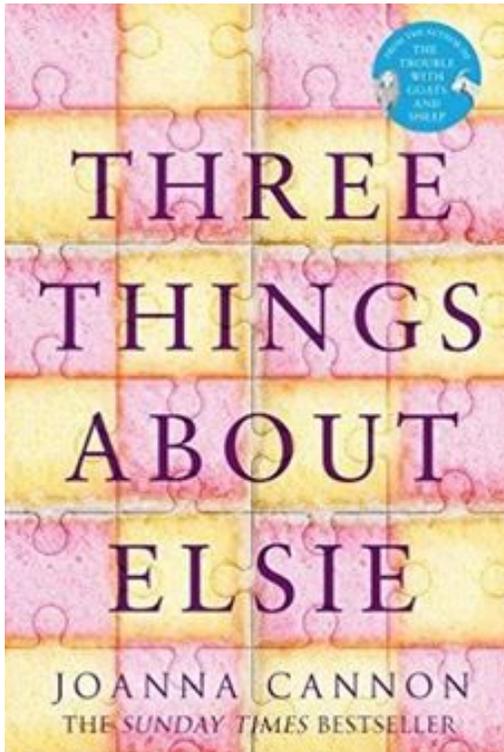


LoveReading Reader reviews of Three Things About Elsie

By Joanna Cannon

Below are the complete reviews, written by LoveReading members.



Phyllippa Smithson

Quite simply, this is up there with the very best of books I have ever read. It's fun, engenders melancholy, thought provoking and totally unputdownable.

Switching between real time, the more recent past and 60 years previous, the story is a reflection of relationships, secrets, friendships and loss as seen through the eyes of Florence (Flo).

Right from the opening sentence I was hooked. Flo, lively, loud and full-on has fallen and is alone in her home – a retirement flat - and whilst she awaits the arrival of someone who notices her

absence (which may not be soon as she has a reputation for preferring not to engage socially with anyone but Elsie her best friend of 60 years and Jack, a former military man who takes on being 'the man' of the two ladies), she has time to reflect on a secret that she has shared with no-one despite + 60 years of living with it.

As the pages turn it becomes evident that Flo's secret has caught up with her in the shape of a new resident who she has spent a lifetime in the comfort that he had died and was no longer around to haunt her. But when things start going wrong within the home (thefts, fires and so on) it would appear all fault lies with Flo and her forgetfulness which is put down to old age.

But Flo's loyal friends believe her when she claims her innocence and the three determine to prove the guilt lies with a man who first came into the lives of Flo and Elsie all those years ago. A man who left Elsie with a broken heart and Flo with a guilt that she has lived with all these years later.

Oozing with real world characters, real world issues and all delivered with ironic humour, I cannot recommend it more highly.

Nikki Whitmore

Secrets, friendship and love #ThreeThings

This is an amazingly deceptive novel. You're going along, learning about the main characters, Florence and Elsie, and slowly beginning to unravel the mysterious secrets from their past that bind them together. For a while you're comfortable, you think you know where you're heading, or you have an inkling at least and then BAM, all of a sudden everything is turned on its head - not once, but over and over again and all these little, insignificant details that you barely noticed when you were first told about them become huge pieces of a much bigger picture.

As she did in 'The Trouble with Goats and Sheep', Cannon does a fantastic job of making ordinary people extraordinary. You feel like you know them and more importantly you want to fight their battles with them. You fall a little bit in love with Jack, you find yourself furious when people don't listen to Florence, you want Simon to figure out that he's more than he thinks he is.

Early in the novel Florence tells us we should know three things about Elsie. Well actually, there's just one: you should read it.

You can follow Nikki on Twitter: @njwhitters

Sabine Little

This is a sad book - not "cry-your-heart-out-and-be-done-with-it" sad, but a sadness that is more subtle, small tragedies that hide inside bigger ones, but that are ultimately more difficult to bear.

After a fall, Florence is lying on the floor in her sheltered accommodation flat for hours. Not always sure of her own mind and memories, the reader sees Florence's past few weeks both from her perspective and from those around her,

as Florence unveils a 60-year-old mystery surrounding her and her best friend Elsie.

I found this book incredibly sad - not

""cry-your-heart-out-and-be-done-with-it"" sad, but a sadness that is more subtle, small tragedies that hide inside bigger ones, but that are ultimately more difficult to bear. One of the premises of the book is that we are more than, and shouldn't be defined by, the worst things we have ever done, but that premise is skilfully interwoven into a backdrop of growing older, having to live with choices, and, ultimately, potentially, and most scarily, forgetting the choices we made, as our mind tries to hide from the consequences.

