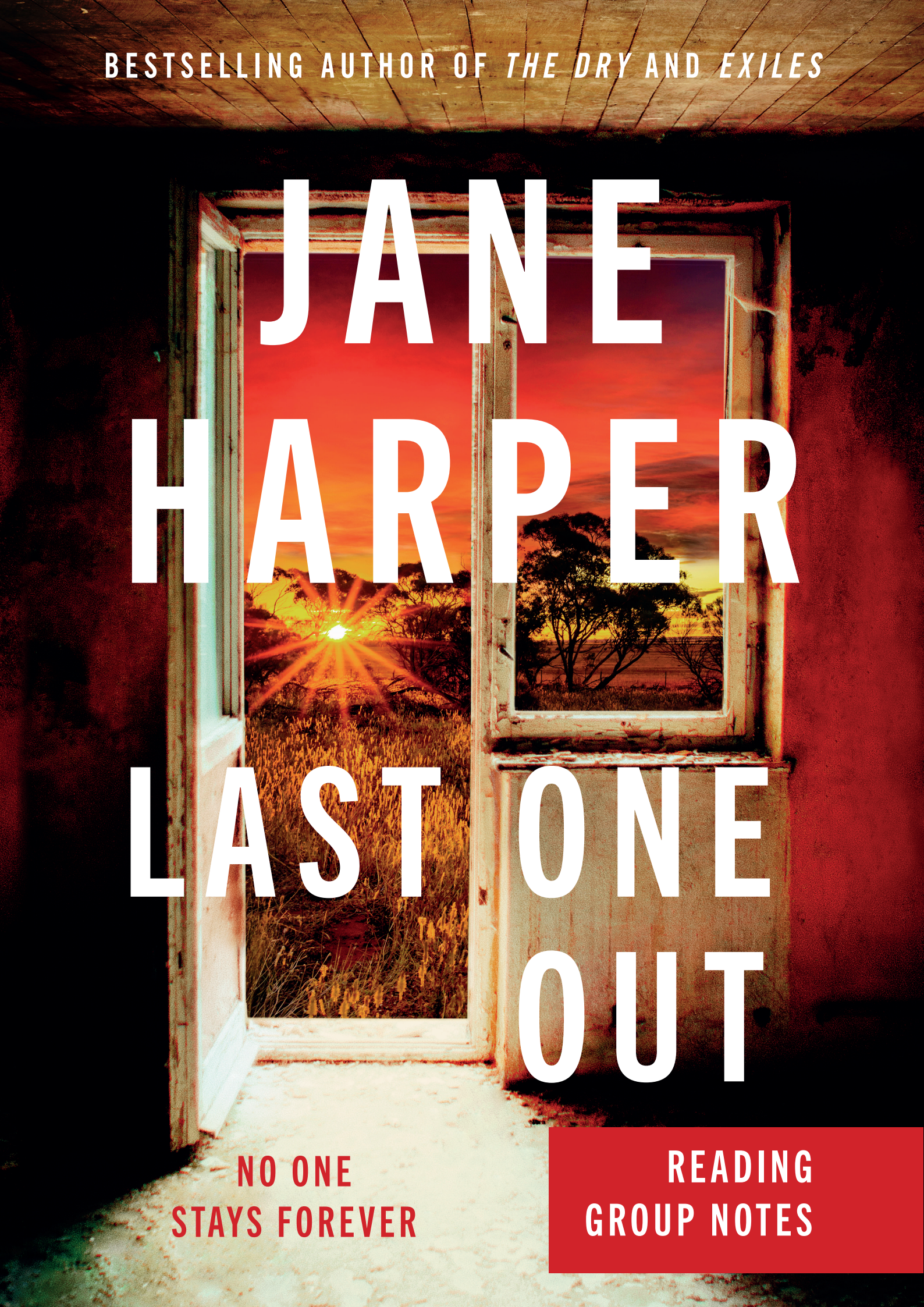


BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *THE DRY* AND *EXILES*



JANE HARPER LAST ONE OUT

NO ONE
STAYS FOREVER

READING
GROUP NOTES

Blurb

He had been here, that was clear from the marks in the dust. And he had been alone.

In a dying town, Ro Crowley waits for her son on the evening of his 21st birthday.

But Sam never comes home. His footprints in the dust of three abandoned houses offer the only clue to his final movements. One set in. One set out.

Five long years later, Ro returns to Carralon Ridge for the annual memorial of Sam's disappearance. The skeletal community is now an echo of itself, having fractured under the pressure of the coal mine operating on its outskirts.

