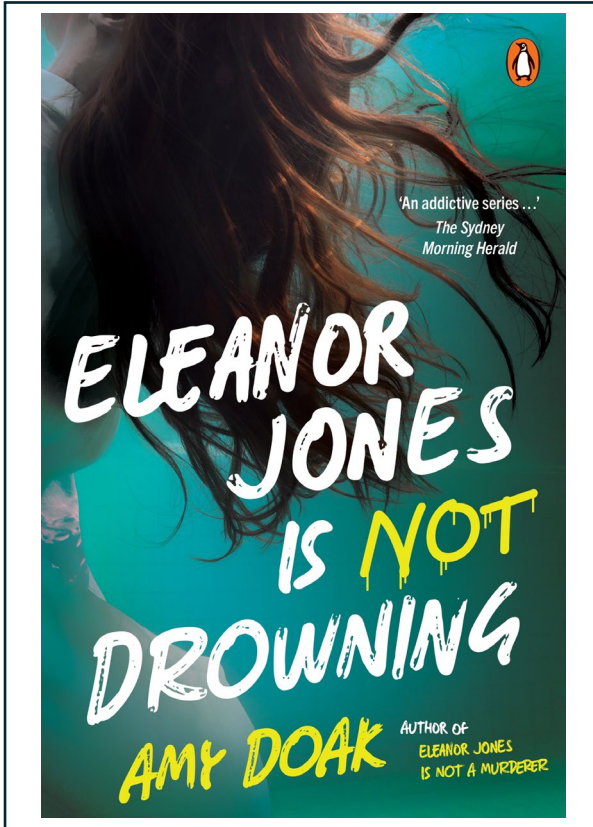




## TEACHERS' RESOURCES



### Eleanor Jones is Not Drowning by Amy Doak

#### PLOT SUMMARY

Eleanor Jones is over the rain. The drought has finally broken, and the Cooina River is rising – fast.

When fellow student Letisha Sabri asks her to prove her boyfriend's death was not an accident or suicide, but rather murder, Eleanor is thrown back into detective mode. The more Eleanor investigates – which she fits in around school, spending time with Troy and planning for the upcoming Deb Ball – the more it seems like Letisha might be right.

As the riverbank starts to spill over and reveal its secrets, it becomes increasingly difficult for Eleanor to keep her head above water.

#### RECOMMENDED FOR

Ages 13+ (Years 7 to 10)

#### CONTENTS

1. Plot summary	1
2. About the author	2
3. Praise for Eleanor Jones	2
4. Pre-reading questions & activities	2
5. Writing style	3
6. Key study topics	3
7. Key quotes	4
8. Discussion Questions & Activities	4
9. Further reading	5
10. Order form	6

#### KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- Learning areas: English
- General capabilities: Literacy; Critical and creative thinking; Ethical understanding, personal and social capability

#### REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- Fantastic new story by the award-winning and bestselling Aussie author of the Eleanor Jones series.
- Great messages about community, empathy and friendship.

#### THEMES

- Community and crisis
- Genre and tropes
- Street art

#### PUBLICATION DETAILS

ISBN: 9781761357305 (paperback);  
9781761357312 (eBook); 9781761624223  
(audio).

**These notes may be reproduced free of charge for use and study within schools, but they may not be reproduced (either in whole or in part) and offered for commercial sale.**

Visit [penguin.com.au/schools](https://penguin.com.au/schools) to find out how our fantastic Penguin Random House Australia books can be used in the classroom and sign up to the monthly schools newsletter for all the latest educational resources.



# Eleanor Jones is Not Drowning by Amy Doak

## ABOUT AMY DOAK



Amy Doak writes mysteries filled with action, adventure, fun and heart. Her debut Young Adult novel *Eleanor Jones is not a Murderer* won the 2024 Davitt Award for Best Crime Novel; was a CBCA 2024 Notable Book; and was shortlisted for both the 2024 ABIAs Book of the Year for Older Readers, and for the 2024 Davitt Awards Best Debut Crime Novel.

