

ALLEN & UNWIN



READING GROUP NOTES

Contents: About the book (2) About the author (2)
Reviews (2) Suggested points for discussion (2)
Further reading (3)

About the book

Angie loved Mr Fox's magnificent, absurd hotel. In fact, it was her one true great love. But ... today Angie was so cross, so fed up with everybody and everything, she would probably cheer if a wave of fire swept over the cliff and engulfed the Palace and all its guests.

A sweltering summer's day, January 1914: the charismatic and ruthless Adam Fox throws a lavish birthday party for his son and heir at his elegant clifftop hotel in the Blue Mountains. Everyone is invited except Angie, the girl from the cottage next door. The day will end in tragedy, a punishment for a family's secrets and lies.

In 2013, Fox's granddaughter Lisa, seeks the truth about the past. Who is this Angie her mother speaks of: 'the girl who broke all our hearts'? Why do locals call Fox's hotel the 'palace of tears'? Behind the grandeur and glamour of its famous guests and glittering parties, Lisa discovers a hidden history of passion and revenge, loyalty and love.

A grand piano burns in the night, a seance promises death or forgiveness, a fire rages in a snowstorm, a painter's final masterpiece inspires betrayal, a child is given away. With twist upon twist, this lush, strange mystery withholds its shocking truth to the very end.

About the author


Julian Leatherdale's first love was theatre. On graduation, he wrote lyrics for four satirical cabarets and a two-act musical. He discovered a passion for popular history as a staff writer, researcher and photo editor for Time-Life's *Australians At War* series. He later researched and co-wrote two Film Australia-ABC documentaries *Return to Sandakan* and *The Forgotten Force* and was an image researcher at the State Library of New South Wales. He was the public relations manager for a hotel school in the Blue Mountains, where he lives with his wife and two children. *Palace of Tears* is his first novel.

Reviews

"A tap-dancing debut novel, beautifully and lyrically written." - *Australian Women's Weekly*

"Melding history and fiction, *Palace of Tears* is an entertaining novel and an impressive debut from Julian Leatherdale." - Book'd Out

For discussion

 Julian Leatherdale has talked about his research of the opulent Hydro Majestic Hotel in Sydney's Blue Mountains as the inspiration for *The Palace*. 'But I soon realised that my family saga needed something else besides poetic landscape and atmosphere. It needed a building at its heart that would be the family's inheritance and keeper of all its memories.' (<https://bookdout.wordpress.com/2015/06/12/guest-feature-how-the-hydro-majestic-inspired-the-palace-of-tears-by-julian-leatherdale/>)

- ☞ Do you think the author has successfully grounded his novel using this building as its heart?
- ☞ Which characters did you feel were most successfully drawn in *Palace of Tears*? Which ones did you believe in the least? Why?
- ☞ *Palace of Tears* gives a broad variety of character qualities as the novel continues. For example, Adam Fox is presented as kind as well as ruthless, as a self-aggrandising fake as well as a modernist visionary, as a loving husband as well as a distant, aloof man. Did you find a satisfying cohesion to Fox's character?
- ☞ *Palace of Tears* traverses time and place in its complex structure throughout the gothic-style novel as the secrets unravel. What effect do you think this has on the story? Do you think it's effective?
- ☞ Leatherdale melds history and fiction in this novel, for example, Lisa and Luke are astonished to learn of German internment in Australia during WWII. What was your reaction, reading through their eyes? Did you discover this for the first time through *Palace of Tears*?
- ☞ This is a tale both of human strengths and remarkable follies. Discuss

Suggested further reading

The Secret Keeper - Kate Morton

Steady Running of the Hour - Justin Go

In Falling Snow - Mary-Rose MacColl

Half the World in Winter - Maggie Joel

The Iron Necklace - Giles Waterfield