



***Looking For Alibrandi***  
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Introductory Activities

- The topic area deals with the concept of discovery. Find as many dictionary definitions as you can and try to write a comprehensive meaning for the word.
- Think about things you have discovered in recent times and talk to your neighbour about them or jot them down. Have you discovered anything about yourself, your friends, your family or about life? Which discoveries are you prepared to talk about? Which ones would you prefer to keep to yourself? Why? Write reflectively on an occasion when you made an important discovery about yourself or someone close to you.
- Now think about the **ways** in which you made these discoveries. Did any of the following methods apply? By chance? From experience? From observation? Through study? From stories past down through the family? Any others? Which was the most common way of making the discoveries?
- Interview a person who has come to Australia from another country. devise a set of questions which aim to prompt responses about that person's adjustments to their new country.
- Do we make certain discoveries at particular **stages** of our lives? Play the song 'Seventeen' by Janis Ian and discuss the discoveries she mentions. When do individuals start to develop a realistic view of themselves?

The Novel

As you read *Looking For Alibrandi* make notes on the following characters and themes.

- Characters: Josephine Alibrandi, Christina Alibrandi, Michael Andretti, Katia Alibrandi, Francesco Alibrandi, Marcus Sandford, Sister Louise, John Barton, Jacob Coote, Sera, Anna, Lee, Ivy, Carly.
- Themes: Cultural heritage, social classes/barriers, relationships, freedom, fulfilment, self-identity.

Questions on the chapters

**Chapter One**

1. What information is given about Josie's background? Refer to her family, education and class.
2. What evidence is there that she is caught between two cultures and two social classes?

**Chapter Two**

1. At school, Josie believes that she doesn't fit. Why does she feel this way?
2. What are the consequences of this feeling? Consider her friends.
3. Why was Josie impressed with Jacob Coote?
4. Why did Josie aspire to belong to the world of 'Poison' Ivy?

### **Chapter Three**

1. What does Josie feel about the rituals which are associated with her Italian background?
2. Josie expresses her wish to be free 'if society will let (her)' (page 40). What does she mean? Is her view of freedom a naive one?
3. What discoveries does Josie make about her father in this chapter?

### **Chapter Four**

1. How does Josie learn about the differences that exist between her world and that of John Barton in this chapter?
2. What insights do we gain of the life of John Barton? Is it free from stress?

### **Chapter Five**

1. What are Josie's impressions of Jacob Coote and John Barton?
2. Is Jacob Coote right in describing Josie as a snob?

### **Chapter Six**

1. Josie has her second encounter with Michael Andretti in this chapter. How does he react to her?
2. How does Christina react to Michael's statement, 'It's too late. Seventeen-year-olds don't need a father.' (Page 66)?

### **Chapter Seven**

1. What does Josie discover about her grandmother's past?
2. Some of the cultural differences between Italy and Australia are highlighted here. Provide an example of one.
3. There are also suggestions that Nonna and Josie have qualities in common. Can you identify any?

### **Chapter Eight**

1. How does Carly upset Josie?
2. How does the father-daughter relationship develop in this chapter?

### **Chapter Nine**

This chapter highlights some of the generational differences between Christina and Nonna.

1. How does the argument between Christina and her mother highlight these differences?
2. How does Josie react to Christina's date?

### **Chapter Ten**

1. Explain Josie's mixed feelings towards Jacob?
2. How are the cultural differences between Josie and Jacob highlighted here?

### **Chapter Eleven**

1. 'I'm changing, Mama. I'm growing up. I'm finally seeing the light.' (Page 110). What prompted this statement? Is it genuine?
2. '...the age of innocence is gone...' p.112 Is Josie trying to frighten her mother or is she serious?

### **Chapter Twelve**

1. Josie shows more interest in Nonna's past. What does she learn of Nonna's early life in Australia?
2. What hints are given that Marcus Sandford was special to Nonna?

### **Chapter Thirteen**

1. Why was Josie furious with Jacob Coote?
2. How does this chapter mark a change in the relationship between Josie and her father?

### **Chapter Fourteen**

1. Josie's attitude to John Barton is changing? How? To what do you attribute this change?
2. How is John reacting to the pressures he feels?

