

CROOKED VOWS

by John Watt

Book Club Notes



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Founded in 2010, Wild Dingo Press is a vibrant and essential force in the Australian publishing landscape being a vehicle for bringing a personal viewpoint on issues affecting our world.

The Press brings to light the stories of individuals quietly doing extraordinary things, be it exposure of corruption and systemic flaws or the experiences of the disenfranchised, disempowered and dispossessed.

Wild Dingo Press is committed to contributing a valuable and necessary perspective to the discussion of social, cultural and political matters by giving control over representation back to the people affected.

A Thematic Outline

Crooked Vows is an account of two entwined journeys of escape and survival. One is the central character's literal, physical journey to safety through a harsh and beautiful wilderness after surviving a plane crash. The other is an inner journey, as the same young man begins to find his way out of a narrow, inhibiting way of life, thought and feeling, and takes his first steps towards another sort of salvation. The story touches on the issue of sexual abuse of children in religious institutions, and particularly the Catholic Church.

Questions

- Did you find that the blending of literal and metaphorical survival stories worked convincingly for you?
- At intervals Thomas conjures up in his mind an image of a splendid medieval cathedral. What meaning did you take this image to have in the story?
- Chapter 12 is a high point of drama in Thomas' story. What do you think he should have done in the situation? Should he have felt guilt about what he actually did?
- At a certain point in Chapter 15 Thomas suddenly finds himself feeling sympathy for Father Kevin. Do you find this credible? Acceptable?
- Towards the end of Chapter 15, Father Kevin is brought to confront what he has supposedly believed. Do you find his response plausible in a clergyman? In a regular church-goer?
- At several points characters in the story express views that you might class as philosophical or 'spiritual', about such matters as the basis of morality and the meaning of life (e.g. Macpherson in chapter 14, and Thomas' late wife, in the final chapter). Did these strike you as authentic and 'natural' details in a fictional story about fictional characters, or as a didactic vein running through the book?

