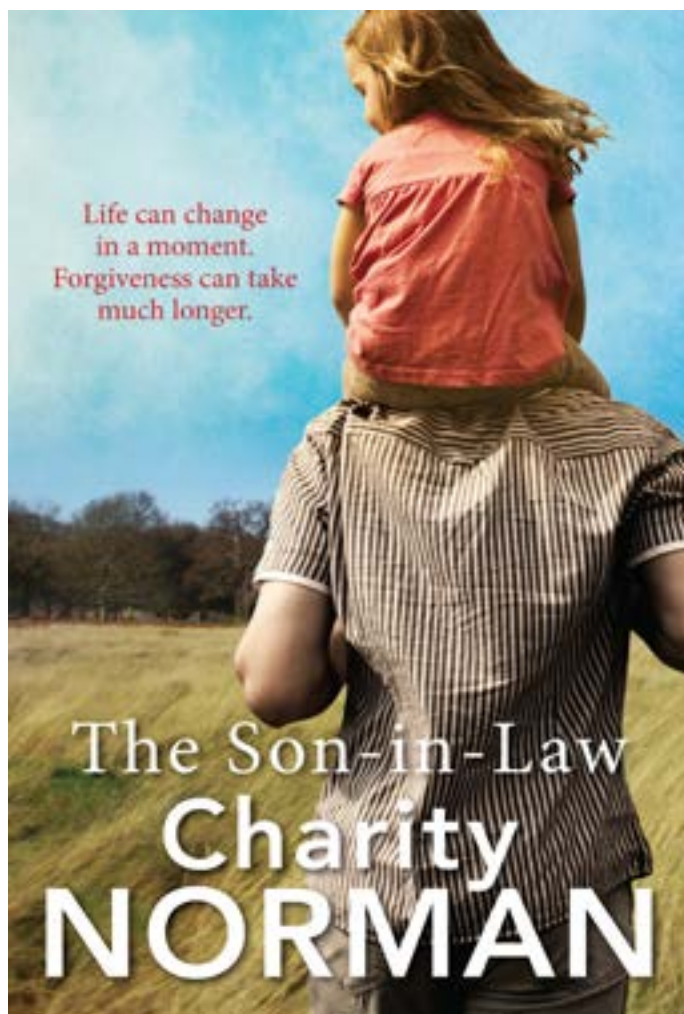


ALLEN & UNWIN



READING GROUP NOTES

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About the book

For three years Joseph Scott has been haunted by one moment - the moment that changed his life forever. Now he is starting over, and he wants his family back more than anything.

This is the story of Joseph and his wife, Zoe; of their children, Scarlet, Theo and Ben, for whom nothing will be the same; and of Zoe's parents, who can't forgive or understand.

A compelling, moving and ultimately optimistic story of one man who will do almost anything to be reunited with his children. And of the grandparents who are determined to stop him.

About the author

Charity Norman was born in Uganda and brought up in successive draughty vicarages in Yorkshire and Birmingham. After several years' travel she became a barrister, specialising in crime and family law in the northeast of England. Also a mediator, she is passionate about the power of communication to slice through the knots. In 2002, realising that her three children had barely met her, she took a break from the law and moved with her family to New Zealand. Her first novel, *Freeing Grace*, was published in 2010 and her second, *Second Chances*, in 2012 (published in the UK as *After the Fall*). *The Son-in-Law*, her third novel, was published in 2013.

Reviews & Quotes

"An engrossing read that is hard to put down and will induce more than a few tears, anger and various other emotions on the way through." - *GoodReads*

"A compelling, moving and ultimately optimistic story of one man who will do almost anything to be reunited with his children." - *Femail.com.au*

"Charity Norman covers complex issues with compassion in this visceral telling of a fractured family. She firmly earns a place as a writer to continue to watch and admire." - *Culture Street*

"Beautifully written, *The Son-in-Law* is a harrowing and powerful story. I was utterly engrossed by the realistic characters, their precarious relationships and the heart wrenching circumstances of this family tragedy ..."

- *Book'd Out*

"*The Son-in-Law* raises lots of questions about forgiveness, parental rights and rights of grandparents who have stepped in to care for the children as well as questions about personal responsibility and mental health issues."

- *GoodReads*

For discussion

- 📖 Joseph thinks, 'Forgiveness was something he hadn't valued at all, until he himself committed the unforgiveable.' In Hannah's place, would you forgive Joseph? And in Scarlet's place?
- 📖 One of the functions of a Prologue is to engage the reader immediately. A prologue usually should also sit outside the main narrative, providing the reader with information that they won't receive from within the novel. Do you think this prologue is successful?
- 📖 This is a novel in which the hidden costs of mental illness within families plays out to a tragic end. Reflecting on the way Joseph, Hannah and Frederick handled their different relationships with Zoe, with what thoughts are you left?
- 📖 *The Son-in-Law* is not sentimental or melodramatic - Charity Norman's characters aren't heroes or villains, they're real people in difficult situations; they ring true. Discuss.
- 📖 *The Son-in-Law* is structured in alternating chapters from the point of views of Joseph, Hannah and Scarlet. Why do you imagine the author chose this way to tell her story? Do you think it works?
- 📖 Informed by the author's previous career as a family court barrister, each of Charity's novels addresses current social issues centering around family dynamics. What other novels have you read that pose similar moral questions? Why do these novels appeal so much to readers?
- 📖 In being open to each characters' experience and viewpoint while reading, did you change your mind about judgements or opinions you held? Discuss your answers to this question within the greater context of the value of literature.

Suggested further reading

Heart Like Mine by Amy Hatvany
The Storyteller by Jodi Picoult
The Husband's Secret by Liane Moriarty
In Falling Snow by Mary-Rose MacColl
Freeing Grace by Charity Norman