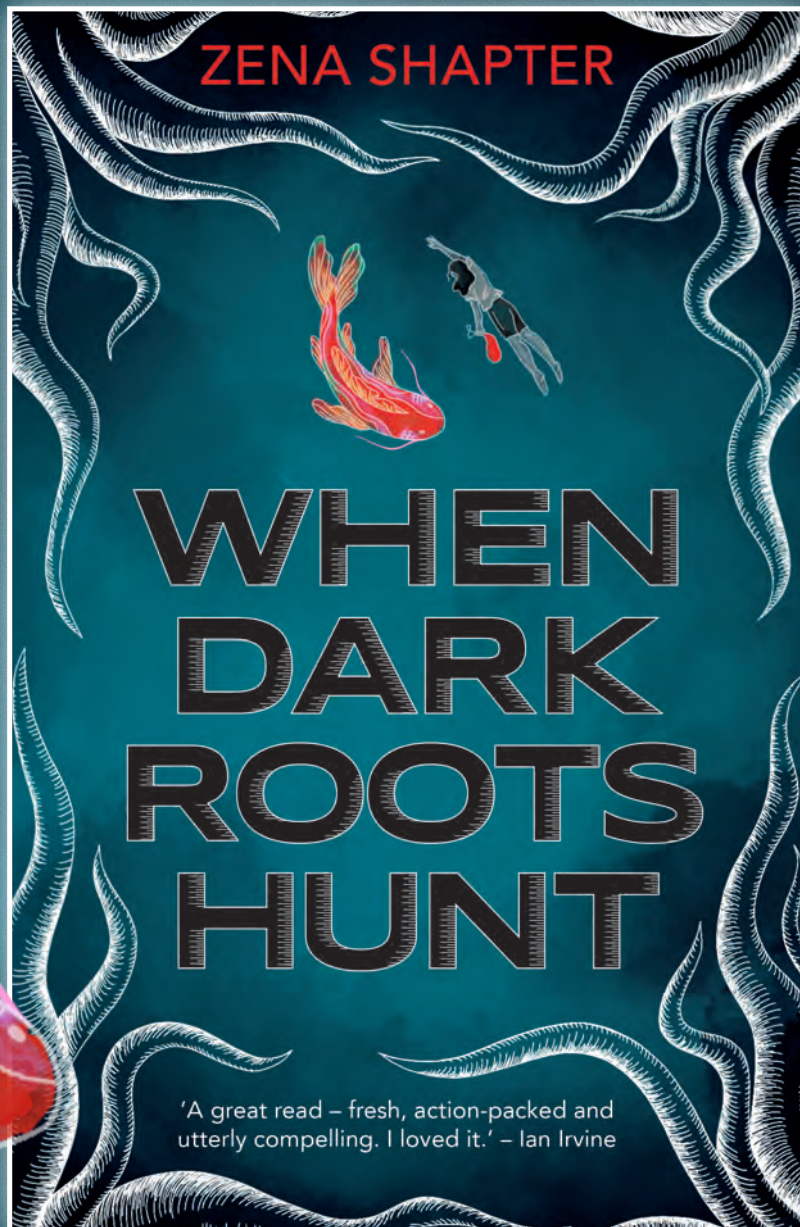


Book Club Notes



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WHEN DARK ROOTS HUNT

An exhilarating science fantasy adventure with belonging and becoming at its heart, *When Dark Roots Hunt* is an accessible read that will appeal to contemporary and speculative readers alike, adults and young adults, exploring topics such as family, friendship, technology, land scarcity, social responsibility and sustainability.

BLURB

Don't go out onto the lake. Wyann trees search the shallows to spear passing prey with their roots. Giant water-ants hunt anything that moves on the water-skin. Sala's village survives hidden behind a wall of poisonous ivy, because everyone agrees: don't go out onto the lake.

But then a strange comet crosses the night sky, throwing Sala and her pet pointer into a race through wyann-infested swampland that has her risking it all, unearthing long-hidden truths and stirring rivalries into a terrifying conflict set to change the world of Palude forever. Sala must do whatever it takes to face the truth of who she is: to save her village, to save her family, to save herself.

If only they had listened.

"When Dark Roots Hunt is a rich and thrilling read... Shapter has created an intriguing new world filled with luminous beauty, exotic dangers, and unsettlingly familiar ageing tech, where the heroine must navigate strange cultural and political tensions and wrestle with the consequences of her own tangled ambitions."

Leife Shallcross, author of *The Beast's Heart*

"Fresh, action-packed and utterly compelling. I loved it."

Ian Irvine, internationally bestselling author of *The Gates of Good and Evil* series

"Shapter has created an immersive, fantastical world with tension poised to snap at any moment. I couldn't put it down."

