



'A compelling, suspenseful
tale imbued with warmth,
humour and heart'

LIANE MORIARTY

HE WOULD NEVER

Five families

Fourteen years of friendship

One long weekend

Holly
Wainwright

READING GROUP NOTES

WELCOME TO GREEN RIVER.

Five families on an annual camping trip, a mothers' group of fourteen years, children starting to look like adults, a father with his own mysterious agenda ...

He Would Never is a searing page-turner about the bonds we forge in the furnace of early motherhood, the trust we place in other adults, and the chaos that erupts when one man refuses to play by the rules.

ABOUT HOLLY WAINWRIGHT

Holly Wainwright is a writer, editor and podcaster who lives on the south coast of New South Wales with her partner and their young family. She's an Executive Editor at women's media company Mamamia. *He Would Never* is her fifth novel.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The manuscript begins with a dramatic prologue from the perspective of Lachy Short. How does this introduction set the tone for the rest of the story, and how does the anticipation of Lachy's fate influence your reading experience?
2. In between flashbacks to the past, the events at Green River Campground in the present day catalyse the storyline. Discuss the role of this setting in unfolding the novel's main conflicts.
3. Discuss the dynamics between each of the members of the mothers' group. How do these relationships contribute to character development, especially for Liss, Dani and Sadie?
4. Page 189:
'Lachy, you need to stay out of other people's lives.'

'Why wouldn't you help the people you care about?' he asked, his mouth close to her ear. 'Or who your wife cares about? Sometimes people can't see what they actually need.' (Page 189.)

In what ways does Lachy Short try to insinuate himself into the other characters' lives? What is the effect of this?
5. There are several references in the novel, from various characters, to Sadie being 'mad', 'crazy', 'insane, completely nuts'. And yet Sadie is the only character who calls out Lachy Short's behaviour for what it really is. How does this gaslighting of Sadie – even by the other women – influence Sadie, her children, and her role in the story? What are the consequences for everyone?
6. More than the other characters, Liss shows a lack of interest in her appearance and the effects of ageing. Why do you think Liss in particular might care less about this than other women?
7. Analyse the presentation of masculinity through characters like Lachy and the contrast shown by the other men in the story, particularly Aiden. What insight does this provide into societal expectations of gender roles?
8. One theme that emerges in this novel is the exploration of community and isolation within the context of modern parenthood. How do the experiences of the characters reflect broader societal issues?

9. 'Some people,' [Lachy] said, slowly, as if yes, she was slow to understand, 'would try to twist the fact that I look out for you. Help you with a few things. Give you a bit of advice, make your life a bit easier. Some people would make a big stupid fuss about it. That's why we don't go on about it, right?' (Page 194.)

In what ways can you see Lachy grooming Lyra in this scene? What else does he do? Why do you think Lyra isn't always sure whether or not his behaviour is inappropriate?

10. We are also privy to fourteen-year-old Lyra and Tia's points of view at times. In what ways does the writing change to show us a teenager's perspective? Does the way the teens view their parents and their parents' actions affect how you see the adult characters, too? Discuss.
11. In what ways do secrets and discoveries act as catalysts for the plot in the narrative? Discuss the theme of truth versus perception and its impact on the characters' lives.
12. Explore the character of Liss through her interactions and reactions throughout the novel. How does her character evolve in response to the challenges she faces? How has her upbringing prepared her (or not) for the events that occur?
13. Several different marriages/partnerships are portrayed in this novel. What do you think it is that makes the successful ones work, and vice versa?