The sequel, *Eleanor Jones Can't Keep a Secret*, was shortlisted for the 2025 Indie Book Awards, the 2025 ABIAs and was a CBCA Awards 2025 Notable Book. *Eleanor Jones is Playing with Fire* is the third book in the series and winner of the 2026 Indie Book Award for Young Adults. She also released standalone YA mystery *What Have They Done to Liza McLean?* in 2025.

Amy lives in regional Victoria with her husband, two teenage children and a very grumpy cat.

## PRAISE FOR ELEANOR JONES:

'Doak has written an ode to the strength of women, believing in yourself and finally finding your people.' *Books+Publishing*

'I was hooked from the opening sentence. Eleanor Jones is smart, strong and very much the person I'd want on my side in a crisis. Brilliant.'

Katrina Nannestad, award-winning author of *Rabbit, Soldier, Angel, Thief*

'Eleanor's fun and sarcastic commentary throughout the book creates a fun but tense atmosphere ensuring readers are on the edge of their seats . . . Perfect for fans of Holly Jackson's *A Good Girl's Guide to Murder* series, and anyone who wants to experience a twisty Australian novel.' *Reading Time*

'Doak has created a wry and relatable adolescent narrator, at home in a gossipy world of teen crushes and high-school drama yet thrust into solving crimes . . . an addictive series.' *Sydney Morning Herald*

## PRE-READING QUESTIONS & ACTIVITIES

1. Study the front cover of the book. How has typography and colour been used to communicate what the story is about and what genre or category it might fit into?
2. Research the other books in the series. How has the designer made sure this book fits into the established series design?
3. Read the blurb on the back of the book. Based on the information given, create your own design for the cover of *Eleanor Jones is Not Drowning*.
4. Research YA crime fiction. Can you identify a trend within this genre when it comes to cover design?
5. Look at the quotes on the first page of the novel (or in the Teachers' Notes under 'Praise for Eleanor Jones'). Who do you think these quotes are for? Why do you think they have been included?
6. Read the quote from the *Sydney Morning Herald* – what do you think 'wry and relatable adolescent narrator' means? Does this sound like a character you'd like to read about?



## WRITING STYLE

### Questions and activities

1. Write a review of *Eleanor Jones is Not Drowning*. In it describe Amy's writing style for people who might not have read other books in the series.
2. Can you find examples of literary devices such as symbolism, metaphor and foreshadowing used throughout the story?
3. How is foreshadowing used to create tension? Find some examples in the text.
4. Read the first page of the novel again. How has the author hooked the reader into the story?
5. Look at the length of the chapters. Do you think this helps with the pacing? Why or why not?
6. What do you notice about the tone of the novel? Do you think the tone is connected to the voice of Eleanor, the central character?
7. How do you think the novel would differ if the main character wasn't Eleanor and was instead one of the other characters like Ethan or Tyler? Using the opening scene as a base, write a paragraph or two from either Tyler's or Ethan's point of view to see how this would change the narrative.

## KEY STUDY TOPICS

### Genre and tropes

#### Questions and activities

1. What defines the crime genre? Do crime fiction books always have to revolve around a murder?
2. Research the most popular crime fiction novel for Young Adults last year. Have you read this book? Why do you think it was so popular.
3. Tropes have gone from being something not really mentioned to being highly popular and a way to reference how much people like a book.
4. How many red herrings can you spot in the text?
5. How has the author used the metaphor of the river rising to help increase the tension in the narrative?

### Community and crisis

#### Questions and activities

1. What do you think the story would be like if the town of Cooinda wasn't flooding? Which elements of the story would need to be changed or removed? How does the flooding frame the mystery elements of the story?
2. Drought and flooding are a big part of life in Australia, particularly in regional areas. Find out if the area you live in has a flood plan in place. What does this entail and how recently was it updated? Is it the responsibility of local councils to put measures in place to prevent flooding?
3. The backdrop for the last Eleanor Jones story was the dangers of fire in drought effected areas. This book Cooinda is experiencing floods. Is it realistic for the town to experience these two disasters within a few months? Do some research and find two other towns that has experienced this type of extremes in their environment.
4. Deb balls – Debutant balls – can be considered an event connected to older times. In the story, Kylie Farrell has changed the rules for the deb and modernised the premise. Research the origins of these events in Australia and find out if they are still held on a regular basis.

