

## **BOOK GROUP GUIDE FOR 'BENEATH THE MOTHER TREE'.**

One of the themes explored in the novel is the idea of belonging. Why do you think Ayla is feeling like she doesn't belong anywhere? Do you think Grappa's Gran, by changing the Irish myths and folklore to suit this new country helps or hinders Ayla's sense of belonging? How else is this theme explored in the novel?

Marlise is an ambiguous character. What were your first impressions of her? Did your feelings for her change throughout the read? How did you feel about her by the end of the book?

For the Indigenous characters in the book, their landscape is overlaid with a relatively recent violent past. In what way did the author portray this? What effect, if any, did the knowledge of this violence have on the non-Indigenous characters in the book?

Did the fact that this story was set within a known landscape, utilising real historical events make you read the book differently? Did the fact that the story was set on an island help or hinder the turn of events?

Grappa's view of the world is unique. Did you find any wisdom in Grappa's interpretation of things, or did you view him as untrustworthy because of his drinking habit?

Riley is often shocked by how he feels about his mother. Did you see his loyalty towards his mother as a noble or weak quality?

The two main mother/offspring relationships in the book are Riley/Marlise and Ayla/Helen. How do these relationships differ? What is it about the mothers that determine the type of relationship they have with their children in each instance? How else is the idea of the mother depicted in the book?

The author makes use of gothic tropes and magical realism throughout the novel. Are you able to identify some of these devices within the text? And how did you feel when you came across them?

The book is told through four different points of view. Do you think the author wishes you to side with one interpretation over another, or do you think she weighted them evenly?

The climactic event of the book is ambiguous. Whose perspective do you prefer, and why? Can you find evidence in the text to support your interpretation?

Another theme within the novel is the repercussions of colonisation. How did the author explore this in relation to each of the characters? And relation to the landscape? What is the significance, if any, of Buster?

The final moments between Riley and Aya are left open to interpretation to a certain extent. What do you think will happen with Ayla? And Riley? Do they have a future together?