

To All the Boys I've Loved Before by Jenny Han

Summer 2026 ESL360 Book Club

This summer we are reading *To All the Boys I've Loved Before* by Jenny Han. The novel is about a teenage girl navigating first love, family, and the slow process of figuring out who she is. Each week's discussion is also framed by a short passage from *The Laws of Human Nature* by Robert Greene.

Robert Greene is one of the most widely read authors in the world. His books have sold millions of copies and have been translated into dozens of languages. His book *The Laws of Human Nature*, published in 2018, became a number one New York Times bestseller immediately. The book draws on psychology, philosophy, history, and biography to identify eighteen patterns in human behavior that shape what we do, often without our awareness. Greene has a talent for taking difficult ideas from scientists and philosophers and making them clear and useful for everyday readers. The book is not a textbook. It reads more like a guide to understanding the people around you and the person you are still becoming.

You do not need to read Greene's book. Each week, one short passage is provided on your session sheet. Think of it as a camera lens. Jenny Han shows us a story. Greene provides a way of looking at it. The laws selected relate directly to what happens in the novel. Lara Jean is a teenager figuring out who she is and what she wants. The people around her illustrate, in real and recognizable ways, the very patterns Greene spent years studying. Reading the novel through Greene's lens makes the story richer and our discussions deeper and more interesting.

Reading Schedule

Session	Date	Chapters	Theme
1	June 3, 2026	Ch. 1–6	<i>The Law of Repression</i>
2	June 10, 2026	Ch. 7–12	<i>The Law of Irrationality</i>
3	June 17, 2026	Ch. 13–18	<i>The Law of Death Denial</i>
4	June 24, 2026	Ch. 19–24	<i>The Law of Shortsightedness</i>
5	July 1, 2026	Ch. 25–30	<i>The Law of Covetousness</i>
6	July 8, 2026	Ch. 31–36	<i>The Law of Compulsive Behavior</i>
7	July 15, 2026	Ch. 37–42	<i>The Law of Envy</i>
8	July 22, 2026	Ch. 43–48	<i>The Law of Self-Sabotage</i>
9	July 29, 2026	Ch. 49–54	<i>The Law of Conformity</i>
10	August 5, 2026	Ch. 55–60	<i>The Law of Aimlessness</i>

Your Weekly Assignment:

Before each session, read the assigned chapters and review the discussion questions on this sheet. Think about each question and jot down a few notes of your own thoughts in the space provided. You do not need to prepare a formal answer. You simply need to come ready to share your perspective. The more thinking you bring to the room, the richer our conversation will be.

SESSION 1: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

June 3, 2026 · Chapters 1–6 & The Law of Repression

Repression is when a person unconsciously hides difficult emotions or desires from their own mind instead of dealing with them directly. The person may not even realize they are doing this.

FROM THE NOVEL

"I keep my letters in a teal hatbox my mom bought me from a vintage store downtown. They aren't love letters that someone else wrote for me; I don't have any of those. These are ones I've written. There's one for every boy I've ever loved — five in all... My letters are for when I don't want to be in love anymore. They're for good-bye. If love is like a possession, maybe my letters are like my exorcisms." (Ch. 1)

GREENE'S LAW

Robert Greene writes that every person has two sides. The first is the self we show to others. The second is a hidden self we keep private. This private side holds the feelings we are ashamed of or afraid to face. It holds our fears, our jealousies, the desires we think are too much. Greene calls this the shadow. Most people spend their lives pretending this shadow does not exist. But the shadow does not disappear just because we ignore it. Instead, it finds other ways out. It appears in sudden anger, in strange behavior, or in the way we hold on to things we are not ready to let go of. The healthier path, Greene says, is to face these hidden feelings honestly. When we know our own shadow, we begin to understand it. And when we understand it, it loses some of its power over us.

DISCUSS

1. Greene says that hidden feelings find other ways out, such as in anger, strange behavior, or the things we hold on to. Do you think this is true of people in general? What are some of the ways you have observed this pattern in yourself or others?
2. Lara Jean stores her hidden feelings in a hatbox. Have you ever found an unexpected way to manage feelings you weren't ready to face directly? What did that look like?
3. Lara Jean believes her letters set her free. Do you think she is truly free of these feelings, or is she just managing them? What is the difference?
4. Lara Jean calls her letters *exorcisms*. To her, they are a way of driving unwelcome feelings out. Do you think it's possible to truly get rid of strong feelings, or do they always find their way back?

MY NOTES

SESSION 1: VOCABULARY

June 3, 2026 · Chapters 1–6 & The Law of Repression



delusions of grandeur *n. phrase* /dɪˈluːʒənz əv ˈgræn.dʒə/ dih-LOO-zhunz uv GRAN-jer

Definition: If someone has delusions of grandeur, they believe they are much more important or powerful than they really are.

Example from book: “He nudges Margot. ‘Your sister suffers from delusions of grandeur.’” (Ch. 1)



begrudgingly *adv.* /bɪˈɡrʌdʒ.ɪŋ.li/ bih-GRUJ-ing-lee

Definition: If you do something begrudgingly, you do it even though you feel it is unfair or annoying to have to do it.

Example from book: “Kitty nods begrudgingly.” (Ch. 3)



fester *v.* /ˈfɛs.tə/ FES-ter

Definition: If a bad feeling or problem festers, it gets steadily worse because it has not been dealt with openly. A wound can also fester when it becomes infected.

Example from book: “She says sometimes you have to scream out emotions; if you don’t, they’ll fester.” (Ch. 4)



wistfully *adv.* /ˈwɪst.fəl.i/ WIST-fuh-lee

Definition: If you say or do something wistfully, you show a gentle sadness, usually because you are thinking of something pleasant that is no longer possible.

Example from book: “Wistfully, she says, ‘I wish I’d been in love more than once.’” (Ch. 5)



in retrospect *phrase* /ɪn ˈrɛt.rə.spɛkt/ in RET-ruh-spekt

Definition: When you consider something in retrospect, you think about it afterwards using the knowledge or understanding you now have.

Example from book: “In retrospect, it wasn’t so surprising that Josh would like Margot, since he’s that kind of guy too.” Ch. 6

SESSION 1: GRAMMAR

June 3, 2026 · Chapters 1–6 & The Law of Repression

The Present Perfect

We use the present perfect (have/has + past participle) for:

1. Experiences at an unspecified time: "I've never tried sushi."
2. Situations that began in the past and continue now: "She's lived here for six years."
3. Recent events still relevant now: "I've just finished the chapter."

Use the simple past for completed events at a specific time:

"She hit her head on the floor." (specific past moment — simple past)

"It's been almost six years." (still ongoing — present perfect)

Form:

(+) I / You / We / They have ('ve) + past participle

(+) He / She / It has ('s) + past participle

(–) haven't / hasn't + past participle

(?) Have / Has + subject + past participle?

From the book:

"I've never flown by myself before." Ch. 1

→ experience — no specific time given

"It's been almost six years now, and sometimes it feels like just yesterday she was here." Ch. 2

→ situation that started in the past and continues

"I've never cheated or gotten drunk or smoked a cigarette or even had a boyfriend." Ch. 2

→ list of lifetime experiences

PRACTICE

Vocabulary

1. Choose the correct phrase: His plan to build a personal skyscraper shows clear ____ (delusions of grandeur / wistfulness / retrospect).
2. True or False: If you do something begrudgingly, you are happy and willing to do it.
3. Fill in the blank: If you never talk about your anger and keep it inside, your resentment might ____.
4. Use wistfully in a sentence about a place or person you miss. _____
5. Fill in the blank: ____, I realize I should have spent more time with her before she moved away.

Grammar — Present Perfect

6. Choose: She (worked / has worked) at this hospital since 2015.
7. Correct the error: "I never saw that film before."
8. Write a present perfect question using: you / ever / live / in another country?
9. Choose: "When (did she finish / has she finished) the report?" "Yesterday at 3pm."
10. Complete: I'm exhausted. I ____ (not sleep) well this week.