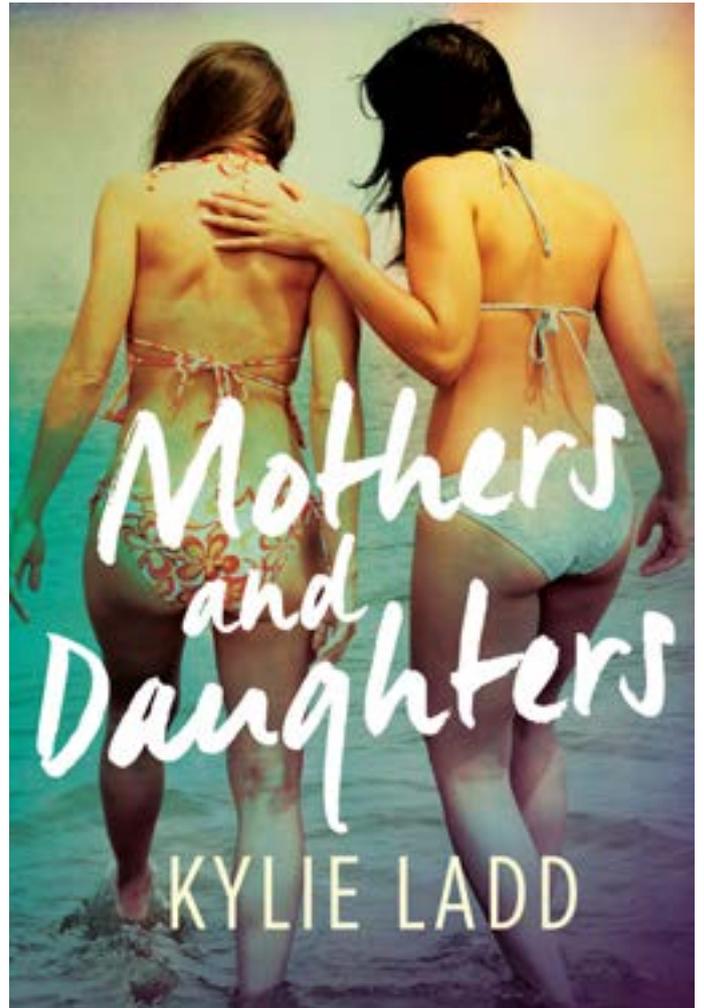


ALLEN & UNWIN



# READING GROUP NOTES

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## About the book

Four mothers. Four teenage daughters. An isolated tropical paradise with no internet or mobile phone reception. What could possibly go wrong?

There's tension, bitchiness, bullying, sex, drunken confessions, bad behaviour and breakdowns - and wait till you see what the teenagers get up to ...

How can we let our daughters go to forge lives of their own when what we most want to do is hold them close and never let them go? How do we let them grow and keep them protected from the dark things in the world at the same time? And how can mothers and daughters navigate the troubled, stormy waters of adolescence without hurting themselves and each other? A clear-eyed, insightful and wildly entertaining look into the complicated, emotional world of mothers and daughters by the acclaimed author of *Into My Arms*, *Last Summer* and *After the Fall*.

A sure-fire hit from a writer who's been steadily building fans and critical acclaim and is ready to explode on to the bestseller lists; '... a strong, intelligent, subtle and wise new voice ... being compared with Christos Tsiolkas, Malcolm Knox and Helen Garner ...' - *Booktopia*

## About the author

Kylie Ladd is a novelist and freelance writer. She has published four novels: *After the Fall*, *Last Summer*, which was highly commended in the FAW Christina Stead Award for Fiction, *Into My Arms*, chosen as one of Get Reading's '50 books you can't put down' for 2013, and her latest, *Mothers and Daughters*. With Leigh Langtree she also edited the anthology *Naked: Confessions of Adultery and Infidelity*. Kylie holds a PhD in neuropsychology and lives in Melbourne with her husband and two children.

## Kylie Ladd on writing *Mothers and Daughters*

*The cruel girls we loved  
Are over forty,  
Their subtle daughters  
Have stolen their beauty;  
And with a blue stare  
Of cool surprise,  
They mock their anxious mothers  
With their mothers' eyes.*

David Campbell, '*Mothers and Daughters*'

I am a huge fan of the work of the late Australian poet, David Campbell, and have long carried his perfect poem '*Mothers and Daughters*' in my head. All my novels are about relationships - lovers in *After The Fall*, friends in *Last Summer*, and family, or blood ties, really, in *Into My Arms* - and *Mothers and Daughters* continues this theme by exploring that most tempestuous of bonds, that between a mother and her teenage daughter. I had always planned to write about Campbell's poem, and with my own daughter growing up, and watching with interest as my close friends begin to negotiate their previously easy relationships with their teenage daughters, I felt the time was just right. I'd like to add that I never planned the novel to be an 'issues' book, but having spent a year in the far northwest, where the book is set, I realised soon after I started that I also wanted to include something about Australia's uneasy relationship with its indigenous people - a topic I learned a lot about firsthand up north, and have absolutely no answers about. I think (hope!) the two themes work well together - both are about uneasy relationships, and both, I hope, are about the possibility of reconciliation.

## For discussion

- ☞ The retreat to Broome offers an escape for the mothers from their lives in Melbourne. What are they each hoping to gain from the trip? And what are they hoping to escape?
- ☞ What issues does the book highlight surrounding colonial conflicts between 'white' and Indigenous Australians? How do each of the characters reinforce and challenge these issues?
- ☞ In what ways do both the women and their children struggle with issues surrounding body image throughout the book?
- ☞ 'The children that grew up alongside yours made their own place in your heart.' (p. 278)  
In what ways are the women mothers not only to their own children, but the children of their friends?
- ☞ Through taking time away from their husbands, what revelations do the women come to about their relationships?
- ☞ Are there ever instances in which the roles of mother/daughter are blurred, or even reversed? What do the mothers and daughters have to teach and learn from each other?
- ☞ What issues does the book raise about the pressures facing young women today?
- ☞ How are the mothers coming to terms with their daughters' blossoming sexuality? Does this threaten them at all?
- ☞ Throughout the book, education is a central theme. Discuss the role of education in shaping young people. Do you think there are some things that can't be taught at school?
- ☞ While presented as fiction, the book offers an insight into aspects of local indigenous culture and community. What do the characters have to learn from this experience? What did you, as a reader, take away from this insight?

- ☞ 'The trouble was, she thought, that you loved your friends and you loved your children and you thought the two things were separate, would never impact on each other, but it didn't work out that way.' (p. 239)  
Consider this observation by Amira. In what ways does it apply to the relationships between the characters in *Mothers and Daughters*?
  
- ☞ In what ways does the trip to Broome challenge, but ultimately strengthen the relationships between the mothers and their daughters?

## Suggested further reading

*Wife on the Run* – Fiona Higgins

*Safe With Me* – Amy Hatvany

*Mothers Grimm* – Danielle Wood

*The Mother's Group* – Fiona Higgins

*The Children* – Charlotte Wood

*The Slap* – Christos Tsiolkas

*Barracuda* – Christos Tsiolkas

Also by Kylie Ladd;

*Last Summer*

*After the Fall*

*Into My Arms*