



THE LAKE'S APPRENTICE

by Annamaria Weldon

Some topics to consider while reading *The Lake's Apprentice*:

- Identity and nature
- Natural beauty
- Ecological balances
- Science versus spirituality
- Development versus conservation
- Colonial versus Indigenous uses of land

How do we describe a place? Annamaria Weldon offers an intimate portrait of the chain of lakes that includes Lake Yalgorup between Mandurah and Bunbury on Australia's south-west coast.

The Lake's Apprentice contains a suite of poems, with celebrated essays and photographs and nature notes cognisant of current environmental research. This elegant testimony collapses time, evoking the long past of Bindjareb Noongar land use, and thinks through to a resilient future.



About Annamaria Weldon

Annamaria Weldon is a widely published poet, essayist and freelance writer. Born in Malta, she spent her childhood in North Africa, Central America and the United Kingdom, before moving to Australia in 1984. She has previously published two collections of poetry, won the inaugural Nature Conservancy Australia's Prize for Nature Writing in 2011, and was shortlisted for the Peter Porter Poetry Prize in 2012.

Discussion Questions

- 1 How do Weldon's poems and photographs help to enhance or identify the landscape that she describes?
- 2 By blurring the natural world through a first-person account which includes prose and poetry, what effect does this have on our relationship with the land?
- 3 Weldon notes an internal tension in unifying her Catholic upbringing with her new found nature spiritualism. How do you interpret this struggle: as land versus humanity, spirituality versus Christianity, natural chaos versus divine order?
- 4 In 'Song of the Long-Necked Turtle', community pressure led to the withdrawal of a commercial development plan. How do you think future communities will balance conservation with the need for commercial development?
- 5 Weldon creates a bridge between Western scientific thinking and Indigenous spiritual connection. Do you think this is something that should and could be sustained into the future?
- 6 Discuss Gary Snyder's phrase, 'Awareness of emptiness brings forth the heart of compassion' in regards to humans' relationship with nature.
- 7 Weldon is overcome with emotions at the Pinjarra Massacre site and notes that no official state markings have been placed to distinguish the memorial site despite it being recognised by the Indigenous community. Given the importance of and the Australia's commitment to reconciliation, why do you think this site hasn't been acknowledged?
- 8 Scientists may dismiss 'magical thinking', but Weldon notes that there is some commonality to scientific and Aboriginal concepts. The importance of thrombolites is one example, can you think of any others?
- 9 Why do you think the author connects so powerfully with Western Australia? Is it, for her as an immigrant, the novelty of the landscape, because she is actively engaging with Aboriginal culture, which is powerfully tied to the landscape and a culture that remains foreign to many locals, or is there another explanation that is suggested by the text?