



Questions of travel

By Michelle De Kretser

First published in 2013

Genre & subject

Domestic fiction

Australian fiction

Synopsis

A mesmerising literary novel, *Questions of Travel* charts two very different lives. Laura travels the world before returning to Sydney, where she works for a publisher of travel guides. Ravi dreams of being a tourist until he is driven from Sri Lanka by devastating events.

Author biography

De Kretser was educated at Methodist College, Colombo and in Melbourne and Paris.

She worked as an editor for travel guides company Lonely Planet, and while on a sabbatical in 1999, wrote and published her first novel, *The Rose Grower*. Her second novel, published in 2003, *The Hamilton Case* was winner of the Tasmania Pacific Prize, the Encore Award (UK) and the Commonwealth Writers Prize (Southeast Asia and Pacific). Her third novel, *The Lost Dog*, was published in 2007. It was one of 13 books on the long list for the 2008 Man Booker Prize for fiction. From 1989 to 1992 she was a founding editor of the Australian Women's Book Review. Her fourth novel, *Questions of Travel*, won the 2013 Miles Franklin Award, the Australian Literature Society Gold Medal (ALS Gold Medal), and the 2013 Prime Minister's Literary Awards for fiction.

Discussion starters

- Michelle de Kretser has stated in an interview that she's interested in asking 'Who travels? Who doesn't? What takes us from home? What brings us back?' in *Questions of Travel*. What are your answers to her questions? What takes Laura Fraser from home? What takes Ravi back to his home?
- Consider the following quote: "This was modern love: traceless, chilling. But when it's over was as empty of meaning as a faulty proposition of logic." What does Laura Fraser's affair with Paul Hinkel highlight about the evolution of the modern relationship?
- Consider Laura in comparison to Hester. Discuss the similarities and differences between the two women.
- Consider the following quote: "When Freda pointed out these defences, Ravi had thought how easily circuits are disabled and men frightened or bribed. But he said nothing. Precautions soothed her and left him unconcerned." Is security an illusion?
- Discuss 'RealLanka', Ramsay and other events in the book in relation to the constant search for an 'authentic experience' in tourism.

- Consider Laura's comment to Robyn Orr: "Have you noticed, the only word you never hear around this place is "tourism"? Because tourism's about dollars, no argument. But "travel" lets you pretend. Travel has an aura. "What are your thoughts on 'tourism' against 'travel'? Is there a difference?"
- How does Ramsay represent the modern working environment?
- Discuss Ravi's relationship with the women in his life; his sisters, mother, wife, Freda and Laura.
- "Details weren't essential to truth, only to persuasive stories. Do you agree?"
- What is the significance of Ravi's 'mystery tours'?
- The rise of the World Wide Web is significant to both Laura and Ravi. Discuss how.

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