Joanna Cannon offers us three perspectives - Florence's own, and those of two staff members, but other characters are drawn well as they are viewed through people's eyes, created from perceptions - a reminder that whatever we see of a person is limited to the here and now, unless we are partial to their history. There are plenty of ""reveals"" in the plot, twists and turns, but even though they are dramatic at times, they remain subdued somehow, as though there isn't quite the energy left to get truly worked up about things, which only underlines the masterful writing. This one will stay with me for a long time.

Marjorie Lacy

I loved Joanna's first book and felt so excited when I was selected to review her second book.

Joanna's style of writing is original and poetic. I have sat and read it from cover to cover, only stopped to sleep and eat! As a member of a Creative Writing Course, she is someone who needs reading as an example of how to do it.

The book, in spite of being about some residents of Cherry Trees Retirement Home, moves at a pace and is a page turner. There is so much happening, a lot of it is in Florence's mind. Apart from Florence, her friend and helper is Elsie, who always knows what to say to make Florence feel better.

A wonderful book, one I am happy to recommend anyone to read.

Charlotte Walker

An interestingly written mystery about love, loss, forgiveness and growing old that is great to read during the special reflective time in the New Year.

*‘Three Things About Elsie’ is a thought provoking tale that takes place in an unusual setting. The plot follows Florence, who has had a fall and while awaiting rescue begins to reflect on her life. This reflection includes the appearance of a person she thought had long since been buried. This book reminds me of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time* and is an interestingly written mystery that allows the reader to travel alongside the main character as she uncovers the stories of her past with twists, turns, secrets and revelations that will have the reader second guessing life at Cherry Tree. The bittersweet book is the perfect reflecting New Year read about love, loss, forgiveness and growing old; ‘Three Things About Elsie’ reminds the reader to pay attention to and enjoy the little things in life no matter what age you are because “you can’t tell how big a moment is until you turn back and look at it”.*

Nicola Lowes

A story that will touch your heart.

84-year-old Florence recounts the last few weeks of her life as she lies in her flat, unable to get up. At first, she seems to be another old lady with a dodderly memory that life is gradually forgetting...

Yet we eventually learn that her life has had its share of dramatic events that continue to haunt her. There are situations she has tried to forget and others where she has never known the full truth.

She goes over recent events in her mind and manages to piece together what actually happened many years ago, with the help of her friend Jack and the not-so-helpful new resident, Gabriel Price.

Oh, and we learn the third thing there is to know about Elsie. I did have my suspicions on the way but that didn’t spoil the ending. The ultimate ending surprised me but it fitted in with the story.

I would recommend this as it is full of characters who seem so real you could just imagine them sitting next to you.

You can follow Nicola on Twitter: @NJLowes

Carol Attridge

*This is a sweet book. It's a great story that has depths to it that hold you. I could relate to Florence and her experience in the home. Not wanting to join in and conform. How hard that must be. To be old and lose who you are must be awful. Interspersed into the story was her lovely friendship with Elsie. Something she treasured. And then there was the mystery of Ronnie. **I really enjoyed this book and the characters and all the questions and dilemmas it threw up. Read and enjoy!***

Sarah Harper

Living out her twilight years in Cherry Tree Home for the Elderly, the arrival of the mysteriously young Gabriel Price opens windows on Florence's past. Flo is on probation and needs to focus on behaving herself to avoid being sent to Greenbank (which is neither green, nor on a bank) but strange events start to occur. Books turn up in fridges and Battenberg avalanches cascade from cupboards. Is Flo starting to lose her mind or is something more sinister going on? As she lies on the floor, waiting to be rescued, Flo fits the pieces of her life together and the story which emerges will make you laugh, cry and wish that you could gather this amazing woman into your arms and never let go.

*Okay, I'm going to try really hard not to gush here. 'The Trouble With Goats' and Sheep was good but 'Three Things About Elsie' is absolutely stunning. I adore Joanna Cannon's writing style, her acutely accurate observations, wry humour and exquisite turn of phrase. She just keeps getting better and better. This book made me feel a bit like I do when I read Fredrik Backman and has echoes of 'Britt-Marie Was Here' in the subtle beauty of its language and its exquisite characters. It's one of those 'I must tell everyone about it now' books and I felt that way after only a couple of chapters. A book which inspires you to shout it from the rooftops is a rare thing. Touching, poignant and thought provoking, this is an absolute joy to read. **If you have to read only one book in 2018, make it this one.***

Jane Brown

Remarkable story told with great writing and emotion. Getting old and being young at the same time. A beautiful story.

I had not come across this author but so glad I was asked to review.

A remarkable story- thought provoking and emotional too - It's about getting old, being young and what we do with our lives.

Florence is lying on the floor in her sheltered accommodation she muses over her life- a new resident has arrived; is this someone she thought had died over 60 years ago? Her friend Elsie then helps her to remember the past and a secret Florence has kept to herself.

