



Book Club Book of the Month: November 2020

***Skyglow*, Leslie Thiele (Margaret River Press)**

Summary

From the miraculous to the mechanical, *Skyglow* delves into the complexities of mundane life to discover truth and balance within it. Thiele's collection of stories contains an eclectic mix of characters including a rodeo ringer who is unaware of the havoc he wreaks wherever he goes, a woman adjusting to life in a new environment, a man washed up on a South West beach, a family on a cattle station, a neglected young girl who hears a voice calling her name, an ex-drug addict trying to make amends and a war veteran fulfilling his mate's final wishes. From rural fields to crashing coastlines, Leslie Thiele's vivid imagery evokes the beauty and variety of the West Australian landscape. As each story unfolds, Thiele explores past, present, and future worlds to reveal societal flaws, the meaning behind human relationships, and what it means to belong.

About the author

After a nomadic childhood, Leslie Thiele spent twenty-five years living on a cattle station in the Kimberley. She moved to the South West region of

Western Australia in 2012 and has recently completed her Bachelor of Arts in Creative Writing and Literature at Edith Cowan University's regional campus in Bunbury. Leslie's work has gained recognition in various writing competitions and her stories have been published in several anthologies. Her short fiction centres around social change and her characters' reactions to the world in which they live. Leslie drops people into imagined situations and environments and waits to see what they will do. *Skyglow* is her debut short story collection.

Questions for discussion

1. Which story had the strongest evocation of place for you? Explain why.
2. Which character or characters did you identify with most? Why?
3. Although each story in this collection is written by the same author, many of the narrators have distinct voices. What writing techniques has Thiele employed to differentiate between these voices?
4. What common threads did you find running through the collection?
5. Author Robyn Mundy states that *Skyglow* "grazes thwarted hopes, silent losses, the visceral skin of ordinary lives". Discuss this in relation to one or more of the stories you read.
6. In an interview on Margaret River Press's website, Thiele says that she is worried about "where we are headed socially and environmentally in our headlong rush for 'progress'". In what ways do the short stories 'Wilding' and 'The Slaughterman' explore these concerns?

(<https://margaretriverpress.com/2020/01/16/get-to-know-leslie-thiele/>)
7. How does Thiele combine historical research and the elements of narrative in 'Ashore' and 'Inshallah'?
8. Which ending surprised you the most? Why?

9. *SkygLow* opens with 'Light Pollution', a story about a woman who has moved from a rural landscape to an urban one. The collection concludes with 'The Medal', which centres on a veteran visiting the property of his dead army mate. What do each of these stories contribute to the exploration of home and belonging?
10. Which story would you most like to reread? Why?

If you liked this book, you may also like...

Well-Behaved Women, Emily Paull (Margaret River Press)

Smart Ovens for Lonely People, Elizabeth Tan (Brio Books)

In this Desert there were Seeds, edited by Elizabeth Tan and John Gresham (Margaret River Press and Ethos Publishing)

You Belong Here, Laurie Steed (Margaret River Press)

Feet to the Stars, Susan Midalia (UWA Publishing)

Arrhythmia: Stories of Desire, Richard Rossiter, (UWA Publishing)

Maar Bidi: Next Generation Black Writing, edited by Elfie Shiosaki and Linda Martin (Magabala Books)