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Cate Kennedy is an award-winning short-story writer whose work has been published widely. Her collection, *Dark Roots*, was shortlisted for the Steele Rudd Award in the Queensland Premier's Literary Awards.

book club notes

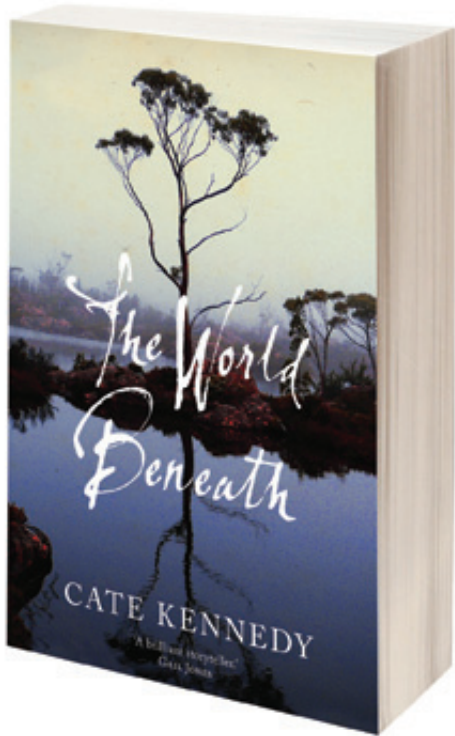
The World Beneath

CATE KENNEDY

1. Cate Kennedy takes time at the beginning of *The World Beneath* to introduce each character through their own limited perspectives of themselves and each other. What do you think was the author's intention in doing this? As the story progressed, did your feelings towards each character change?
2. What are some of the images Kennedy uses throughout the story to create the sense of being stuck — in the past, in a burnished nostalgia for it, in a certain mindset? Do these objects and memories feel familiar and plausible to you? What do they evoke for you?
3. How is humour employed in the book? Do you think the ability to laugh at yourself is a necessary antidote to high-mindedness or excessive earnestness? Can you see this capacity, or the potential for it, in Sandy?
4. How much of Sophie's behaviour and persona seem a direct reaction to her upbringing? How could you interpret her eating disorder or her attraction to a goth subculture, say, in this light?
5. At first Sophie is attracted to Rich because he seems cool and cynical compared to her credulous hippie mother. Why and when does disillusionment set in?
6. Consider the symbolism of the tree in Sandy's front yard. How does the author weave its presence and meaning, for Sandy, into the story?
7. Many reviewers have suggested that the wilderness itself becomes almost a character in the story. Do you think this is true? How does 'going off the map' correspond with what takes place emotionally between Rich and Sophie?



Australian Small Publisher of the Year 2006/2008



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8. Why do you think Kennedy introduces the point of view of Ian, the Search and Rescue officer? What does it force our perspective to encompass, as readers?
9. *The World Beneath* is threaded through with references to Greek mythology and the journey into 'the Underworld'. For readers not familiar with these myths, do you think these references still make the story 'resonate' in some way? Can the entire novel be read as a contemporary reimagining of a myth or even a kind of cautionary tale? If so, what themes is it asking us to consider, do you think?
10. Rich is a man who constantly berates himself for having 'missed his moment'. Can his final action be read as a testament to his grasping what's really important in life? What drives him to it, and what will it mean for his future, do you think?

'Cate Kennedy is a brilliant storyteller. She possesses the power to find in ordinary lives their poetic and mythic dimensions and to remind us that vernacular speech and everyday experiences betoken the tender mysteries that lie beneath family life.' — Gail Jones

'*The World Beneath* is a rare combination of a pacy, gripping plot with very real characters and spare, elegant writing. Beautifully observed, Kennedy's novel is painfully honest about the ways in which family members hurt — and heal — each other.' FOUR STARS — *Who Magazine*

For more information visit:

www.scribepublications.com.au/book/theworldbeneath