

BOOK CLUB NOTES

Coming Rain, Stephen Daisley (Text Publishing)

SUMMARY

Lew McLeod has been travelling and working with Painter Hayes since he was a boy. Shearing, charcoal burning, fencing—whatever comes. Over time, they've grown into friends of a sort, and at his best, Painter's been something of a surrogate dad to Lew. Calls him 'Son', tells stories, guides the boy towards his own take on right on wrong.

But Lew's now a grown man. And at their latest job, shearing for John Drysdale and his daughter Clara, everything changes.

In Coming Rain this late beginner continues to make his distinguished, solitary way, not least in reclaiming the rural societies of a half century ago, rendered so vividly that they seem keenly of the present, rather than past curiosities.

– Peter Pierce, *The Australian*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stephen Daisley was born in New Zealand and now lives in the South West of Western Australia with his wife and five children. He spent five years in the New Zealand Army and has previously worked as a sheep-herder, brush cutter, truck driver, road worker, bar-tender and construction worker.

Stephen's first novel, *Traitor*, won the 2011 Prime Minister's Literary Award for Fiction, The 2011 UTS Glenda Adams Award for New Writing, and the 2011 New South Wales Premier's Literary Award. His second novel, *Coming Rain*, was published in April 2015.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Author Stephen Daisley has stated that the mythology of those who worked the land in Australia's early days is almost as strong as the mythology of Gallipoli. Do you agree? Why do local writers return to stories of shearers, drovers, and the open land? Is this natural nostalgia or an unhealthy obsession with a rural idyll?
- Daisley also speaks of 'an admiration and deep compassion for people on the land', and indeed worked on sheep and cattle stations earlier in his life. Does this admiration and compassion come through in the telling of *Coming Rain*, or do other factors cloud the inherent goodness of these characters?
- *Coming Rain* unfolds in two competing narratives: that of Lew and Painter and the parallel narrative of a pregnant mother dingo in search of nourishment. How do these two journeys compare and contrast with each other? Is there a bit of the dingo in Lew or Painter, or vice versa?
- Racial relations seemed strained throughout *Coming Rain*, particularly in relation to Painter and the house hand Jimmy. Was this symptomatic of the period shown (1950s Western Australia), or is racism still a significant issue in Australian culture to this day?
- Crikey reviewer Jim Morgan states that Daisley 'almost succeeds in making beauty out of filth and cowardice' in *Coming Rain*. How prevalent was this filth and cowardice to you as a reader? What other aspects of character are on display, particularly in relation to Lew and Painter?
- In *Coming Rain*, Lew and Painter save a young joey after they hit and kill its mother one night. What does Gwen represent for Lew, and how does his giving the joey to Clara foreshadow events to come in the novel?
- Grief also plays a powerful part in *Coming Rain* in the lives of both Maureen, the widow from the opening chapters of the novel, and John Drysdale, who has lost his wife to cancer. How do hope and desperation balance out in both characters, in

terms of the processing of their grief?

- Reviewer for *The Australian* Peter Pierce notes that 'Daisley carefully gives the names of the things on the station, establishing a parallel specialist vocabulary to that of the Aboriginal language.' Did you find such painstaking attention to detail enlivening or distracting? How does one best bring to life such a bygone era?
- Thus far, Daisley's novels have explored concepts of masculinity and mateship. What might his take on femininity look like, if set in the same period, exploring a traditionally female occupation?

IF YOU LIKED THIS BOOK, YOU MAY ALSO LIKE...

Traitor, Stephen Daisley (Text Publishing)

The Penguin Henry Lawson Short Stories, Henry Lawson (Penguin)

The Break, Deb Fitzpatrick (Fremantle Press)

Everyman's Rules for Scientific Living, Carrie Tiffany (Pan MacMillan)

Shearer's Motel, Roger McDonald (Random House)