



Wake in Fright

By Kenneth Cook

First published in 1961

Genre & subject

Horror

Australian fiction

Synopsis

Wake in Fright tells the tale of John Grant's journey into an alcoholic, sexual and spiritual nightmare. It is the original and greatest outback horror story. Bundanyabba and its citizens will haunt you forever.

Author biography

Kenneth Cook was born in Sydney. *Wake in Fright*, which drew on his time as a journalist in Broken Hill, was first published in 1961 when Cook was thirty-two. It was published in England and America, translated into several languages, and a prescribed text in schools. Cook wrote twenty-one books in a variety of genres, and was well known in film circles as a scriptwriter and independent film-maker. He died in 1987 at the age of fifty-seven.

Discussion starters

- 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?
- What did you think of John Grant?—personality traits, motivations, inner qualities.
 - Are his actions justified?
 - How has the past shaped him?
- How does Grant change by the end of the book? Does he learn something about himself and how the world works?
- What main ideas—themes—does the Cook explore? Does he 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?

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