USA Today Bestselling Author Dionne Lister,
author of *The Circle of Talia*

"A completely captivating fantasy world, that is full of action with intriguing characters and a great story line. Sala is a complicated character who will have you screaming at her one minute and cheering her on the next... A perfect story for fantasy and sci-fi lovers." Lamont Books

"This book has broad appeal across age, gender, cultures and book genres, it's YA for AA, that stands for All Adults. When Dark Roots Hunt takes you to a fantastical intriguing world. To fully enjoy this book, suspend all judgment and immerse yourself in its luminosity and complexity. It's as though Game of Thrones met Alice in Wonderland in an underwater world."

Tawny Frogmouth Magazine

PRE-READING DISCUSSION:

Before reading *When Dark Roots Hunt*, ask your book club members the following questions and share your answers as a group:

1. How do you know when you truly belong somewhere?
2. What do you fear most about the future?
3. How do adult and teenage fears about the future differ?
4. If you had the definitive answer to Earth's sustainability issues, how far would you go to ensure that answer was heard, if not realised?
5. What do you like best and/or not like about speculative fiction worlds?

Speculative fiction is a broad term that refers to any story that departs from the real world in some way. It includes science fiction, fantasy, horror, alternate history, dystopian fiction, superhero and supernatural fiction, and any combination of these.

6. Which of these quotes do you identify with the most and why?

"Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come.
We have only today. Let us begin." Mother Theresa

"The future belongs to those who believe in the
beauty of their dreams." Eleanor Roosevelt

"If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot
stamping on a human face – forever." George Orwell, 1984



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. "I have a good idea, the only idea, and everything will be alright." (Chapter 1) – What do you think is more important to Sala: the long-term sustainability of milking the keei fish, or to have her ideas heard? Why do you think this is?
2. "Can't you just drink dag and kiss under the ivy like everyone else our age?" (Chapter 3) – Should Aten admire Sala's social responsibility? Why doesn't he?
3. "It's not my ideas they have a problem with – it's me." (Chapter 6) – Discuss five adjectives that you would use to describe Sala, then also discuss five adjectives that Sala would use to describe herself. What does a comparison of these lists tell us about the nature of identity and self-reflection?



4. "It wasn't black roots I saw earlier." (Chapter 8) – What do you think is the author's purpose in creating a world where humans are hunted by water-ants and wyann trees?

5. "Yet this store is left wide open and unlocked." (Chapter 11) – What does this tell us about swamper culture, and why does Sala want Aten to notice this?

6. "This is how family is supposed to make you feel. Light. Special. Safe." (Chapter 13) – In what ways do you agree and disagree with Sala's expectations of family?

7. "Their ancestors used to believe roots were possessed by angry relatives, intent on punishing them for being lazy and not being aware enough of their surroundings." (Chapter 15) – Rituals and beliefs about death can often tell us more about the living than the dead. When swampers kiss their fingertips before touching the memorial names carved into wyann trunks, what does this tell us about their culture?

8. "...the Sendalg also triggered its forming mode... accidentally released unfiltered cryogenic gas... maybe the archives and search results were all wrong..." (Chapter 16) – In the future, how will technology be more reliable, less reliable, or stay the same? Why do you think this?

9. "Cranfield swampers only care for their own." (Chapter 17) – What do we know so far about the relationships and rivalries between Ittan, swamper, Tillar and mounder communities?

10. "I don't belong here..." (Chapter 22) – Sala used to believe she belonged among swampers. What made her think that, and why has that now changed?

11. "...he didn't want me to be too much like Mum." (Chapter 23) – Why does Kib think this of his dad, and what does this reveal about his family dynamics?

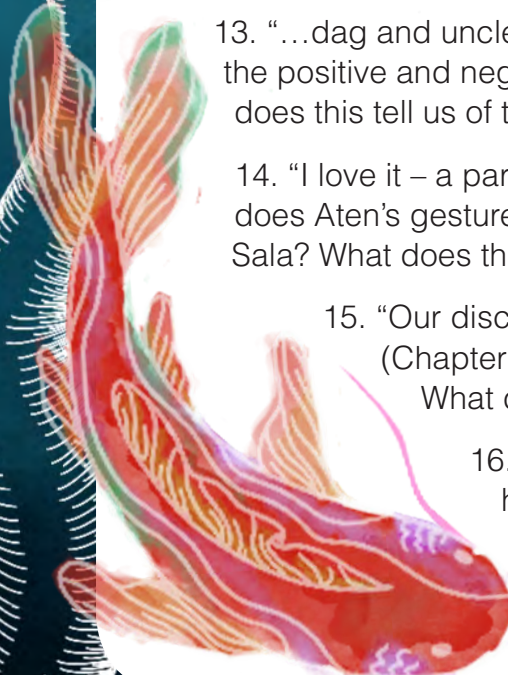
12. "I smear away my soundless tears, though find some semblance of strength in them." (Chapter 24) – What does this tell us about Sala's physical, emotional and psychological reactions to what she sees in Sendalg?

