

WRITING__WA. LOVE TO --- READ LOCAL

Hive, A.J. Betts (Pan Australia)

Summary

Prologue: All I can tell you is what I remember, in the words that I have. I'm here because of a drip. A drip I wasn't supposed to find. They thought, back then, I'd gone looking for a rogue bee. The truth is, I'm here because of the madness.

Hive is the first in a thrilling two-book dystopian YA series told from the perspective of Hayley, a 15-year-old beekeeper whose curiosity about her narrow, confined world leads her to uncover dangerous secrets and lies. The novel depicts a society that lives - architecturally and socially - like bees in a hive. It is a contained world of three hundred people with fixed roles - like beekeeper, gardener, engineer and seeder. All is well in this controlled socialist society until Hayley begins to ask questions.

About the author

A.J. Betts is an Australian author, speaker, teacher and cyclist. She has a PhD on the topic of wonder, in life and in fiction. She has written three novels for young adults. Her third novel, *Zac & Mia*, won the 2012 Text Prize, the 2014 SCBWI Crystal Kite Award, and the 2014 Ethel Turner Prize for Young People's Literature at the New South Wales Premier's Literary Awards, and was shortlisted for the 2014 Queensland Literary Award. A.J. is originally from Queensland but has lived in Perth since 2004.

Questions for discussion

- *Hive* has been described as a dystopian novel. Dystopia, which is the direct opposite of utopia, is a term used to describe a utopian society in which things have gone wrong. Would you agree that that there may be a fine line between the two and that a dystopian world may still be regarded

as utopian by its inhabitants? Would you like to live in such a society?

- Hayley's world with its hexagonal houses is like a beehive. How do the designated roles of Hayley's fellow residents resemble the roles of bees in the organisation of a hive?
- Once Hayley discovers the drip and begins to question what is real she is presented with the alternative of simply forgetting. Do you regard this as a viable solution to problems? Did you find it easy to believe that most of the inhabitants would not question what is on the other side of the walls and can you suggest why this might be the case?
- "God works in mysterious ways" - what is the significance of this phrase? How important is a belief in "God" to the success of a communal society?
- Whilst the prologue of *Hive* is peppered with questions, many of which are answered as the story develops, what main question would you still like to ask or do you hope will be answered in the next volume, *Rogue*?
- Reading is not a skill which appears to have been passed on through the generations in *Hive's* society. What might be the reason for this?
- The children in Hayley's world are separated from their mothers early and do not know them. How do you think this might impact on their development?
- Compare and contrast the characters of Will and Luka, the two significant male protagonists in Hayley's story.
- Consider the character of Celia, Hayley's best friend. How does their relationship develop? Did your opinion of Celia change as the story progressed?
- How important is the cover design for a book such as *Hive* which spans both YA and adult genres?

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