad bar allows for customization, representing the diverse experiences and choices of the characters. Include a variety of fresh greens, vegetables, fruits, nuts, cheeses, and interesting dressings. (Members can bring a favorite salad ingredient or dressing to share.)

**White Horse Tavern Burgers:** A nod to the significant setting in the book, offer a choice of gourmet burgers (perhaps a classic burger, a vegetarian option, or a unique flavor combination). Serve with fries or a side salad.

## **Dessert:**

**Sweet Surrender Cheesecake:** This decadent dessert is rich and comforting, representing the theme of eventual reconciliation and healing, along with the sweetness of friendship.

**The Bitter Truth Chocolate Truffles:** These dark chocolate truffles provide a bittersweet element mirroring the emotional complexities of the novel.

# THEMED PARTY MENU SUGGESTIONS

# The Feisty Five Punch

## Ingredients:

- 4 cups Cranberry Juice
- 2 cups Pineapple Juice
- 1 cup Orange Juice
- 1 cup White Rum (or sparkling wine for a non-alcoholic version)
- 1/2 cup Grenadine
- Orange slices and maraschino cherries for garnish

## Instructions:

- Combine cranberry, pineapple, and orange juices in a large punch bowl.
- Add rum (or sparkling wine).
- Gently stir in grenadine.
- Garnish with orange slices and maraschino cherries.
- Serve chilled.



SIGNATURE DRINK



Landslide by Fleetwood Mac  
Hallelujah by Leonard Cohen  
The Scientist by Coldplay  
Skinny Love by Bon Iver  
Heartbreak Hotel by Elvis Presley  
Wild Horses by The Rolling Stones  
Both Sides Now by Joni Mitchell  
Fast Car by Tracy Chapman  
The Sound of Silence by Simon & Garfunkel  
A Case of You by Joni Mitchell  
Crazy Little Thing Called Love by Queen  
Dancing Queen by ABBA  
Landslide by Dixie Chicks  
River by Joni Mitchell  
Come Away With Me by Norah Jones



# SPOTIFY MUSIC RECOMMENDATIONS

A watercolor illustration of a cozy living room. In the center, a wooden chair with a curved back sits on a light-colored rug. To the left and right are tall wooden bookshelves filled with books. A small table with a plant on it is visible behind the chair. The overall style is soft and artistic, with a warm color palette.

THIS GUIDE CONTAINS POSSIBLE  
SPOILERS FOR THIS BOOK IN  
THE DISCUSSION SECTION.

WARNING

1. The novel opens with a focus on memory and the unreliable nature of recollection. How does this theme shape our understanding of the characters and their relationships?
2. The concept of the feisty five is introduced early on. How do the individual personalities and dynamics within this group contribute to the overall tension and conflicts of the story?
3. Several characters harbor significant secrets. How do these secrets impact their relationships with one another and influence their choices throughout the novel?
4. The novel explores themes of betrayal and forgiveness. How do different characters grapple with these concepts? Are some more capable of forgiveness than others?
5. The setting plays a significant role. How do the locations (e.g., the White Horse Tavern, Stockbridge, the lake) contribute to the atmosphere and emotional impact of the story?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

6. The author uses flashbacks effectively. How do these flashbacks enhance our understanding of the characters' motivations and the unfolding events?
7. The novel touches upon themes of family and chosen family. How do the relationships between biological family and the chosen family of friends shape the characters' lives and identities?
8. Several characters struggle with feelings of guilt and self-blame. How do these feelings impact their choices and relationships?
9. The theme of female friendships is central. How does the novel portray the complexities and contradictions of these relationships? Are these friendships ultimately supportive or destructive?
10. What is the overall message or theme of the novel? What are your personal takeaways from reading Faith Among Friends? What did the book make you think or feel?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



Vera Jane Cook, known as Jane to her friends and family, is a native New Yorker who has always embraced the vibrant city life. As an only child, she found solace in novels, drawing inspiration from a diverse array of authors.

Before embarking on her writing career at the age of fifty, Jane was deeply involved in the professional theatre scene, with appearances on television, in regional theatre, films, and Off-Broadway productions. Her literary journey began with her novel "Dancing Backward in Paradise,".

Jane's writing has been featured in ESL Magazine and Christopher Street Magazine, and she has contributed early childhood curriculum to Weekly Reader and McGraw Hill. Currently residing on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, near Riverside Park, Jane enjoys jogging with her beloved dogs, Peanut and Carly. She shares her home with her spouse of thirty years and their two cats, Sassy and Sweetie Pie.

By day, Jane works at Summit Education, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the continuing education for Pts, Ots, and SLPs student.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

WEBSITE: <https://verajanecook.com/>

OTHER BOOKS: The Darlings Series | The Fourniers Series | Pleasant Day