



JASON
SUMMERS

RED LAKE

SECRETS RUN DEEP

READING GROUP NOTES

'A taut and compelling page-turner . . . I loved it!'

MARK SMITH, bestselling author

Blurb

Sergeant Harper Quinn has returned to her sleepy hometown of Koorinda in search of a quieter life. Until she learns that the town's once glittering waterpark is being reopened, on the shores of its famous Red Lake: the place her little brother vanished into thin air 30 years ago.

And then Harper receives a call: a body has been found at the park.

Once again, Harper finds her family at the centre of a shocking criminal investigation. This time, she is determined to find her own answers.

But when secrets run this deep, the truth can drag you under . . .

***Red Lake* is a thrilling and propulsive novel by the bestselling author of the Nick Vada series, Jason Summers.**

About Jason Summers

Jason Summers is the Australian author of the Nick Vada thriller series, known for its gripping plots, rich characters and vivid depictions of the Australian outback. Born and raised in Deniliquin, a rural town in New South Wales, Jason draws on his deep connection to the bush to bring authenticity and atmosphere to his writing.

When he's not crafting thrilling crime fiction, Jason works full-time as a construction manager, balancing the demands of building projects with his passion for storytelling. A father of three girls, they keep him on his toes just as much as his characters do.

Discussion Questions

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

- 1.** What is the significance of the title of this novel, *Red Lake*? What effect does the presence of this unusual lake have on your reading of the novel?
- 2.** The prologue of the novel comes to us from the past, and sets the context for everything that happens to protagonist Sergeant Harper Quinn thereafter. What is the effect of this chapter-out-of-time?
- 3.** When we first see it at the waterpark in late summer, the now murky brown water of the lake is a powerful visual introduction to the novel. In what ways could the colour of the water throughout the seasons be said to be symbolic?
- 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.** Domestic violence and its consequences deeply affect Camilla's life. How does Steve's increasing violence towards Kathleen and Camilla herself influence Camilla's attitude to her life in Koorinda and her plans for the future?
- 6.** Discuss the dynamic between Harper and her parents, Tony and Janelle. How does their relationship contribute to the narrative? How does it differ from Harper's relationship with her own family unit: husband Darren and son Will?
- 7.** Harper and Darren are convinced that their son Will must be innocent of the crime he is accused of. But were you? What elements of Will's story made you suspicious of him, and which made you think he was innocent?
- 8.** The pattern of young people moving away from small country towns but then occasionally returning when they're older is touched on several times in the novel. Why do you think this pattern is so entrenched?
- 9.** Camilla is horrified to discover that a lithium mine is mooted for her town, which will undoubtedly have detrimental environmental effects. But not everyone thinks that the jobs and other investment that will come with it are a bad idea. Discuss the dilemma faced by everyday people in small rural towns in the battle between economic growth and protecting the environment.
- 10.** It becomes apparent that many of the townsfolk of Koorinda know each other and have done across generations. 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?
- 11.** How does Jason Summers' use of suspense and pacing affect the reader's experience? What are some of the ways the author achieves this?
- 12.** The story is told through two main voices: Harper Quinn's and Camilla's. How does this structure carry pace and tension, and influence your enjoyment of the story?

- 13.** Why do you think Harper regularly returns to her file on Nick's disappearance, even though she knows it by heart? How is she hoping this will help in her search for the truth about what happened?
- 14.** Camilla believes she is misreading the signals men give her – for example, when Kyle asks her out to lunch and Mark Johnson puts his hand on hers. Ultimately, she realises she should have trusted her first instincts about this behaviour. What do you think this has to say about society's expectations of men and women?
- 15.** Did you work out any of the circumstances around Nick's disappearance, and/or who committed the crimes in the novel? If so, what were the clues that led you to the killer/s?
- 16.** Who else did you suspect of the crimes – both Nick's abduction and Camilla's murder – along the way, and why?
- 17.** Kyle Chalmers seems like a quiet, supportive, hardworking boss at first. Did you notice any signs that he was not quite what he seemed? If so, what were they, and why did they make you suspicious?
- 18.** Tony Quinn's sporting success and fame, combined with his gregariousness and charm, have made him popular and much loved and admired all his life. How and why do you think this helped him hide the truth about what happened to Nick? Why were people, including the police, more inclined to look elsewhere for answers?
- 19.** How does the setting of Koorinda contribute to the overall mood of the story? How do the descriptions of the physical environment – including the lake, the swimming spot, the main street, Mark Johnson's mega-mansion and the derelict waterpark – enhance the storytelling? Give some examples.
- 20.** What did you think of the final scene of the book, in which Harper finds Nick's last resting place out in the bush? What do you imagine will happen next?