

## BOOK REVIEWS

Coralie Creevey

If you have volunteered to tell us what the reviews of a book say, look on the internet for three good reviews (more can get confusing), different to each other if possible, in worthy publications such as Sydney Morning Herald and Melbourne Age if Australian books; the NY Review of Books, the Guardian, are good for all. Goodreads gives some reader opinions which can be chatty and brief and give you a feel for the general reader's rather than just professional reader's opinion.

Make a few notes on best reviews, or use a highlighter pen on copies of reviews if you print them. This enables you to find the main points quickly. Reviews read aloud from a phone are hard on listening skills and patience. Plan on taking no more than 5-6 minutes.

In your summation of reviews some points to include might be:

. what the critical opinion was of plot, characters, build up to crisis in a novel, overall quality of writing. Was it original? Was it too hard to follow because the author jumped about in chronology too much? Avoid summarising the plot for us; we have read it and know.

. did any of the reviews comment on where this novel stood in relation to the author's other works, if any? Better? Drearier? A break from his/her usual? Or have you read other works by same author and can give us your own assessment?

. if non-fiction, what motivated the author to research and write this book? Did it contribute more to knowledge on a subject or synthesise well?

## BIOGRAPHIES OF THE AUTHOR

Straightforward. Use the internet eg Wiki. If a new book you could hear interviews with the author on the ABC's Radio National. If you attended a Writers Week session with the author, you may add your impressions of the author. Every book, like every painting, is in some measure autobiographical or a self-portrait.

## QUESTIONS

Let's discuss what sort of questions we like. Not more than 4 to 6? Not too erudite or pernickety? (We are reading for pleasure, not doing a degree course in literature).

I like a couple of questions that everyone in the group can answer, and a question that brings out our heartfelt, gut responses. Did you like the book or not? Why?

Is it a book with any relevance to your own life? Did it help you understand something better? As I grow older, I find this is increasingly what I ask of books (and paintings).

Is it a book that you would tell anyone about? Who? Why?

YOUR own questions are ok. You need not feel that the publishers' questions for book groups are superior to your own. Some may be, so use them, but they can lose us in detail.

When you have prepared questions, please send them to U3A for inclusion on Course Support by **Wednesday the week before** the group meets to discuss that book.

Who would like Qs printed for them for each meeting? U3A charges 10c per copy.

## SUNDRY

This is an innovation for this group. It is an opportunity for anyone who wants to tell us about a recent good read to share it. With non-fiction especially, you may be able to comment on what another author says on the subject. OR comment on a film of the book, or on something else you know about the author. If inclined, put your name down in the Sundry column, otherwise speak up.

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