13. "...dag and unclean bandages are triggers for him." (Chapter 26) – What are the positive and negative aspects of Aten's relationship with his parents? What does this tell us of the nature of family?

14. "I love it – a part of the lake will always be with me now." (Chapter 27) – What does Aten's gesture tell us about the changing relationship between him and Sala? What does this tell us of the nature of friendship?

15. "Our discussions lift me, and something tells me they always will." (Chapter 28) – What does this tell us about Sala's feelings towards Kib? What does this tell us about how romantic attachments are formed?

16. "...trying to be valued by people who don't even know I'm here." (Chapter 33) – Why does Sala tremble, even though she's safe inside the airlock? What does this tell us about her character?



17. “All Tuni’s done is hurt herself” (Chapter 35) – Would you have set fire to the oil like Tuni did, and would be your reasons?

18. “I don’t need excuses anymore, because trying is what I do.” (Chapter 35) – What does Sala mean by ‘excuses’?

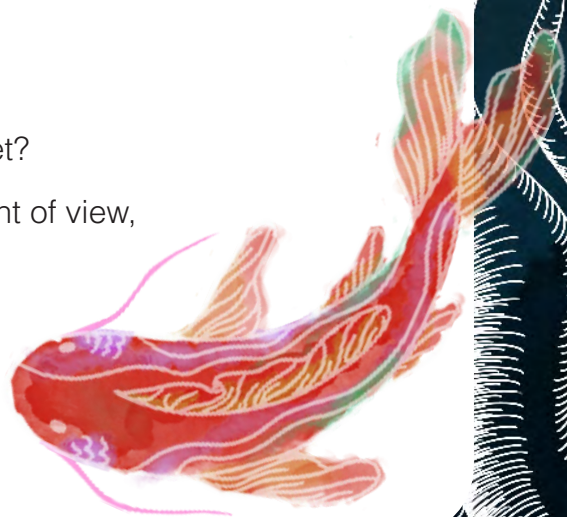
19. “As if in answer, the ship lurches.” (Chapter 37) – In what ways does technology drive the plot of *When Dark Roots Hunt*?

20. “...why do we have to leave places before we realise we love them?” (Chapter 40) – How is Sala different now, compared to when she first dived with the keei in Chapter 1?

POST-READING DISCUSSION:

After reading *When Dark Roots Hunt*, discuss a selection of the following as a group:

1. In what ways does the novel lean on subtle parallels and analogies to our contemporary world?
2. Which elements of the novel do you think belong to the genres of science fiction, fantasy, or science fantasy?
3. What does Sala learn about herself through her experiences in the novel?
4. What did you like best about the book?
5. What other books did this remind you of?
6. Which characters in the book did you like the best?
7. Which characters in the book did you like the least?
8. If you were making a movie of this book, who would you cast in which roles?
9. What feelings did this book evoke for you?
10. What songs did this book make you think of, in any genre?
11. If you had the chance to ask the author one question about this book, what would it be?
12. Which places in the book would you most like to visit?
13. Which character in the book would you most like to meet?
14. If you could read this story from another character’s point of view, who would you choose?
15. Why do you think the author wrote this book?



Links to Further Information:

For discussions on #StorytellingOverTime, including:

- The Hero's Journey,
- The Insight of Wildernesses,
- Worlds of Upheaval,
- Love & Betrayal, and
- How Monsters are Metaphors

Please go to:

<http://zenashapter.com/blog/?s=StorytellingOverTime>

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For free creative writing tips:

<http://zenashapter.com/blog/?s=writing+rockface>

Reviews

If you enjoyed reading *When Dark Roots Hunt*, please consider sharing a review with friends or other readers. Reviews make a real difference to authors, helping them to write more books, for you to then enjoy!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Zena Shapter writes from a castle in a flying city hidden by a thundercloud, reaching across age and genre into the heart of storytelling. A multi-award-winning author of speculative and contemporary fiction, she loves conjuring journeys into the beyond and unusual. To read more of her work, please browse the bibliography on her website at zenashapter.com

When not writing, Zena loves movies, frogs, chocolate, potatoes and living with her family among Sydney's beautiful Northern Beaches. She's travelled all around the world, visiting close to 50 countries, which inspire her to create worlds of her own.



With her BA (Hons) in English Literature, and a plethora of post-graduate qualifications, Zena enjoys working as a mentor, editor and inclusive creativity advocate, inspiring writers to develop their craft. She teaches storytelling and writing at festivals, libraries and schools, judges various literary awards, and encourages everyone to value the importance of creativity.

She believes that stories are our best invention.

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<http://zenashapter.com/contact/>

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