The author writes beautifully and the reader will be drawn to the characters who are real and interesting.

I often wonder when I am older what I will muse over - I have to admit to a few tears along the way.

Beautiful and I could not put this down totally devoured to the end.

Cathy Peterson

A delightful jigsaw where you need to pay attention to all the details to see the whole.

I found this overall to be a very pleasant read, not too taxing and quite pleasurable if on occasion slightly too sentimental for me. I loved the character of Florence and really felt for her as she navigates the world of sheltered housing, dementia and the threat of a move she doesn't want. Often very sad, this was also funny and very thought provoking, particularly in how younger people respond to older people who need additional care. It's in the little observations that this really worked for me, from Flo not being allowed to change her mind, to memory and the tricks it can play. The other characters were really good and while I wasn't entirely invested in the mystery I did like the way the story unfolded and everything fitted together. I did guess the twist very early on but again this didn't detract from what was a really good read.

Kathy Eastman

When a secret from the past resurfaces, Florence's friends help her unlock the mystery in this gentle, moving novel about ageing, friendship, memory, identity... and the ripples our lives make.

Joanna Cannon's 'Three Things about Elsie' takes a compassionate look at growing old and how it's often hard enough to be seen as another human being, let alone understood or even believed. To some, Florence is little more than an uncooperative old lady who shouts too much. But she's really battling to stay alert and independent and keep what little freedom she has left in her sheltered accommodation, in order to prevent being sent to a nursing home. She turns to friends old and new, as she tries to remember a traumatic past event and finally right a wrong, if she can.

'Three Things About Elsie' is a wonderful tribute to the importance of friendship and the impact small human kindnesses can have on the recipient, even if they go unremarked by most others. Cannon uses the perspective of Handy Simon and Miss Ambrose to great effect, gently nudging us away from judging people too quickly and offering a more nuanced understanding, allowing for those times when people have lost their way in trying to find their sense of purpose.

This gentle, soothing story is best enjoyed with a pot of tea and one, two, maybe even three, slices of battenberg. Then try and find time for Florence's long seconds and look for Elsie's Three Things in yourself and others.

<https://nutpress.co.uk>

Katie Hoare

The book starts with Florence, who is more or less the narrator/protagonist of the story, and she is telling the reader about the three things she has found important about her lifelong friendship with Elsie. Florence and Elsie are in an elderly residence, where Elise reminds Florence of how they first met at school, and about two men that they know later in life, and try go looking. The reader is invited onto the day out with the other residents and how they try to help, and the other relationships with these residents. Florence tells of how Elsie has always looked out for her and their strong bond over the years, and you find out how Florence is the more dependent of the two friends. However, Elsie is a strong, but kind character, who does help Florence out with her suggestions,

*even though they might not be the best ones. This story is the polar-opposite to Joanna Cannon's debut novel, *The Trouble with Goats and Sheep*, which is about a friendship of two young friends, but this one is about two elderly friends. This book is still told with the same warmth and charm as the debut, and shows the power, strength and humanity of what binds friends together over a lifetime, through the bad and good times.*

Edel Waugh

This is the story about Florence , an elderly lady who has just taken a fall in a retirement home and is waiting to be rescued . While on the floor she has a lot of time to think over her past , and the possible ramifications that actions from back then might have on her now . This story is filled with mystery and a good bit of suspense too , the story goes back and forth in time as Florence tries to figure out what could have happened back then and how it is possible it's coming back to haunt her . For a while I was not sure if Florence was losing her memory, its a real possibility , later things became much clearer . I really enjoyed seeing what their day to day life was like as a resident in the retirement home , and the bonds with the other residents that they have there too as well as their hopes , and fears of growing older and perhaps ill. There was many times I had a lump in my throat reading this beautiful story , it's a must read!

Emily Wright

Deeply poignant and always honest, this delightfully bittersweet novel is life affirming and uplifting. I feel that all life and emotion is packed into Joanna Cannon's writing.

Sue Broom

Florence is contemplating her life, eight decades of it, during most of which she has kept a secret close to her heart. The arrival of a ghost from her past has unsettled her and she worries that all is about to be revealed.

The author writes in a straightforward, unpretentious style, with great insight and sensitivity, not only for those experiencing old age and loss of memory but for everyone caught up in life-changing

events they would rather forget.

I enjoyed the writing very much (the trip to Whitby stands out particularly), but overall I was ambivalent about the plot. This book came at the end of a couple of reading years saturated for me with heart-warming stories of elderly people struggling with memory and memories. Not that it isn't a good rendering of that type of story, just that I think I've had enough, and the twists at the end weren't any great surprise.