# Still Alice by Lisa Genova

## Synopsis

Alice Howland, happily married with three grown children and a house on the Cape, is a celebrated Harvard professor at the height of her career when she notices a forgetfulness creeping into her life. As confusion starts to cloud her thinking and her memory begins to fail her, she receives a devastating diagnosis: early onset Alzheimer's disease.

Fiercely independent, Alice struggles to maintain her lifestyle and live in the moment, even as her sense of self is being stripped away.

## Discussion questions

1. When Alice becomes disoriented in Harvard Square, a place she's visited daily for twenty-five years, why doesn't she tell John? Is she too afraid to face a possible illness, worried about his possible reaction, or some other reason?
2. After first learning she has Alzheimer's disease, "the sound of her name penetrated her every cell and seemed to scatter her molecules beyond the boundaries of her own skin. She watched herself from the far corner of the room" (pg. 70). What do you think of Alice's reaction to the diagnosis?
3. Do you find irony in the fact that Alice, a Harvard professor and researcher, suffers from a disease that causes her brain to atrophy? Why do you think the author, Lisa Genova, chose this profession? How does her past academic success affect Alice's ability to cope with Alzheimer's?
4. When Alice's three children, Anna, Tom and Lydia, find out they can be tested for the genetic mutation that causes Alzheimer's, only Lydia decides she doesn't want to know. Why does she decline? Would you want to know if you had the gene?
5. Were you surprised at Alice's plan to overdose on sleeping pills once her disease progressed to an advanced stage? Is this decision in character? Why does she make this difficult choice?
6. Alice's mother and sister died when she was only a freshman in college, and yet Alice has to keep reminding herself they're not about to walk through the door. As the symptoms worsen, why does Alice think more about her mother and sister?
7. "One last sabbatical year together. She wouldn't trade that in for anything. Apparently, he would" (pg. 223). Why does John decide to keep working? Is it fair for him to seek the job in New York considering Alice probably won't know her whereabouts by the time they move?
8. Why does Lisa Genova choose to end the novel with John reading that Amylix, the medicine that Alice was taking, failed to stabilize Alzheimer's patients? Why does this news cause John to cry?
9. Alice's doctor tells her, "You may not be the most reliable source of what's been going on" (pg. 54). Yet, Lisa Genova chose to tell the story from Alice's point of view. As Alice's disease worsens, her perceptions indeed get less reliable. Why would the author choose to stay in Alice's perspective? What do we gain, and what do we lose?

*Synopsis/Discussion questions from https://www.readinggroupguides.com/reviews/still-alice/guide*