



Book Club Book of the Month February 2020

***Red Can Origami*, Madelaine Dickie (Fremantle Press)**

Summary

When young Melbourne journalist Ava lands herself a job in the northwest town of Gubinge, she is warned the “country will eat you alive”. Instead, she finds “it’s got you captivated”. After discovering Japanese company Gerro Blue is seeking to mine uranium on sacred Burrika country, Ava accepts a role as its Aboriginal Liaison Officer, in the hope of helping the community from the inside. Readers are drawn into a world simmering with tension amid the differing perspectives of the Gubinge residents, local Burrika people and the mining company. Will Ava’s good intentions enable her to advocate successfully, or will she simply lose everything she has come to love? And is the mine a chance to lift the community out of poverty, or will it tear it apart?

About the author

Madelaine Dickie’s first novel, *Troppo*, was published by Fremantle Press in 2016 after winning the City of Fremantle T.A.G. Hungerford Award. It was also shortlisted for the Dobbie Literary Award and Barbara Jefferis Award. *Red Can Origami* is her second novel. It was written on Balangarra country, in the Kimberley region of Western Australia, and at Youkobo Art Space in Tokyo, Japan. Madelaine loves to travel, speaks Indonesian, and is studying Spanish. She currently lives in Exmouth, WA.

Questions for discussion

1. How would you describe Ava at the beginning of the novel? In what ways does she change over the course of the story?
2. How is Ava viewed by the local Burrika people when she first arrives in Gubinge?
3. What is the impact of using the second person point-of-view ('you') on the reader?
4. How did you feel about Ava's decision to accept a job with the Japanese mining company?
5. Which characters do you have empathy for and why?
6. Describe The White Namibian (DeBeer) and Watanabe. How are we positioned to view them?
7. What is the symbolism of the locked gate and the significance of who does and does not have a key?
8. How much power or agency do Noah and the rest of the Burrika people have over the decision to mine uranium on their country?
9. "... country changes, especially with something as drastic as an open-cut uranium mine". In what ways does the country change between the beginning and end of the novel?
10. Was the ending of the novel inevitable or could a different chain of choices and decisions have unfolded? If so, what might they have been?
11. What understanding does *Red Can Origami* offer about the Burrika people, their connection to country and the impact of mining on their land?
12. In an interview, Madelaine Dickie says that *Red Can Origami* is the "culmination of about six years" of living in the Kimberley and adds that "as a writer I tend to work with what I have around me, so that is why I guess I drew my inspiration from the country in the Kimberley." What details about the landscape show Dickie's familiarity and knowledge of the Kimberley?
13. What did you learn about native title and the power to negotiate with mining companies by reading *Red Can Origami*?

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Tropo, Madelaine Dickie, Fremantle Press

Love Song, Sasha Wasley, Penguin

Shadow Lines, Stephen Kinnane, Fremantle Press

A Stolen Life: The Bruce Trevor Case, Antonio Buti, Fremantle Press

Simply Ing, Helen Nellie as told to Margaret O'Brien, Magabala Books