



BORN INTO THIS

STORIES

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Reader Guide: Questions and Topics for Discussion

1. What are some of the common themes running through the short stories in this collection?
2. The 16 stories that make up *Born Into This* are written by an Aboriginal (pakana) Tasmanian Australian writer and take place largely in Tasmania, featuring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander characters: discuss what you learned about the culture, history, and politics of Australia through this lens. If you live in another part of the world, what are some similarities to your country's culture, history, and politics in regards to Indigenous peoples, colonization, and race? What are differences?
3. The Tasmanian landscape plays an outsized role in several of the stories: what are some examples that stood out to you? Why do you think the descriptions of the land and how the Aboriginal characters interact with the natural world were important for the author to write about?
4. How are land ownership and rights explored in the stories? Consider "The Blackfellas from Here," with Kat confronting the wealthy homeowners who have a plaque reading: *The owners acknowledge that this house stands on Aboriginal land*; the title story "Born Into This," where the main character Kara is described as doing something against the law; and "Honey," containing a scene in which Sharkey worries about "a land rights claim" after Nathan finds stone tool artifacts.
5. Many of the stories involve revenge in some form. Why do you think this might be? Discuss some examples in the book where personal or political revenge is had. Do you think these instances are right or wrong, or are justifiable?

6. The history and politics of Australia Day/Invasion Day, are at the heart of the stories “Invasion Day” and “Kite”: what happens in each of these stories? How do different populations of Australia feel about this day? What did you learn that you didn’t know before?
7. Heritage, identity, and lineage are at the forefront of many of the stories. Consider Kara in “Born Into This,” when she describes her boss Jason as a “tick-a-box Aboriginal” — what does that mean? In “Bleak Conditions,” how is the child’s hair symbolic? What are some other instances of characters struggling with issues of identity?
8. In “Descendant,” who gets to claim Aboriginal identity and heritage is deeply explored with its young main character Dorothy and her struggles with her school’s teachers and classmates. What is Dorothy proud of, and what does Amelia do that upsets Dorothy? Do you believe this story could be seen as a metaphor for larger societal issues of who gets to claim heritage?
9. What are the different forms of racism that are explored in the collection? Consider the stories “Your Own Aborigine,” where a law is passed that requires welfare recipients to be in direct contact with taxpaying “sponsors”; “Kite,” where an Aboriginal man finds himself in the midst of white Australians celebrating Australia day; “Summer Girl,” where an Aboriginal man and his white girlfriend go on a camping trip; the uneven “friendship” between Sharkey and Nathan in “Honey”; jealousy sparking a racial divide between two childhood friends in “Sonny.” Did the stories make you think differently about how racism is inflicted, and how it is experienced?
10. Several of the stories show Aboriginal activism, service to community, and preservation of heritage and culture. How are those elements depicted in the different stories? Are they shown as being at odds with the country of Australia?