

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



Jean E. Pendziwol is an award winning Canadian author. Born and raised in northwestern Ontario, she draws on the culture, history and geography of the region for inspiration for her stories.

An instant national bestseller, Jean's debut adult novel *The Lightkeeper's Daughters* is a story about family, identity, and art involving a decades-old mystery. Vividly drawn, Lake Superior is almost a character in itself, changeable yet constant, its shores providing both safety and isolation. Published by HarperCollins in North America, the book is also available in multiple other languages around the world.

Jean's latest picture book, *I Found Hope in a Cherry Tree*, is published by Groundwood Books. Nathalie Dion provided the beautiful illustrations for this meditation on the nature of hope. Jean's other children's books include the Governor General's Literary Awards shortlisted *Once Upon a Northern Night* (Groundwood Books, Illus. Isabelle Arsenault) and the bestselling *No Dragons For Tea: Fire Safety for Kids (and Dragons)* (Kids Can Press, Illus. Martine

Gourbault).

- Author's website

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *The Lightkeeper's Daughters* is primarily narrated from two points of view, that of Elizabeth Livingstone and Morgan Fletcher. Which character did you more closely identify with? Why?
2. In many ways, Lake Superior evolves as a character, affecting the lives of the Livingstone family. Do you see the Lake as an ally or adversary? Why?
3. In the case of Morgan's transgression, does the punishment fit the crime? What is she supposed to learn from her time at the Boreal Retirement Home versus what she actually learns? What does Morgan mean when she says, "I'm invisible except to the one person who is blind"?
4. Elizabeth and Morgan both find themselves transported by music, though their tastes differ, while Emily's preferred medium is painting. How do the arts comfort and uplift us?

5. The journals that are discovered on Charlie's boat reveal many family secrets, ones both painful and redeeming. If you had access to that much knowledge about your past, would you reach for it? Is there any way in which it's better not to know about the skeletons in your family's closet?
6. How does Morgan use toughness as a defense mechanism? How does Elizabeth break down the girl's defenses?
7. What kind of man was Elizabeth and Emily's father, Andrew Livingstone? What about his character made him seek out a job like lighthouse-keeping? What did you think of Lil as a character? Why do you think she was so distant from Emily and Elizabeth?
8. Marty plays a subtle but influential role in the relationship between Elizabeth and Morgan. How much do you think he knows or suspects about the relationship between the two of them? Why?
9. Porphyry (pronounced por'-fer-ree) Island is located on Lake Superior, on the southern end of Black Bay, east of the Sleeping Giant and northeast of Isle Royale. The island takes its name from the quartz and feldspar crystals, or porphyries, found in the volcanic rocks that make up the island. In what way does this reflect the characters in *The Lightkeeper's Daughters*?
10. The dragonfly, in almost every part of the world, symbolizes change and change in the perspective of self-realization; and the kind of change that has its source in mental and emotional maturity and the understanding of the deeper meaning of life. Why do you think the author chose dragonflies as a recurring motif in the book?
11. Is there any excuse for what Lil does to Emily? Does she deserve her daughters' forgiveness? Does Charlie deserve his sisters' forgiveness?
12. There are many twists throughout the story. Which one surprised or affected you the most?
13. At the end of the story, Morgan makes the decision to respect Emily's unspoken request not to share Elizabeth's true identity as learned in the pages of Andrew Livingstone's journals. Why do you think Morgan decides to do this? If you were in Morgan's position, what would you do?
14. Elizabeth speaks of being stalked by wolves in her dreams. What is the symbolism of the wolf? What is the relationship between Emily and wolves and Elizabeth and wolves throughout the story?
15. Do you feel Morgan has changed by the end of the story? In what ways? Do you feel Elizabeth has been changed by knowing Morgan?

- <https://www.jeanependziwol.com/book-club-questions.html>

## BOOK REVIEWS

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### Booklist

Morgan Fletcher has been sentenced to community service at a local retirement home for tagging its fence. There she meets Elizabeth Livingstone, a resident whose advancing blindness has taken away her beloved books and treasured paintings. When Elizabeth unexpectedly receives her father's long-lost journals of his time as a lighthouse keeper on Porphyry Island, she asks Morgan to read them to her. Morgan, who has lived her life in a series of foster homes dreaming of learning about her past, finds the journals a surprising link to her own early life. As Morgan and Elizabeth delve deeper into the pages, they discover a shared connection to the lighthouse and its history. Pendziwol's (*Me and You and the Red Canoe*, 2017) first adult novel is a deeply satisfying look at the meaning of family. With strong characters and rich in historical details, *The Lightkeeper's Daughters* looks carefully at love and identity and the things we do to keep them both safe.