### Street art

#### Questions and activities

1. Xavi uses the bridge project he's working on to record various secrets within the community. Had he lived to see his work on the bridges completed, do you think anyone would have noticed the secrets he was spilling?
2. Is there a difference between street art and graffiti?
3. Councils often have programmes to 'beautify' the community using street art. Can you think of any famous or popular street artworks in your community?
4. Think about your local area. Is there a place that would suit a large piece of street art. Design a piece of street art to go in that spot. Write a 'mission statement' for your artwork as if you were submitting it to the council as part of a bid.



## KEY QUOTES

1. *'She's about to speak when three Year Seven boys run past us, one cracking the top of his thigh on the back of the empty chair next to me. The chair falls to its side and Ethan reaches to straighten it, glaring at the boys in the process. They look terrified. Nudging each other and whispering, they back away from the table, all the while keeping wide eyes on Ethan. He takes a single step and they run off in fear. Their response causes him to shake his dark head of hair as he pulls the seat back and drops into it. I try not to laugh. Everyone's so scared of Ethan but he's actually softer than a two-week-old kitten.'* (pp.2–3)

What does this scene say about Ethan's reputation at the school? Do you think he leans into his reputation? Or do you think it frustrates him? How do you think he uses how people react to him to his advantage?

2. *The rain. It hadn't rained here for years and years, but in the past couple of months it's barely stopped. At first, everyone was thrilled. Water in the dams at long last. Everything stopped being so dry and dusty. The river was rising again. Alfie – that's my friend, Alfred Ryan – gave me a lesson in what happens when drought-hardened soil can no longer absorb water and now I've gone from freaking out about bushfires to freaking out about floods, so that's great.* (p.5)

Find out if there is a word for drought-hardened soil not being able to absorb water. How does this effect the land in the long term? What factors create this problem? Is there a way that farmers can fix this problem with the soil?

3. *'I think about everyone I've ever known, everyone I've ever loved, and all their messy stories. I think about Min and all the things she's too afraid to talk about, like why she won't ever stop running. Measuring and comparing trauma credits is not a competition I want any part of, let alone one I want to win. I decide to change the subject.'* (p.128)

Eleanor doesn't talk about her family beyond Min a lot. What do you think she could be keeping from her friends about her past?

4. *The Cooinda Debutante Ball is the talk of the Year Eleven class at Cooinda Secondary. The ball was*

*an annual event for decades, until someone in the early two thousands decided it was sexist and reeked of all that was negative about colonialism. Kylie Farrell, who's in my year, found out that her mum wasn't made to feel welcome at the ball when she was our age, so together they decided to resurrect it as a bit of an 'up yours' to the establishment.* (p.18)

What do you think could have been the impetuous for the Cooinda ball being cancelled in the early two thousands?

5. *'I was thrilled to spy a copy of Daphne du Maurier's Rebecca, and Namita is on a Mills and Boon that looks like it last saw the light of day in 1970.'* (p.210)

Eleanor often has her head in a book in the series. Have you read any of the titles she mentions?