But Ro still wants answers. Only a few people remain. If the truth is to be found in that town, does it lie among them?

About Jane Harper

Jane Harper is the author of the international bestsellers *The Dry*, *Force of Nature*, *The Lost Man*, *The Survivors* and *Exiles*. Her books are published in forty territories worldwide, and Jane has won numerous top awards including the Australian Book Industry Awards Book of the Year, the Australian Indie Awards Book of the Year, the CWA Gold Dagger Award for Best Crime Novel, and the British Book Awards Crime and Thriller Book of the Year. *The Dry* and *Force of Nature* have been adapted into major motion pictures starring Eric Bana, with *The Survivors* released as a Netflix series. Jane worked as a print journalist for thirteen years both in Australia and the UK, and now lives in Melbourne with her husband, two children, and two cats.

Discussion Questions

**** Please note, these questions contain spoilers ****

1. What is the significance of the title of this novel, *Last One Out*? What does it refer to?
2. The prologue of the novel comes to us from an omniscient viewpoint rather than a specific character's point of view, and sets the scene for the disappearance of Sam Crowley. What is the effect of this perspective on the story to come?
3. The three abandoned houses that we see in the prologue are a powerful visual introduction to the novel. How are they symbolic of the loss of a once thriving town and its population?
4. Loss is a major theme of this novel, and it is portrayed in several ways through the setting and many of the characters' lives. What are some of the experiences of loss explored in the novel? How are they handled by the characters? Can you think of any real-world examples that are similar? Discuss.
5. Discuss the dynamic between Ro, Della and Griff. How does their relationship contribute to the narrative? How does it appear to have changed since Sam was around?
6. Did you work out any of the circumstances around Sam's disappearance, and/or who committed the crimes in the novel? If so, what were the clues that led you to the killer/s?
7. Who else did you suspect of the crime along the way, and why?
8. Did you suspect that Warren's supposed suicide might also have been suspicious, and if so, what gave you this impression?
9. The mine that is encroaching on the town of Carralon Ridge is a constant presence in the novel. What are some of the ways it is described, and what is the effect of this on the novel? Discuss the ways the mine has contributed to the town's decline, and what effect this has had on the residents of Carralon Ridge.
10. It becomes apparent that Sam and his close childhood friends Darcy and Jacob had begun to drift apart over time. Why do you think this happened? Do you think their parents' views about the mine and the town had any influence on this? Discuss.
11. At one stage, Ro thinks, *Ties within this community were complex and deep, perhaps even more so than she'd realised herself* (page 255). How does the novel explore the ideas of community and belonging? What are the benefits of a tight-knit community, in your opinion, and what can be some of the drawbacks?
12. How does the setting of Carralon Ridge contribute to the overall mood of the story? How do the descriptions of the physical environment – including the dense surrounding bushland, the town's derelict dust-coated buildings, and its isolation – enhance the storytelling? Give some examples.
13. Heather and Noel's teenaged sons Kyle and Zach take out their boredom and frustration on the town itself, by destroying some of its abandoned places. How does this behaviour differ from the pranks Darcy, Jacob and Sam – and even the older generation including Warren, Damien and Griff – played on others in their youth, and why do you think this is?
14. How does the author's use of suspense and pacing affect the reader's experience? What are some of the ways the author achieves this?

15. Why do you think Ro continually returns to Sam's notebook and the footage gathered from the time of his disappearance? How is she hoping this will help in her search for the truth about what happened?
16. Towards the end of the book, Ro is surprised to find her old abandoned garden beds well tended, and the metal arch from her wedding relocated when she had thought it lost. How are these discoveries catalysts for change in Ro?
17. The idea of poor mental health playing a part in Warren's death and Sam's disappearance distracts both the authorities and the people of Carralon Ridge from the truth about what happened to the two men. Why do you think people were inclined to believe that mental health played a role in the deaths, even though neither man had showed obvious signs of poor mental health?
18. Jane Harper is well known for using her settings to create mood and atmosphere for her stories. How does she do this in *Last One Out*, and how does this compare to the settings in other Jane Harper novels you have read?
19. On page 131, Ro thinks to herself, *Time changes things*. It has been five years since Sam's disappearance. What is different about this year that finally allows the truth about what happened to Sam to come to light?
20. The final scenes of *Last One Out* are set in Ro and Griff's new home, in another small town, but this time one that is thriving and full of life. Do you get the sense things will be different for Ro and Griff now? If so, why?