### Publisher's Weekly

YA author Pendziwol (*Once Upon a Northern Light*) pins her first story for adults to the "fortunes of chance" that bring mixed blessings to the last family manning a lighthouse on the Ontario side of Lake Superior. The narrative nimbly tacks between the past and present of Elizabeth Livingstone, a near-blind expat raised on Porphyry Island in the 1920s and '30s. Since recovering her father's old day logs, returned by a constable investigating a shipwreck, she's eager to get to the bottom of the tragedy that forced her and her twin sister to leave the island 60 years before. Her failing eyesight prevents her from diving in until "fortune" pairs her with Morgan Fletcher, a foster teen sent to do community service at her retirement home. Game on. Cagey and drawn to bad company, Morgan turns out to be on an ancestral quest of her own and proves the perfect Watson. This is a perfect hammock read for those who love the Brontë sisters and Jodi Picoult in equal measure.

### Library Journal

Children's author Pendziwol's adult debut is about two women: elderly Elizabeth, who has lost her eyesight and yearns to know more about her family's past, and teenage orphan Morgan, who is performing community service at Elizabeth's assisted-living facility and gets roped into helping Elizabeth. When Elizabeth's late father's journals are discovered after an accident, Morgan reads them aloud to her. The 70-year-old tales of his time as the local lighthouse keeper on an island on Lake Superior unravel the clouded mysteries in the family. Both women will learn that their histories have always been entwined in ways neither could have realized. This atmospheric novel tells an intricate story about familial love and deception. While the story at the novel's core may lean toward the melodramatic, readers will be drawn in by the intergenerational relationship between Elizabeth and Morgan as they discover their pasts in each other. VERDICT Fans of Heather Young and Jojo Moyes might want to look into Jean Pendziwol this summer.

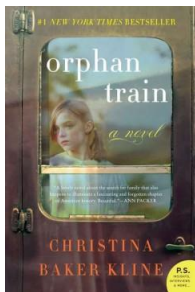
### Kirkus

A decades-old mystery is revisited as an elderly woman shares the story of her childhood with a troubled teen. Teenage foster child Morgan Fletcher has been sentenced to completing a term of community service at the senior center she tagged with graffiti art. On her first day scraping off spray paint, Morgan meets Elizabeth Livingstone, an elderly woman who's still sharp as a tack but is almost completely blind. A boat belonging to Elizabeth's older brother, Charlie, has just been found, empty and foundering on Lake Superior. The boat was discovered near Porphyry Island, a small island in the Thunder Bay District of Ontario, where she and her siblings were raised. Their father was the lighthouse keeper on Porphyry Island for many years during the early 20th century. Although Charlie is missing, the authorities have recovered journals that belonged to their dead father, Andrew, and those books have just arrived for Elizabeth. Unable to read her father's words on her own, Elizabeth looks to the delinquent teenager repairing the fence outside her window. Morgan is quickly drawn in by Elizabeth and her history, spending many hours reading to the old lady instead of hanging around with her deadbeat boyfriend. As Morgan helps Elizabeth solve the puzzles of

her past, the two women, young and old, form an unlikely bond that helps Morgan unearth many mysteries about her own life. With each tidbit that Elizabeth discovers from her father's writings, Morgan becomes more desperate for answers about her own past. In her first foray into adult fiction, Pendziwol (*Once upon a Northern Night*, 2013, etc.) has created an intricately satisfying story about love and deception that manages to be both melancholy and exhilarating. A haunting tale of nostalgia and lost chances that is full of last-minute surprises.

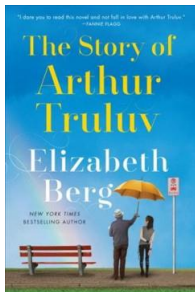
## READALIKES

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### ***Orphan Train* by Christina Baker Kline**

Close to aging out of the foster care system, Molly Ayer takes a position helping an elderly woman named Vivian and discovers that they are more alike than different as she helps Vivian solve a mystery from her past.



### ***The Story of Arthur Truluv* by Elizabeth Berg**

Making daily visits to the grave of his beloved late wife, Arthur forges unexpected relationships with a nosy neighbor and a troubled teen who dubs him "Truluv" before the trio discovers healing and family together.



### ***Flora* by Gail Godwin**

Isolated in a decaying family home while her father performs secret work at the end of World War II, 10-year-old Helen, grieving the losses of her mother and grandmother, bonds with her sensitive young aunt while desperately clinging to the ghosts and stories of her childhood.