



Truth, Lies,

and the Questions in Between

BY L.M. ELLIOTT

TEACHING TIPS

1. The novel is set into two separate parts — the historical sections informing the reader of events timely to the narrative, and the third person limited narrative that follows what Patty, one of the first female pages in U.S. Senate in 1973, is able to witness and experience. What is she able to share with the reader that other characters — Will, Abe, Simone, and Julius — cannot? How would the events of 1973 look different from their perspectives?
2. The sections on the history of 1973 are there to provide context to Watergate, the Vietnam War, Kent State, feminism, *Roe v. Wade*, and the Equal Rights Amendment. Patty, her family, and her friends are living the effects of the headlines in one way or another. How does the factual information affect the way you understand Patty's story? Do you think following the news today could help you understand how current events affect you and the people around you?
3. Patty tells Scott in Chapter 8, "what I really mean is it's going to be important to gather all the evidence — tapes included — so Americans can feel confident they know the whole truth, and then decide what we as a country should do next. That's what democracy requires, isn't it? To be informed. And involved." What does Patty do to stay informed and involved throughout the story? How can we stay informed and involved now? What challenges make it harder to be informed today than it was for Patty in 1973? Are our options for being involved different now?
4. Look at Patty's parents and Simone's parents. How are their relationships different? How do they parent their girls differently? How is Patty's understanding of feminism informed by their mothers' opposite beliefs about the Equal Rights Amendment? How do her experiences with sexist comments and behavior add to her view of her mother and Simone's and how women should expect to be treated?
5. While L.M. Elliott leaves us with an epilogue and author's note to tell us what happened with the historical figures in the book, the novel ends with unanswered questions about the fictional cast. What do you think happens with Patty and the rest of the characters after the final pages of this book?
6. Consider talking to a family member or neighbor who was around Patty's age in 1973. (In 2025, Patty would be turning 70 years old.) Ask them what they remember about the events of that year — especially the events you found most interesting and/or surprising — and how they learned about them.

Teaching Tips created by Cindy Minnich



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