### **Chapter Fifteen**

1. How accurate are Lee's comments on social class? (page 44) Are her views confirmed by the novel as a whole?
2. Comment on Josie's heightened interest in her sexuality.

### **Chapter Sixteen**

1. Describe Josie's feelings as she spends the day with Jacob.
2. What discovery does she make about life and love in this chapter?
3. How are the cultural differences between Australian-Italians and other Australians depicted in the chapter?

### **Chapter Seventeen**

1. What discoveries does Josie make about Michael during their holiday in Adelaide?
2. How have Christina's impressions of Jacob changed?

### **Chapter Eighteen**

1. How does this chapter reveal Josie's continuing sensitivity to racist taunts?
2. 'I pictured myself with Jacob Coote for the rest of my life.' (Page 170) What developments have occurred in her relationship with Jacob?

### **Chapter Nineteen**

1. Tomato Day - an Italian tradition. What is Josie's attitude at this stage? Contrast with her attitude at the end of the novel.
2. '...culture is nailed into you so deep you can't escape it...' (Page 175)  
How is this true for the characters in the novel as a whole?

### **Chapter Twenty**

1. What does Josie learn about responsibility in this chapter?
2. What does she mean by the last sentence, 'I think my emancipation began at that moment.'?

### **Chapter Twenty-One**

1. What does Josie have in common with John Barton? Why does she see *Macbeth* with him? How does this cause tension with Jacob Coote? Why?
2. What lessons are learnt from this incident?

### **Chapter Twenty-Two**

1. What do we and Josie learn about Christina from her conversation on page 197?
2. What does Christina try to teach Josie about love?

### **Chapter Twenty-Three**

1. What evidence is there that Josie is more tolerant of her Nonna? How do you explain this change?
2. Has Josie developed a greater appreciation of cultural heritage, too?

### **Chapter Twenty-Four**

1. How does Josie react to Jacob's advice, 'Break away from those rules, Josie. Make your own.'
2. What similarities does Josie see in Marcus Sandford and Jacob Coote?
3. Why does Josie reject Jacob's approaches?

### **Chapter Twenty-Five**

1. What does Josie discover about Nonna? How does she react? Is her reaction understandable?

### **Chapter Twenty-Six**

1. Josie contemplates further the ramifications of Nonna's affair with Marcus Sandford. How does her opinion of Nonna begin to soften in this chapter?
2. Why does Josie refer to her mother and grandmother as 'two of the strongest women'? (Page 226)
3. 'I was beginning to feel free..' (Page 221) What does Josie mean?

### **Chapter Twenty-Seven**

1. Describe John Barton's mood in this chapter. What clues are there to what is about to happen?

### **Chapter Twenty-Eight**

1. How does Josie feel when she learns of John's suicide?
2. Josie believes John died to achieve his emancipation. From what?

### **Chapter Twenty-Nine**

1. Josie makes several discoveries in this chapter. What are they?
2. How does her relationship with her father develop further here?

### **Chapter Thirty**

1. How has Jacob been changed from his relationship with Josie?
2. Why did Jacob end the relationship with Josie?
3. How did Josie react? 'I will never fall in love again...'

### **Chapter Thirty-One**

1. Lee recounts her first sexual encounter. What is Josie's attitude to sex at this stage?

### **Chapter Thirty-Two**

1. In this chapter Josie feels she has achieved her emancipation. How would you define 'emancipation' now? What does it mean in terms of her relationship with her father, her mother, her grandmother, her culture and her understanding of herself?
2. The novel ends with the line: 'Because finally I understood.' What did Josephine come to understand?

## Essay Questions

1. 'I'm beginning to realise that things don't turn out the way you want them to.'  
(Page.154) Discuss the ways in which Josephine makes her important discoveries in the novel.
2. The process of discovery is more important than the discoveries themselves. Do you agree with this statement? To what extent has this phenomenon been illustrated in *Looking For Alibrandi*?
3. The first person style of narration makes *Looking For Alibrandi* an interesting but unreliable portrayal of discovery. Do you agree?
4. 'At every turn Josephine Alibrandi makes errors of judgement only to realise her mistakes too late.' Do you agree with this assessment of Josephine's judgement in the story?