

Black Inc. Book Club Notes

TITLE: Car Crash
AUTHOR: Lech Blaine
ISBN: 9781863959698
PRICE: \$29.99
SUBJECT: Memoir

Book description

At seventeen, Lech Blaine walked away unharmed from a car crash that killed three of his friends and left two in comas.

On a May night in 2009, seven boys in Toowoomba, Queensland, piled into a car. They never arrived at their destination. The driver made a routine error, leading to a head-on collision.

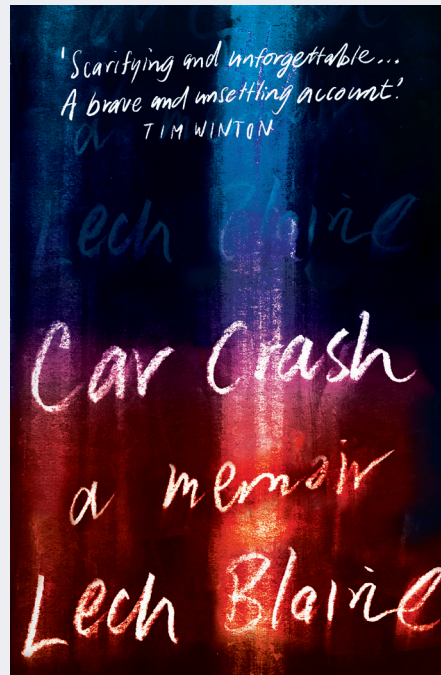
In the aftermath, rumours about speed and drink driving erupted. There was intense scrutiny from media and police. Lech used alcohol to numb his grief and social media to show stoicism, while secretly spiralling towards depression and disgrace.

This is a riveting account of family, friendship, grief and love after tragedy. In a country where class and sport dominate, and car crashes compete with floods and pandemics for headlines, our connection with others is what propels us on. Heartbreaking and darkly hilarious, *Car Crash* is a story for our times.

About the author



Lech Blaine is a writer from Toowoomba, now based in Sydney. His work appears widely, including in *The Best Australian Essays*, *Meanjin*, *The Guardian* and *The Monthly*. An inaugural Griffith Review Queensland Writing Fellow, he won the 2017 Queensland Premier's Young Publishers and Writers Award and the 2019 Brisbane Lord Mayor's Emerging Artist Fellowship.



Praise for Car Crash

'Scarifying and unforgettable, *Car Crash* is a story of carnage and life-long consequences – not just from a single, sudden catastrophe but from the long, slow cataclysm of masculine confusion. A brave and unsettling account.' —TIM WINTON

'A poetic, unflinching meditation on the exuberance of youth and the trauma of survival. It shines with a fierce intelligence.' —KRISTINA OLSSON

'A heart-soaring act of literary bravery where the ongoing cost of experience is exposed in every note-perfect sentence. This is a profound reflection on the deafening soul noise heard by a beautiful group of young friends fated to live the rest of their lives with the silence of the dead. Some books just have to be written. And some books just have to be read.' —TRENT DALTON

'*Car Crash* is a clear-eyed, bruising and tender account of how the moments that thrust you into adulthood can take place in seconds. Lech Blaine's journalism has long made me suspect he's one of the best writers of his generation. *Car Crash* confirms it, without a doubt.' —BEN LAW

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Discussion Points

1. The book opens on the car crash itself. How did reading the vivid description of the accident make you feel? Where were you expecting the narrative to go after chapter one?
2. As described in the book, the media's coverage of the accident and the speculations and assumptions about the circumstances that led to it had a big impact on those involved and the wider community. Discuss the idea of 'trial by media'.
3. As a young man growing up in regional Australia, Blaine's idea of masculinity is strongly linked to sports and drinking. Why do you think this is the case? How does this affect young people – boys/men particularly?
4. The book is in many ways a reflection on life and death, seen through the prism of depression. How did Blaine's friends and family respond to his mental illness? Are there still stigmas associated with depression?
5. 'Maybe the grief I sought was no longer possible to feel. Maybe social media had made loss obsolete.' What does Blaine mean by this? How has social media changed the way that we experience grief and memorial? Are there positives and negatives?
6. The book discusses class in Australia from a white, upper middle class, male perspective. How might the trial by media (and indeed the justice system) been different if the young men involved in the accident weren't white and privileged? How does Blaine address this in the book?
7. On his ambition to become prime minister, Blaine writes, 'I just needed to be me: a know-it-all who loved the sound of my own voice, the sight of a huge crowd and the romance of an underdog.' Larrikinism and mateship are recurrent themes throughout the book. Blaine's story is uniquely Australian in many ways. Discuss.
8. Guilt and acceptance are overarching themes of the book. The book doesn't have a solid conclusion because grief is never complete. How does Blaine learn to manage his grief?
9. We follow Blaine from adolescence to adulthood in the book. As he matures, how too do his relationships? Discuss generally how parent/child relationships grow and change as we become adults.