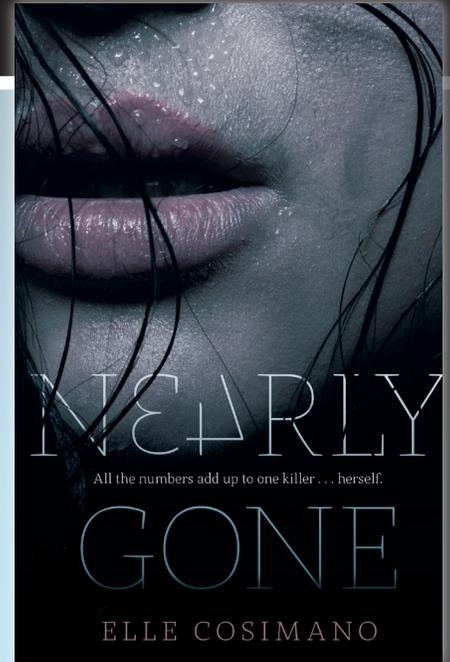


# READER GUIDE

*Bones* meets *Fringe* in a big, dark, scary, brilliantly-plotted urban thriller that will leave you guessing until the very end.

Nearly Boswell knows how to keep secrets. Living in a DC trailer park, she knows better than to share anything that would make her a target with her classmates. Like her mother's job as an exotic dancer, her obsession with the personal ads, and especially the emotions she can taste when she brushes against someone's skin. But when a serial killer goes on a killing spree and starts attacking students, leaving cryptic ads in the newspaper that only Nearly can decipher, she confides in the one person she shouldn't trust: the new guy at school—a reformed bad boy working undercover for the police, doing surveillance. . . on her.

Nearly might be the one person who can put all the clues together, and if she doesn't figure it all out soon—she'll be next.



## Discussion Questions

*For classroom use, ask students to provide specific textual evidence to support their answers.*

- The title of the book is *Nearly Gone*. Analyze and explain the meaning of this title. Why is it important in the story?
- At the start of the book, Nearly is cynical of things that can't be explained by math or science, making her distrustful and reluctant to use her gift. How does her view change over the course of the novel? What specific events bring about this change?
- At the end of the book when Nearly reflects on how Anh's family feels about her, she says, "I'd learned the hard way that sometimes, when people are hurting, they just want someone to blame."
  - ▶ What does she mean by this? How does this relate to the book?
  - ▶ Do you believe this statement is true? Why or why not?
  - ▶ Can you connect this to other pieces of literature where we see characters sharing these same feelings of blame?
- When Vince corners Nearly in the hallway, he insinuates that she is just like her mother. In what ways is she like her mother? In what ways is she different? How do these similarities and differences change over the course of the book?
- Nearly seems fearless. Describe specific events in the book where we see examples of this. Where do we see examples of fear ruling her?
- Setting is very important to the novel. Examine the trailer park in which Nearly lives. What role does it play? Why is it important? Explain using specific examples from the book.

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- How does Nearly's ability to feel the emotions of others add to the book? Explain in detail and use specific examples from the text to support your view. What would the story lose by removing this element?
- Who are the secondary characters in the novel? Explain how each of these secondary characters is important and what they contribute to the novel.
- How do prejudices play into the story? Examine how specific characters are viewed, or view themselves, (because of how they look, where they are from, their backgrounds, etc...) and how these views affect the plot.
- At the start of the novel, Nearly states, "Sometimes the only way to find a solution is to break the rules."
  - How does this foreshadow what happens in the book? Link to specific events.
  - Do you agree? Describe a time when you, or someone you know, broke a rule in order to solve a problem.
- The author examines the thought that even when people are gone/out of your lives, they can still be present. Where do we see examples of this?
- During their conversation in the cemetery, Lonny suggests we are all "stuck by our roots." What do you think he means by this? Do you believe we ever escape our background and the circumstances we are born into? Why or why not?
- Many of the characters in *Nearly Gone* are not who they appear to be. How are specific characters hiding things in this novel? What is each character hiding and why? Are they successful in concealing these things? Why or why not?
- What statement is the author making about appearances?
- One of the major themes in the book is that of escaping your past. Where do we see examples of this? How does this theme develop throughout the book and how does it affect the outcome? Can you think of any other stories, poems, movies, or songs that have this same theme? Describe them.
- What does touch represent to Nearly? How does she feel about it and what might have created these feelings? How do her feelings about touching change throughout the course of the novel, and what events precipitate a change?
- Several characters in the book assume nicknames, aliases, or have chosen to modify the pronunciation of their names for specific reasons. Examine their names and the choices they have made. How do the names help to change or alter their sense of identity? How do the names reflect who they really want to be?
- How have Nearly's relationships changed over the course of the book? Examine specific relationships, how they have changed, and the events that brought about these changes.
- Nearly and Reece are very different, yet they are attracted to each other. How do their differences help them in their relationship? How do their differences hurt them?
- Both Jeremy and Reece are interested in Nearly. Evaluate each of the boys. What can each offer Nearly? Why might each not be good for her? Were you glad she ended up with Reece? Why or why not?
- Reece dressed Nearly up so she would appear to be the type of girl he would date. Her mother dresses Nearly down to make her seem like the kind of girl who doesn't date. Do you believe people need to change for others? Where do we

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see examples of characters who adapt or change based on their circumstances? Where do we see characters who refuse to change?

- Nearly believes it was her dad who contacted her in the *Missed Connections* section of the paper years ago. Do you believe it was him? Where do we see evidence in the novel that it might have been her dad? Where do we see evidence that it might not have been?
- Predict the future of Nearly and Reece's relationship. Do you believe all of their problems are resolved? Why or why not?
- We read books for enjoyment, but sometimes we discover that books can teach us things. What have you taken away from *Nearly Gone*?

## Activities

- Imagine you have Nearly's ability. Choose six emotions and assign each one a corresponding taste and a smell. Be sure to take into account each emotion's overall quality, as well as varying degrees of intensity. What tastes and smells did you choose and why? How might they change when blended with other emotions? Describe in detail.
- *Nearly Gone* is written in first person POV. Select a scene in the book and re-write it in a different POV. How does this change the novel? What POV do you like better? Explain your view.
- Create your own *Missed Connections* ads written by different characters in the book. Who might they be writing to? What would their ads say?
- Look at some of the characters Nearly doesn't touch. Hypothesize what sort of feelings or reactions she would have had if she did touch them. Describe in detail what they might have been feeling and why, citing specific scenes of the novel.



Elle Cosimano is a member of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators, Mystery Writers of America, International Thriller Writers, and Sisters In Crime. She was selected for the 2012 Nevada SCBWI Agented & Published Authors' Mentorship Program, where she worked under the guidance of Ellen Hopkins. She annually attends the Writers' Police Academy at Guilford Technical Community College, Department of Public Safety, to conduct hands-on research for her books. You can learn more about Elle at her website: [www.ElleCosimano.com](http://www.ElleCosimano.com).

This guide aligns with Common Core Standards ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10 1, 2, 3, 6, 9, 10.  
Reader guide questions produced by Rachele Alpine, National Board Certified Teacher, Author, and MFA Candidate.  
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NEARLY GONE BY ELLE COSIMANO  
March 25, 2014  
ISBN: 9780803739260 | \$17.99 | 388 Pages

