

The Dry Discussion Questions

by Jane Harper

Author Bio: (from Fantastic Fiction & Jane Harper website)

Jane Harper was born in Manchester in the UK, and moved to Australia with her family at age eight. Jane Harper has worked as a print journalist both in Australia and the UK. Jane lives in St Kilda with her husband.



In 2014, Jane submitted a short story which was chosen for the Big Issue's annual Fiction Edition. That inspired her to pursue creative writing, and she was accepted to the Curtis Brown Creative 12-week novel writing course where she wrote **The Dry**.

Characters:

- **Kiewarra, Australia** – Farming community. Located in the Outback. 6 hours from Melbourne. Currently in the midst of a drought.
- **Aaron Falk** – Federal police officer in the Financial Intelligence Unit. Grew up in Kiewarra. His father, Erik, died a few years ago from cancer. The people in Kiewarra have hard feelings about him and his father due to Ellie Deacon's apparent suicide.
- **Luke Hadler** – Farmer in Kiewarra. Friend of Aaron Falk when they were children and teens. Has a wife, Karen, son Billy, and 13 month old daughter, Charlotte. Luke, Karen, and Billy are killed in an apparent murder-suicide.
- **Barnes** – Constable – Temporary transfer from Melbourne.
- **Ellie Deacon** – Childhood and teenage friend of Luke and Aaron. Drowned at age 16; apparent suicide. Her father is Mal Deacon and her cousin is Grant Dow.
- **Mal Deacon** – Farmer in Kiewarra. Ellie's father. Neighbor of Luke's. Currently is having mental issues.
- **Grant Dow** – Ellie Deacon's cousin. Laborer. Boorish loudmouth. Lives with Mal Deacon.
- **Gerry Hadler** – Luke's father. Asks Aaron to take a look into Luke, Karen, and Billy's deaths.
- **Dr. Patrick Leigh** – Doctor (GP) in Kiewarra.
- **David McMurdo** – Barman in Kiewarra. Aaron Falk is renting a room above the bar.
- **Sergeant Raco** – Head police officer in Kiewarra. Recently moved to Kiewarra. Has a pregnant wife, Rita.
- **Gretchen Schoner** – Teenage friend of Luke and Aaron. Is a sheep farmer and is on the Board of Education for Kiewarra. Single mother. Has a son, Lachie.
- **James Sullivan** – Friend and neighbor of Luke's. Saw Luke on the day of the murders when he helped James cull rabbits. Takes care of his senile Gran.
- **Scott Whitlam** – Principal of the Kiewarra Elementary School. Karen Hadler did accounting part-time for the school. Married to Sandra and has a daughter, Danielle.

Discussion Questions:

1. Did you like the book? Why or why not?
2. 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?
3. Did you like the pacing of this book? Too fast, too slow, or just right?
4. 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?
5. Aside from town names, did the fact that this story took place in Australia have any impact on the plot? If yes, how?
6. How does the drought color our impressions of Kiewarra, its residents, and the Australian bush throughout the novel?
7. 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? What does the contrast between the wild places in the novel and those tamed by human habitation show us?
8. 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?
9. 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?
10. 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?
11. Going back to Kiewarra made Falk reexamine his youth. Has that ever happened to you? Did you learn anything about yourself?
12. 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?
13. Was Luke a good guy? How would you classify him in relation to others?
14. 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?
15. Why do you think Gretchen is so reluctant to tell Falk who Lachie's real father is? Who do you think it is?
16. Did you know or suspect who had killed the Hadlers before the story told you?
17. 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?
18. Did you know or suspect what happened to Ellie before it was explained?
19. Do you think there will ever be justice for Ellie?
20. Harper has written one other book - **Force of Nature**. Will you read it?

References:

- Book Browse – https://www.bookbrowse.com/reading_guides/detail/index.cfm/book_number/3516/the-dry
- Fantastic Fiction – <https://www.fantasticfiction.com/h/jane-harper/>
- Girly Book Club – <https://girlybookclub.com/discussion-questions-the-dry-by-jane-harper/>
- Jane Harper -- <http://janeharper.com.au>
- Modern Mrs. Darcy – <https://members.modernmrsdarcy.com/the-dry-discussion-questions/>
- Novelist – <http://web.a.ebscohost.com/novp/detail?vid=2&sid=208b21c6-277c-4d9a-99d6-4d790937431c%40sessionmgr4007&bdata=JnNpdGU9bm92cC1saXZl#U=10513222&db=neh>
- Pan MacMillian Book Club – <https://de3d63255e2ed87306a1-58ee2046ea610b14668745360eaa8ac0.ssl.cf2.rackcdn.com/reading-guides/9781743548059-notes.pdf>

Jane Harper Books

Aaron Falk

1. The Dry (2016)
2. Force of Nature (2017)

Stand Alone Novel

- The Lost Man (2019)

If you liked The Dry, try...

- Bitter Wash Road – Garry Disher
- That Empty Feeling – Peter Corris
- Crucifixion Creek – Barry Maitland
- Bones of Contention – Jeanne Matthews
- Toe Tag Quintet – Matthew Condon