



Book Club Set

Jennie's Boy: A Newfoundland Childhood

By Wayne Johnston

About the Author



Wayne Johnston was born and raised in Goulds, Newfoundland. After a brief stint in pre-Med, Wayne obtained a BA in English from Memorial University. He worked as a reporter for the *St. John's Daily News* before deciding to devote himself full-time to writing.

On route to being published, Wayne earned an MA (Creative Writing) from the University of New Brunswick. Then he got off to a quick start. His first book, *The Story of Bobby O'Malley*, published when he was just 27 years old, won the WH Smith/Books in Canada First Novel award for the best first novel published in the English language in Canada in that year. Subsequent books consistently received critical praise and increased public attention. *The Divine Ryans* was adapted to the silver screen in a production starring Academy Award winner Pete Postlethwaite - Wayne wrote the screenplay. *Baltimore's Mansion*, a memoir dealing with his grandfather, his father and Wayne himself was tremendously well received and won the most prestigious prize for creative non-fiction awarded in Canada - the Charles Taylor Prize. Both *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* and *The Navigator of New York* spent extended periods of time on bestseller lists in Canada and have also been published in the US, Britain, Germany, Holland, China and Spain. *Colony* was identified by the *Globe and Mail* newspaper as one of the 100 most important Canadian books ever produced (including both fiction and non-fiction).

Wayne has always been something of a natural athlete - for example, he was once part of a championship ball-hockey team. Luckily (in retrospect) when he was still in the formative stages of considering future career paths, his ice hockey equipment, which was carefully stowed in a garbage bag in the basement, was accidentally put out with the trash. The world of literature benefited; is it possible that the National Hockey League lost a star in the process?

Retrieved from: <http://www.waynejohnston.ca/authorbio.html>

About the Book

Consummate storyteller and bestselling novelist Wayne Johnston reaches back into his past to bring us a sad, tender and at times extremely funny memoir of his Newfoundland boyhood.



For six months between 1966 and 1967, Wayne Johnston and his family lived in a wreck of a house across from his grandparents in Goulds, Newfoundland. At seven, Wayne was sickly and skinny, unable to keep food down, plagued with insomnia and a relentless cough that no doctor could diagnose, though they had already removed his tonsils, adenoids and appendix. To the neighbours, he was known as "Jennie's boy," a back-handed salute to his tiny, ferocious mother, who felt judged for Wayne's condition at the same time as worried he might never grow up.

Unable to go to school, Wayne spent his days with his witty, religious, deeply eccentric maternal grandmother, Lucy. During these six months of Wayne's childhood, he and Lucy faced two life-or-death crisis, and only one of them lived to tell the tale.

Jennie's Boy is Wayne's tribute to a family and a community that were simultaneously fiercely protective of him and fed up with having to make allowances for him. His boyhood was full of pain, yes, but also tenderness and Newfoundland wit. By that wit, and through love-often expressed in the most unloving ways-Wayne survived

Discussion Questions



1. How did you experience the book? Were you engaged immediately, or did it take you a while to “get into it”? How did you feel reading it - amused, sad, disturbed, confused, bored...?
2. Describe the main characters - personality traits, motivations, and inner qualities
 - Are their actions justified?
 - Describe the dynamics between characters (in a marriage, family, or friendship).
 - How has the past shaped their lives?
 - Do they remind you of people you know?
3. How did it impact you? Do you think you'll remember it in a few months or years?
4. Are there lingering questions from the book you're still thinking about?
5. Did you reread any passages? If so, which ones?
6. Of all the information presented in the book, what has stayed you the most?

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Share your thoughts with other readers!



DATE: _____

BOOK CLUB: _____

BOOK TITLE: _____

As a group we rated this book:

1	2	3	4	5
Ugh!		It was OK...		Loved it!

Would we recommend this book to other book clubs?

Yes No Undecided

Why/why not?

Our discussion: