Some topics to consider while reading *That Untravelled World*:

- Dreams and disillusionment
- Family relationships
- Racism
- The Depression and early 20th century WA
- The history of communications
- The pros and cons of technological advancement

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**THAT UNTRAVELLED WORLD**

by Ian Reid

It is 1912, and young Harry Hopewell arrives in Perth to work on the construction of a wireless station commissioned by the new Australian Commonwealth Government. He is full of enthusiasm about the miraculous new world of possibilities opened up by radio transmission, and buoyed by his growing friendship with Nellie Weston.

But when Nellie and her parents vanish without a trace, his world begins to darken.

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**About Ian Reid**

Ian Reid is an Australian author of historical fiction and non-fiction. His previous novel, *The End of Longing*, was published in 2011. Ian's work has been translated into many languages and he was awarded the inaugural Antipodes prize in the US for poetry. Originally from New Zealand he now lives in Perth, Western Australia.
Discussion questions

1. Harry had the skills and intelligence to do well career-wise amidst the emerging new technology, yet his life doesn't go as well as he’d planned. Were the tough social conditions of the era the sole cause of his failures?

2. Harry reflects that some novels ‘showed how people could suffer stinging frustration and hardship in ways that made them more resiliently human’ (p. 107). Do his own experiences throughout the novel increase his resilience?

3. How does Australian society, as portrayed in *That Untravelled World*, change during the inter-war period, including the Great Depression?

4. Harry clings to his idealised version of Nellie throughout the years. Was it ever going to be possible for the real-life Nellie to measure up to this romantic memory? Should Harry have tried to forget Nellie and marry someone else, or do you admire his persistence in loving only one woman?

5. ‘The wireless gave him the illusion of company’ (p.178). What are the pros and cons of technological advancement?

6. Nellie decides not to tell Harry about her rape. Was this a wise decision? Should she have reported Mr. Riven as the rapist? Did Mr. Weston do the right thing by relocating his family?

7. Does the dance-band song 'Farewell to Dreams' sum up Harry's final attitude, or does he move beyond disillusionment?

8. Harry surmises that Ruth is Nellie's daughter, but decides never to divulge this information because of the shame of letting these two women know that Ruth married her half-brother. Was he correct in doing so, or do you think they had a right to know?

9. Around the story's fringes are several ‘solitary phantoms’ (p. 199) who bring suffering to themselves and others. What causes them to come to grief?

10. Harry was aware of Nellie's growing attraction to his half-brother, George. Could he have done more to prevent it? Was Harry’s acceptance of their relationship noble or defeatist?

11. Storytelling was a big part of Harry’s childhood. Later, he says that ‘families were shaped by the stories they shared’ (p. 204). Do you agree that storytelling forms the nucleus of close relationships?

12. Discuss the novel’s ending. In your opinion, has Harry has found enough happiness and sense of belonging with Ruth’s family and Hinkler’s affections?