

Reading Group Notes

The Wakes

'Warm, funny,
profound'

SALLY HEPWORTH

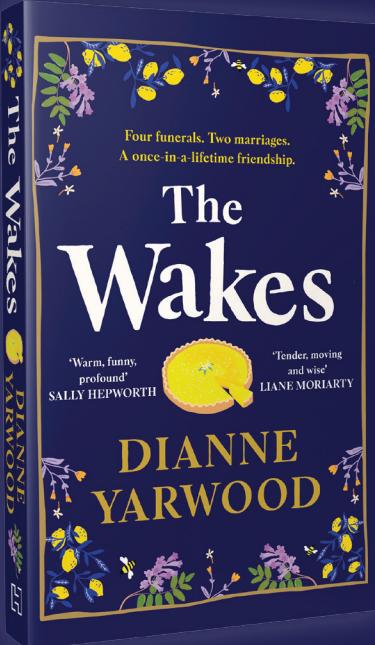
'Tender, moving
and wise'

LIANE MORIARTY



DIANNE YARWOOD

ABOUT THE BOOK



This is a story about Clare, Louisa and Chris. And sometimes Paul, and less often, Beth. It is most certainly not about frittatas (a terrible concession), and more to do with lemon tart (a perfect contrast of textures).

It is about what to do when your husband tells you that he doesn't love you anymore. And what to do when your wife leaves you after too many rounds of IVF. It's about helping your new friend with her funeral catering business, and discovering that, sometimes, the most unlikely of pairings are the very, very best. It is about food that is outrageously good and comforting to sad people. And, for once, not being sensible, and throwing away everything you know.

Catering, like life, doesn't always go according to plan, and as Clare, Louisa and Chris's stories become more intertwined, they will learn that life will always manage to break in to remind you of just how good it can be.

This is a book about living. After all, the thing about death is that it makes life important.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dianne Yarwood worked in accounting and corporate advisory in London and Sydney. She also nurtured a love for cooking and catering. At the age of forty, with three young children, she became very ill and her life was saved by an emergency doctor. This brush with mortality gave her the courage to do what she's always wanted to do – write. Dianne lives in Sydney with her husband. *The Wakes* is her first novel.



'So warm and poignant and sweetly funny. I loved it'

JACQUELINE MALEY

'Immensely human and warm and satisfying'

SHELLEY BURR

'I devoured it in two sittings.
The kind of book where you want to stay
in that world long after it's finished'

KAYTE NUNN

'Warm and profound. I can't wait for everyone to read it'

SALLY HEPWORTH

'I fell head over heels in love with *The Wakes* – a truly beautiful, wise and funny novel about love, friendship and the perfection of a good morning bun'

HANNAH BECKERMAN

'A truly exceptional novel . . . illuminates the breadth of the human experience through the eyes of a suite of perfectly imperfect characters. Rich with wisdom, love, humour and a sparkling joy – that unique kind of story that can make you sob and chuckle in the very same scene'

KELLY RIMMER

'Some books grab hold of you and won't let go until the last page – and far beyond that. *The Wakes* is just such a book'

SOPHIE GREEN

'A glorious book that will make you simultaneously want to eat Louisa and Clare's lemon tarts as well as forge a friendship like theirs. It reminded me that life is the most precious gift of all and every day is a treat meant to be enjoyed to its fullest!'

NATASHA LESTER

'A truly delightful debut novel. Funny, moving, tender and wise, I ate up every delicious word'

LIANE MORIARTY

'For readers of Liane Moriarty and Meg Mason. Will leave you with a renewed appreciation for life'

BOOKS+PUBLISHING

'A celebration of what it means to be alive, and the joy of finding friendship where you least expect it . . . explores the messiness of middle age with warmth, humanity and wry humour, as well as fiction's most delicious lemon tarts! I'd eat this book if I could'

JOANNA NELL



GENERAL

1. *The Wakes* explores some profound themes about life and death and yet it is also laugh-out-loud funny at times. Do you have a favourite humorous moment from the book?
2. *The Wakes* has been described as ‘bittersweet’. What is one bittersweet moment in this book that resonates with you?
3. Though the plot revolves around four funerals, this story is ultimately an uplifting one. How does this contrast reveal important messages about life?

WRITING STYLE

4. The narrative jumps between the points of view of different characters, in different timeframes. What purpose does this serve?
5. How do the voices of Clare, Louisa, Chris and Paul differ from each other in tone and in their perspectives on the events of the book? How are they similar?

KEY THEMES

THEME #1: RELATIONSHIPS

6. Unmet expectations cause this book’s characters to re-evaluate what they want in a romantic relationship. What are some of the core expectations you believe are essential to make a relationship (romantic or otherwise) fulfilling?
7. A key relationship that drives the story is that of Clare and Louisa, two unexpected friends. How does this blossoming friendship enable Clare to break free of expectations and her past life?
8. Paul is portrayed as a brash and at times obsessive man, unable to let go of an unrequited love. How do Paul’s personal struggles influence his relationships with Beth and his peers?

THEME #2: DEATH

9. In *The Wakes*, death is a catalyst for many characters to reflect upon their current lives. What does death reveal to Clare, Louise, Chris and Paul individually?
10. As a doctor, how does Chris’s experience of death differ from Clare’s as a pharmacy professional?
11. Deaths of characters outside the main ensemble happen frequently in this book. How do these deaths highlight the life choices, actions or inactions of the main characters in *The Wakes*? Below is one example of a stranger, whom Chris is unable to save at the hospital

‘She’d told [her husband] she was too independent at heart, and couldn’t imagine herself living any other way. And let’s not be greedy, she’d told him when she decided on the directive. What a privilege to have what I’ve had already. I’m satisfied, I’m grateful.’ (p. 123)

THEME #3: CHANGE & LETTING GO OF THE PAST

12. Two marriages fall apart in this novel and each character undergoes messy life changes. Why do you think the characters’ lives have to fall apart before they can get better?
13. Clare is a pharmaceutical professional and decides to make a career change to catering. What shifts in Clare’s mind enable this career change to occur in a short amount of time?
14. Did you find the last scene of the novel satisfying? What would you imagine might be the next steps for Clare, Louisa and Chris?

