



***Bloodlines*, Nicole Sinclair (Margaret River Press)**

Summary

Thirty-one-year old Beth, who grew up in Western Australia's wheatbelt, is running from her past when she heads to New Ireland in Papua New Guinea. Interwoven with Beth's narrative about the joys and brutalities of island life is the story of her parents' passionate, tender love for each other. But Clem and Rose's union is beset with tragedy, forever marking the lives of those around them. Shifting between the perspectives of five memorable characters, this ambitious, big-hearted, at times confronting novel also asks us to consider what it means to make a home, and what we might owe to those who dwell in it.

About the author

Nicole Sinclair's short fiction and non-fiction has appeared in the *Review of Australian Fiction*, *Westerly*, *indigo* and *Award Winning Australian Writing*, and also forms part of the artworks along Busselton Jetty. Her short stories have won the Katharine Susannah Prichard Short Fiction Award and the Down South Writers Competition. *Bloodlines* is her first novel and was shortlisted for the prestigious 2014 T. A. G. Hungerford Award for an unpublished manuscript. Nicole grew up in Toodyay, Western Australia, has lived and worked in Papua New Guinea and now lives in the south-west of Western Australia with her husband and two young daughters.

Questions for discussion

1. The novel begins with Beth's reluctance to leave Australia for Papua New Guinea. Why does she change her mind?

2. The Western Australian wheatbelt is presented as both a physical place and a set of values. How is that sense of place evoked, and what are the values of the characters who live there? What makes the place so attractive to Beth's mother, Rose?
 3. What kind of man is Clem, Beth's father, and how does the novel bring his qualities to life?
 4. Beth finds her time in Papua New Guinea both joyful and difficult. What are her sources of pleasure, and what does she find so difficult, at times confronting, about this unknown culture?
 5. The character of Val is used to create both humour and pathos in the novel. What is her significance in the novel? How is she different from the male expatriates on Papua New Guinea?
 6. Female friendship on the island is a central experience and theme in *Bloodlines*. What are the various friendships based on?
 7. The novel deals with different kind of losses. What are they, and how do various characters try to deal with their grief?
 8. The narrative of *Bloodlines* moves backwards and forwards in time. How did the use of this unconventional structure affect your response to the novel?
 9. The novel ends with Beth's decision to return to Australia. What motivates her choice? What do you think she has learned about herself, and life as a whole, in the process of living in Papua New Guinea?
 10. The novel uses the perspective of five different characters: Clem, Beth, Rose, Val and Pirate. Which character interested and engaged you the most, and why?
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