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## Johnston Public Library Book Discussion Questions

### Eleanor is Completely Fine by Gail Honeyman

#### Summary

No one's ever told Eleanor that life should be better than fine.

Meet Eleanor Oliphant: She struggles with appropriate social skills and tends to say exactly what she's thinking. Nothing is missing in her carefully timetabled life of avoiding social interactions, where weekends are punctuated by frozen pizza, vodka, and phone chats with Mummy.

But everything changes when Eleanor meets Raymond, the bumbling and deeply unhygienic IT guy from her office.

When she and Raymond together save Sammy, an elderly gentleman who has fallen on the sidewalk, the three become the kinds of friends who rescue one another from the lives of isolation they have each been living. And it is Raymond's big heart that will ultimately help Eleanor find the way to repair her own profoundly damaged one.

Smart, warm, uplifting, Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine is the story of an out-of-the-ordinary heroine whose deadpan weirdness and unconscious wit make for an irresistible journey as she realizes.

The only way to survive is to open your heart.

#### Discussion Questions

1. Knowing the truth about Eleanor's family, look back through the book to revisit her exchanges with her mother. Did you see what was ahead? How did Honeyman lay the groundwork for the final plot twist?
2. What are the different ways that the novel's title could be interpreted? What do you think happens to Eleanor after the book ends?
3. Eleanor says, "These days, loneliness is the new cancer—a shameful, embarrassing thing, brought upon yourself in some obscure way. A fearful, incurable thing, so horrifying that you dare not mention it; other people don't want to hear the word spoken aloud for fear that they might too be afflicted" (p. 227). Do you agree?

4. What does Raymond find appealing about Eleanor? And why does Eleanor feel comfortable opening up to Raymond?
5. Eleanor is one of the most unusual protagonists in recent fiction, and some of her opinions and actions are very funny. What were your favorite moments in the novel?
6. “Did men ever look in the mirror, I wondered, and find themselves wanting in deeply fundamental ways? When they opened a newspaper or watched a film, were they presented with nothing but exceptionally handsome young men, and did this make them feel intimidated, inferior, because they were not as young, not as handsome?” (p. 74). Eleanor’s question is rhetorical and slightly tongue-in-cheek, but worth answering. What are your thoughts? If men don’t have this experience, why not? If they do, why is it not more openly discussed?
7. Eleanor is frightened that she may become like her mother. Is this a reasonable fear? What is the balance of nature and nurture?
8. Is it possible to emerge from a traumatic childhood unscathed?
9. Eleanor says, “If someone asks you how you are, you are meant to say FINE. You are not meant to say that you cried yourself to sleep last night because you hadn’t spoken to another person for two consecutive days. FINE is what you say” (p. 226–227). Why is this the case?

Summary and Discussion Questions from the publisher.