# *The Silent Listener* by Lyn Yeowart

## Synopsis

In the cold, wet summer of 1960, eleven-year-old Joy Henderson lives in constant fear of her father. She tries to make him happy but, as he keeps reminding her, she is nothing but a filthy sinner destined for Hell.

Yet, decades later, she returns to the family’s farm to nurse him on his death bed. To her surprise, her ‘perfect’ sister Ruth is also there, whispering dark words, urging revenge.

And then, the day after their father finally confesses to a despicable crime, Joy finds him dead, with a belt pulled tight around his neck . . .

For Senior Constable Alex Shepherd, investigating this murder revives memories of an unsolved case still haunting him since that strange summer of 1960: the disappearance of nine-year-old Wendy Boscombe.

As seemingly impossible facts surface about the Hendersons – from the past and the present – Shepherd suspects that Joy is pulling him into an intricate web of lies and that Wendy’s disappearance is the key to the bizarre truth.

## Discussion questions

1. From the beginning, Shepherd was convinced that Joy had killed George. Was it a good idea to pursue her the way he did? What did he think in the end?
2. Was the revenge Joy and Ruth exacted on their father sufficient? Or too much? What would you have done in their situation?
3. Did Joy deserve what happened to her in the end? Why or why not?
4. Joy has a rare form of synaesthesia, which is why she sees some words as images. How was this important in the novel?
5. Who was responsible for what happened to Wendy?
6. How much responsibility does Gwen have to take for what went on in the Hendersons’ house? And what do you think happened to her?
7. Whose side are you on: Robert Larsen or Barbara Larsen?
8. What motivates Vicki? And should she have gone looking through old medical records, and given them to Shepherd?
9. Is there a difference between what is morally right and what is legally right? How did this come into play in the novel?

*Discussion questions from https://www.penguin.com.au/book-clubs/2999-the-silent-listener-book-club-notes*