

The Lost Man 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 2017-2018, Harper's debut book "The Dry" won both the Dagger Award for Best Book and the Barry Award for Best First Novel.

Characters:

- **Nathan Bright** – (42) – Rancher in Australian Outback. Oldest son in the Bright family. Ex-wife, Jacqui and son, Xander. Received plot of land next-door to Bright station through marriage. Shunned by the community for an incident with his ex-father-in-law.
- **Cameron Bright** – (40) – Rancher. Middle son in the Bright family. Personable. Found dead of dehydration by Stockman's Grave. Has wife, Ilsa, and 2 daughters, Lo and Sophie. Manager and majority owner of the Bright family station, Burley Downs. Amateur painter. Won an award for his painting of the Stockman's grave.
- **Harry Bledsoe** – Family friend/employee. Has worked the ranch since the Bright boys were little.
- **Carl Bright** – Nathan, Cameron, and Bub's father. Wife, Liz. Died ~20 years previous in a car accident. Abusive parent and spouse.
- **Ilsa Bright** – Cameron's wife. Came to area a backpacker. Dutch origin. Has 2 daughters, Lo (5) and Sophie (8). Housewife.
- **Lee "Bub" Bright** – (30) – Youngest son in the Bright family. A little slower than Nathan and Cameron. Wants to be a dingo/roo hunter. Lives on the Bright family station.
- **Liz Bright** – Nathan's mother. Loves riding horses. Was in same car accident that killed Nathan's father.
- **Lois "Lo" Bright** – Cameron and Ilsa's 5-year-old daughter. Likes to paint.
- **Sophie Bright** – Cameron and Ilsa's 8-year-old daughter. Loves horses and playing the guitar. Has a broken arm.
- **Xander Bright** – (16) – Nathan's son. Lives in Brisbane with his mom. Visiting his father for Christmas.
- **Steve Fitzgerald** – (50s) – Area's nurse. Staffs the 1-man med clinic in Balamara.
- **Katy** – Beautiful backpacker working for the Bright family as a teacher and house helper.
- **Sergeant Glen McKenna** – Area's only police officer.
- **Jenna Moore** – Female English backpacker from Cameron's past who said that their drunken sexual encounter was forced.

- **Keith Walker** – Nathan’s ex-father-in-law. One of the country’s biggest landowners. Hated Nathan. Gave Nathan useless land as a wedding gift. 10 years ago, he had a stroke while Nathan was driving by and blamed Nathan for not stopping to help.
- **Simon** – Backpacker working the Bright family station.

Australian = American Terms & other Info:

- Station = Ranch
- 45°C = 113°F
- Balamara has ~65 locals and 100,000 cattle
 - Next door neighbor/nearest station is about 3 hours away
- School of Air = Remote education
 - Before the Internet, classes were done through the radio.
 - After the Internet, classes are done online.

Discussion Questions:

1. Did you like the book? Why or why not?
2. Who was “The Lost Man”?
3. Did you like the pacing of this book? Too fast, too slow, or just right?
4. Life in the Australian Outback can be pretty harsh – drought, dangerous animals, floods, isolation, fire, etc. Did you learn anything new about Australia from this book? What? Would you want to live in the Outback?
5. Sheer distance and isolation impacts the way crimes are responded to and investigated in the Outback. What effect did the lack of police and medical support have on the outcomes for Cameron Bright? Jenna Moore? The Bright children/family, in general?
6. Nathan, Cameron and Bub all suffered from their father's domestic violence, but they have dealt with that abuse in very different ways. What effect has that abuse had on each of the brothers? What are some of their different coping mechanisms? Which of them do you think has been the most successful at dealing with this traumatic childhood, and why?
7. Nathan was basically shunned for the crime of not stopping for Keith, his ex-father-in-law, when he was on the side of the road. Why did the community do that? Was the punishment worth the crime?
8. Nathan said that isolation is easier if you remain all alone all the time and that brief moments of interaction can make imposed isolation harder. What do you think of that?
9. Why do you think Cameron would not give Bub part of his inheritance so that Bub could leave and become a roo/dingo shooter like he wanted?
10. Nathan lets his gun license expire. This causes his family great distress. Why are they so concerned? When Nathan had a gun license, the area nurse and police sergeant were uneasy about it. Why? Who was right/wrong?

11. In spite of the family's persistently low expectations of Bub, he is the most perceptive about Cameron. In what other ways is Bub underestimated in the novel? How do you think the insistence of the other characters to refer to him by his childhood nickname might have affected him as he grew up?
12. Bub says that they are the way they are because they are “a family of arseholes” (p 244). Do you believe that people reflect how they are raised or that they can change?
13. Did your feelings for Cameron change throughout the book? If so, why and how?
14. In spite of the influence Cameron had on those around him, all the characters in the novel benefit in some way from his death. In what ways are they now better off? Do you think this justifies Cameron's death in any way?
15. 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?
16. What purpose did all the different iterations of the Stockman's Grave tale have to the plot of the book?
17. Who was the villain of the book? Why?
18. What do you think about Nathan's decision not to tell anyone what he has discovered?
19. Did everyone “get what they deserved” by the end of the book? Was the ending satisfactory?
20. Harper has written a couple of other books. Will you read them?

References:

- Book Browse – https://www.bookbrowse.com/reading_guides/detail/index.cfm/book_number/3873/the-lost-man
- Fantastic Fiction – <https://www.fantasticfiction.com/h/jane-harper/>
- Jane Harper – <http://janeharper.com.au>
- Library Ladies – <https://thelibraryladies.com/2019/02/07/kates-review-the-lost-man/>
- Novelist – <http://web.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.clevnet.org/novp/detail?vid=2&sid=7fb06c66-a8b9-49ef-992c-628f8d8bf8fc%40pdc-v-sessmgr02&bdata=JnNpdGU9bm92cC1saXZl#UI=10693502&db=neh>

Jane Harper Books

Aaron Falk

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

Stand Alone Novel

- The Lost Man (2019)
- The Survivors (2021)

If you liked The Lost Man, try...

- The Dry – Jane Harper
 - The Flicker of Old Dreams – Susan Henderson
 - Descent – Tim Johnston
 - The Burgess Boys – Elizabeth Strout
 - The Shepherd's Hut – Tim Winton
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