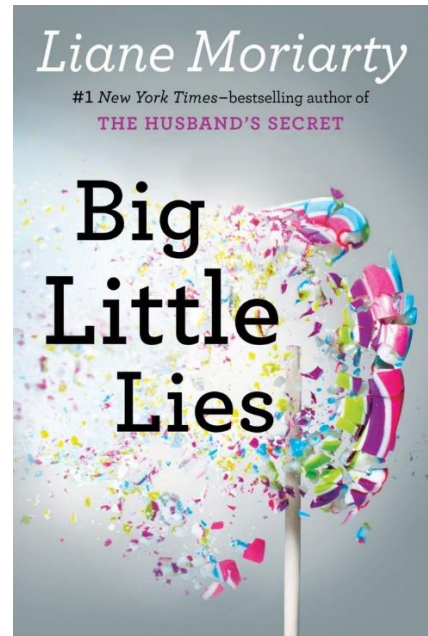


BIG LITTLE LIES

Liane Moriarty

This book generated a wide variety of opinion. It is a tale of a small-town community in a coastal area of Australia and centres around the local school, especially the kindergarten class, and has been made into a successful TV series. The themes of the story are friendship, family, loyalty with some disturbing issues of physical and mental abuse thrown in and is told mainly through the experiences of three women – Madeline, Celeste and Jane.

The reader knows from the beginning that there will be a murder on the school trivia night but intriguingly, there is no hint of who will be the victim. Before each chapter there is a “Greek chorus” of parents giving their opinions on the fateful school trivia night which draws the reader in and helps establish the identities and relationships of characters as the story unfolds.



The lives of the three women are explored in detail including their relationships with partners/husbands and children “behind closed doors” and is a snapshot of the “yummy mummy” stereotype and their behaviour which is often more like squabbling children than responsible adults. This is at times, very funny. It covers the friendships, rivalries, affairs, good and bad parenting and the “keeping up with the Jones” behaviour. In the midst of all this are the children who are all affected in some way by these interactions. It also successfully covers the issue of abuse, both domestic and “one-off” and the serious impact this has on the lives of the abused and abusers. This becomes more and more significant as the story progresses.

It was also reminiscent of J.K. Rowling’s book “The Casual Vacancy” which starts with a death of a good man whose demise opens the floodgates for the tearing apart of a community and a tragic ending. This book ends with the death of someone whose loss could be seen as beneficial to the community and allows the rather neat conclusion.

Some members’ comments:

“As a grandparent having already relived again those crucial years with my own daughters’ families the book is a very detailed, humorous and cliched account of middle-class yummy mummies”

“Some of the subject matter is disturbing but realistic. The children handle situations better and are more sensible than the adults”

“It makes you aware of the wider effects of words and actions within the many different scenarios being played out, like pebbles making ripples and waves and bumping into each other”

“I enjoyed this book. I liked the main female characters in particular, Madeline. She made me laugh out loud. The description of the behaviour and comments of her teenage daughter was hilarious.”

“The main female characters were very distinct and well-drawn. I could picture them though I have not seen the TV series. I found the depiction of domestic abuse very thought provoking.”

“I enjoyed this book immensely. Lianne Moriarty deftly combines a satirical swipe at playground politics with a thoughtful exploration of female friendship and violence against women.”

“I think I was put off from the start by the subject matter of this book, mostly about yuppy sounding mummies and daddies gossiping, criticising, bitching about each other and their primary school kiddies, clothes, behaviour etc.”

“I enjoyed this book on the whole. I thought the characters were well portrayed, as was the description of Celeste’s abusive relationship, Madeline’s problems with a teenage daughter who was trying to cope with split loyalties, and Jane’s problems coping as a single parent. But it was only the author’s clever withholding of the outcome on trivia night that kept me going. I found the build-up rather tedious and was most disappointed with the finale.”