



The watch tower

By Elizabeth Harrower

First published in 1966

Genre & subject

Psychological suspense fiction

Sisters - fiction

Australian fiction

Classical fiction

Synopsis

Breaking their poses like trees snapping branches, the women urgently regarded each other, cleared away all signs of work in an instant, examined their souls for defects, in a sense crossed themselves, and waited." After Laura and Clare are abandoned by their mother, Felix is there to help, even to marry Laura if she will have him. Little by little the two sisters grow complicit with his obsessions, his cruelty, his need to control. Set in the leafy northern suburbs of Sydney during the 1940s, *The Watch Tower* is a novel of relentless and acute psychological power.

Author biography

Elizabeth Harrower was born in 1928 in Sydney, Australia. She is an Australian novelist and short story writer.

She was born in Sydney but spent her childhood in industrial Newcastle, New South Wales. She lived in London from 1951 to 1959. On her return to Sydney she worked as a reviewer for The Sydney Morning Herald, for the ABC, and in publishing.

Discussion starters (general, not title specific)

- How did you experience the book? Were you engaged immediately, or did it take you a while to "get into it"? How did you feel reading it—amused, sad, disturbed, confused, bored...?
- Describe the main characters—personality traits, motivations, inner qualities.
- Do the main characters change by the end of the book? Do they grow or mature? Do they learn something about themselves and how the world works?
- Is the plot engaging—does the story interest you? Is this a plot-driven book: a fast-paced page-turner? Or does the story unfold slowly with a focus on character development? Were you surprised by the plot's complications? Or did you find it predictable, even formulaic?
- Talk about the book's structure. Is it a continuous story...or interlocking short stories? Does the time-line move forward chronologically...or back and forth between past and present? Does the author use a single viewpoint or shifting viewpoints?

- What main ideas—themes—does the author explore? (Consider the title, often a clue to a theme.) Does the author use symbols to reinforce the main ideas?
- What passages strike you as insightful, even profound? Perhaps a bit of dialog that's funny or poignant or that encapsulates a character? Maybe there's a particular comment that states the book's thematic concerns?
- Is the ending satisfying? If so, why? If not, why not...and how would you change it?
- Has this novel changed you—broadened your perspective? Have you learned something new or been exposed to different ideas about people or a certain part of the world?

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