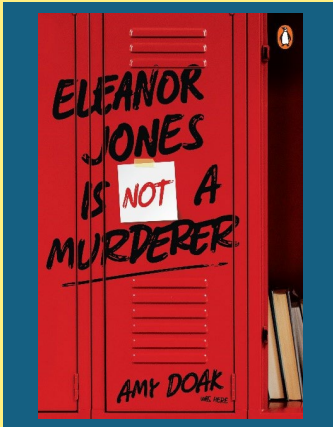
Research Mills and Boon and compare the genre of books they published with a title like *Rebecca* by Daphne du Maurier. Are there similarities? What are the major differences?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & ACTIVITIES

1. Break into groups of three. Hold a series of debates in your classroom based on the question: 'Debutant balls are good for the community' as your basis.
2. Research levees in flood zones. Do you have measures in place where you live to protect people and property from flood waters?
3. Draw a map of the town and the major locations in the narrative. Don't forget to include the river and the bridges Xavi was painting.
4. Write an article about the deb ball as if you're writing for the Cooinda High School Newspaper.
5. One of the themes touched on in the story is 'heritage'. Have a discussion as a class about what this word means? What does the idea of heritage mean within a community? What does it mean on a generational level? What does it mean within families? What is your own family heritage?



## FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA



### ***Eleanor Jones is Not a Murderer* by Amy Doak**

Eleanor Jones has just started at her ninth high school in less than five years. Since she and her mum are always moving on, Eleanor likes to stay on the outer, to stay invisible. So maybe it's just bad luck that the very first person she talks to at Cooina Secondary College, Angus Marshall, is stabbed and left for dead the same day. The last message on Angus's phone is from Eleanor.

After being interviewed by the police, Eleanor realises they don't have all the facts and decides to investigate. In trying to understand what happened to Angus, Eleanor inadvertently becomes involved with an eclectic group of fellow students – all of whom have their own reasons to want to solve the mystery.

As they slowly unravel Angus's secrets, Eleanor discovers the true meaning of friendship – and uncovers a danger lurking at the heart of the town . . .

*Teachers' resources available.*



### ***Eleanor Jones Can't Keep a Secret* by Amy Doak**

Things have settled down in Cooina and Eleanor Jones is getting used to her new normal – spending time with her friends, going to school, and working on a project at the local old age home. But just as things start to feel calm, a series of events once again rock Eleanor's world: Troy's ex-girlfriend is back in town and, during a visit to the old age home, Eleanor's buddy Nance admits to witnessing a murder, swearing Eleanor to secrecy.

In an effort to definitely *not* be concerned about Troy's ex, Eleanor throws herself into solving the mystery of the murder Nance spoke about. Enlisting the help of new friend and genealogy expert Jem to research Nance's past, Eleanor soon realises that digging into old secrets can sometimes be incredibly dangerous indeed.

*Teachers' resources available.*



### ***Eleanor Jones is Playing with Fire* by Amy Doak**

Eleanor Jones isn't looking for trouble.

But someone is starting fires in Cooina – and the first one looks like a murder. Eleanor is determined *not* to get involved, but when she receives a note warning her to 'keep quiet' she can't help but work out who sent it.

Who had motive to murder Eleanor's neighbour? Could it really be one of her classmates? And are the fires connected to the car thefts in town? The more Eleanor tries to do the right thing, the more danger she finds herself in . . .

*Teachers' resources available.*



# ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
<i>Eleanor Jones is Not Drowning</i>	Amy Doak	9781761357305	7-10	\$19.99		
<i>Eleanor Jones Is Not a Murderer</i>	Amy Doak	9781761342417	7-10	\$19.99		
<i>Eleanor Jones Can't Keep a Secret</i>	Amy Doak	9781761342424	7-10	\$19.99		
<i>Eleanor Jones is Playing with Fire</i>	Amy Doak	9781761350634	7-10	\$19.99		
				<b>TOTAL</b>		

<p><b>NAME:</b> _____</p> <p><b>SCHOOL:</b> _____</p> <p><b>ADDRESS:</b> _____</p> <p><b>STATE:</b> _____</p> <p><b>POSTCODE:</b> _____</p> <p><b>TEL:</b> _____</p> <p><b>EMAIL:</b> _____</p> <p><b>ACCOUNT NO.:</b> _____</p> <p><b>PURCHASE ORDER NO.:</b> _____</p>	<p>PLEASE SEND ORDER FORMS TO YOUR LOCAL EDUCATION SUPPLIER.</p>
--	--