



The Dry

By Jane Harper

First published in 2016

Genre & subject

Detective and mystery fiction

Australian fiction

Secrecy

Best friends

Synopsis

Federal Agent Aaron Falk hasn't been back to the place where he grew up in twenty years. Not since he and his father were run out of town. Even when Falk gets word that his childhood best friend, Luke, is dead, his entire family murdered, Falk still isn't planning on going back. But then he gets a note: "Luke lied. You lied. Be at the funeral." And just like that, Falk is swept back into the secrets of the place and people he left so long ago. Amid the worst drought in a century, long-buried mysteries will resurface. And Falk will discover anew what he's known all along, sometimes you have to go back home in order to finally leave your past behind.

Author biography

Born in Manchester in the UK, Harper moved to Australia with her family when she was eight. There, she lived in Boronia, Victoria, and eventually acquired Australian citizenship. As a teen, Harper returned to the UK with her family and resided in Hampshire. Later, she attended the University of Kent and studied English. After spending time working on her career, she moved back to Australia.

After graduating with an entry level journalism qualification, she got her first job at the Darlington & Stockton Times as a trainee in County Durham. Later in her journalism career, she earned the title as a senior news journalist for the Hull Daily Mail. In 2011, she became a journalist for the Herald Sun. Harper worked as a print journalist for 13 years before writing her first novel, *The Dry*, which was published in 2016.

In 2014, Big Issue published one of Harper's short stories. Soon after, in the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards in 2015, Harper won an award for an unpublished manuscript (*The Dry*). In 2017, Harper won the Gold ABIA for Book of the Year for *The Dry*,^[15] and the Gold Dagger awarded by the Crime Writers' Association of the United Kingdom for the best crime novel of the year. Harper became a New York Times bestselling author for *The Dry*. Reese Witherspoon bought the rights to *The Dry* in order to turn it into a movie.

Discussion starters

- This book is written in present with short vignettes of the past sprinkled in. Was it well done? Was it effective? Did you like this style of writing? Why or why not?
- The novel begins with a prologue that describes flies being drawn to the scene of the murders. Why is this approach such a powerful way to introduce the events of the novel?
- How does the drought colour our impressions of Kiewarra, its residents, and the Australian bush throughout the novel?
- The Australian bush, the rock tree, and the Kiewarra River are the scenes of several major events in the novel. Why do you think Aaron is drawn to these places?
- Harper has said she is interested in communities where people have known each other—for better or for worse—their entire lives. How does this affect personal relationships? What are the positives and negatives of a small community?
- Why do you think everyone in town dislikes or is scared of Falk? He was never arrested for an event that was classified as a suicide. Why the animosity?
- Do you think that leaving town was the right way for Erik Falk to deal with the situation he and Aaron were facing? How did his father's doubts about him affect Aaron?
- Going back to Kiewarra made Falk reexamine his youth. Has that ever happened to you? Did you learn anything about yourself?
- When Falk sees the river is totally dry he has an extreme emotional reaction. Why do you think the river being dry was so upsetting to him?
- Was Luke a good guy? How would you classify him in relation to others?
- The investigation in *The Dry* revolved around Luke - until it didn't. What does that say about him, his family, friends, and the town? What does that say about Aaron Falk?
- Why do you think Gretchen is so reluctant to tell Falk who Lachie's real father is? Who do you think it is?
- Did you know or suspect who had killed the Hadlers before the story told you?
- The person who killed the Hadlers seemed to blame the Hadlers and didn't seem to be able to take responsibility for his/her actions. Why do you think that is? In what other ways did s/he seem to slough off accountability?
- Did you know or suspect what happened to Ellie before it was explained?
- Do you think there will ever be justice for Ellie?

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