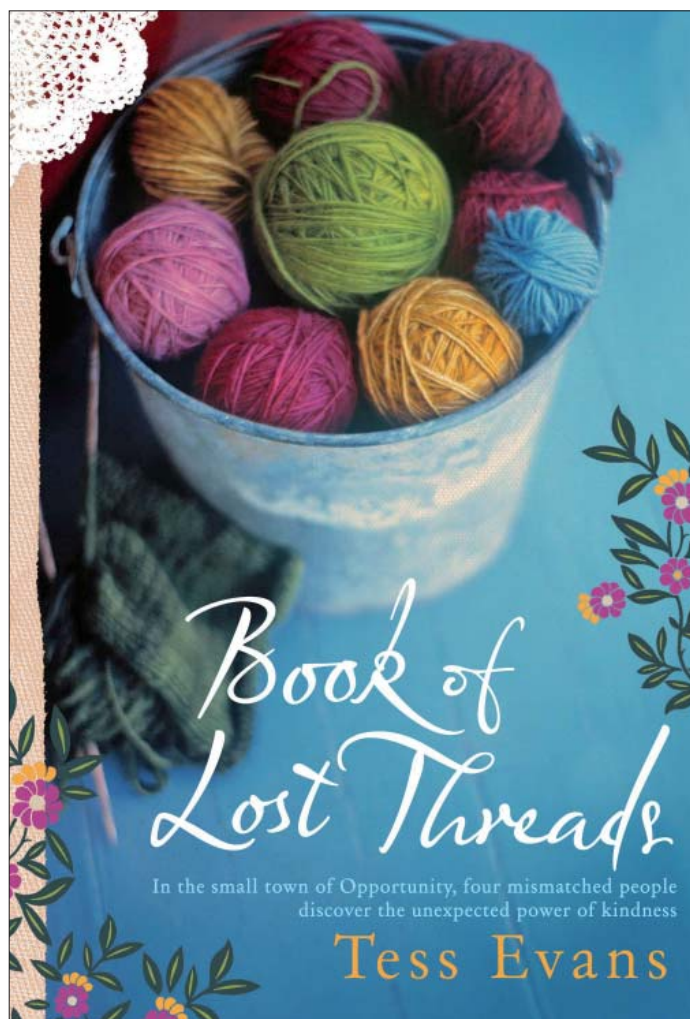


ALLEN & UNWIN



# READING GROUP NOTES

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## About the Book

In the small town of Opportunity, four mismatched people discover the unexpected power of kindness.

Tender, funny and memorable, *Book of Lost Threads* is a story about love and loss, parents and children, hope, faith and the value of simple kindness.

Moss has run away from Melbourne to Opportunity on the trail of a man she knows only by name. But her arrival sets in train events that disturb the long-held secrets of three of the town's inhabitants: Finn, a brilliant mathematician, who has become a recluse; Lily Pargetter, eighty-three-year-old knitter of tea cosies; and Sandy, the town buffoon, who dreams of a Great Galah.

It is only as Moss, Finn, Lily and Sandy develop unlikely friendships that they find a way to lay their sorrows to rest and knit together the threads that will restore them to life.

## About the Author

*Book of Lost Threads* is Tess Evans' first novel. She previously worked in the TAFE system. In her time at TAFE, she taught and counselled a wide range of people: youth at risk, migrants, indigenous trainees, apprentices, sole parents and unemployed workers of all ages and professions. Her experience with these people is clearly visible in her humane, compassionate writing. She is currently undertaking a Diploma of Professional Writing at NMIT.

### Author, Tess Evans, on writing *Book of Lost Threads*

I'm a bit of a bower bird. Somewhere in the back of my head, I hoard information. When I left my job and began to write seriously, these gleanings tumbled into conscious part of my brain, and began to transmute into short stories and poems.

*Book of Lost Threads* originated with a long-forgotten article discussing the right of sperm donors' children to know their fathers' identity. I wondered what it would be like if a child you had never known and never thought about, suddenly knocked on your door. So the novel began with a what if...? leading to the story of Moss and Finn.

As the Moss and Finn story developed, I introduced Mrs Pargetter and Sandy, feeling that Moss and Finn couldn't deal with their problems alone. They were at once, too close and too far apart. Soon, to my astonishment, the four became friends, treating each other with a kindness they denied themselves. I am asked where the idea of the tea-cosies came from. The answer is – I have no idea. That's what is so wonderful about writing a novel. No matter where you plan to go, there are always surprises.

## Reviews

There is genuine care, concern and love between the four main characters and when each of their problems comes to a head they all band together in support. And the story is lightened by humour.

Book of Lost Threads, while keeping a slow and considered pace, is always moving forward with a strong and intricate plot – it's a really enjoyable read.

- Melissa Wilson, Good Reading, June 2010

Debut author Tess Evans unwinds her yarn about how moss weaves her magical ways through a town riven with old baggage, healing wounds and bringing hope back onto the horizon once more. A charming read.

- Australian Women's Weekly, June 2010

## Discussion Questions

☞ Book of Lost Threads begins with a search for identity, and this is a theme that continues throughout the book – the importance of names. Names, and their meanings, change with the passage of time. Discuss the significance of names – of people and places – and their changes.

☞ Tess Evans says that the idea for Book of Lost Threads 'originated with a long-forgotten article discussing the right of sperm donors' children to know their fathers' identity'. What do you think about this issue? Do you think that Moss did the right thing by looking for her father?

☞ In her review for Bookseller & Publisher, Portia Lindsay says that this 'is the story of four lonely and confused individuals (Moss, Finn, Mrs Pargetter and Sandy) trying to come to terms with their pasts'. Discuss this statement.

☞ Is Mrs Pargetter just a deluded old lady, or does the author mean for us to believe that her baby's spirit is in Moss's room?

☞ Tragedy directs Moss towards a new understanding. How does tragedy direct other characters?

☞ The book addresses our need to forge connections in a world where families are torn apart and our sense of community is dying. Why do you think the story is set in a small country town? What is the significance of the town's name, Opportunity? Is it ironic?

☞ A theme of the book is the importance of kindness, to others and to one's self. Do you think it matters that the tea cosies were not used on teapots, or is it enough that they were made and distributed out of generosity?

☞ What is the significance of the novel's title, Book of Lost Threads? Why do you think Tess chose it?

☞ If you were acting Quartermaster, what would you do with a parcel of tea cosies?

## Suggested Reading

- Freeing Grace - Charity Norman
- David Copperfield – Charles Dickens
- Small Island – Andrea Levy
- The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time – Mark Haddon
- Good to a Fault – Marina Endicott
- Major Pettigrew’s Last Stand – Helen Simonson