

Black Inc. Book Club Notes

TITLE: One Hundred Days

AUTHOR: Alice Pung

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SUBJECT: Literary Fiction

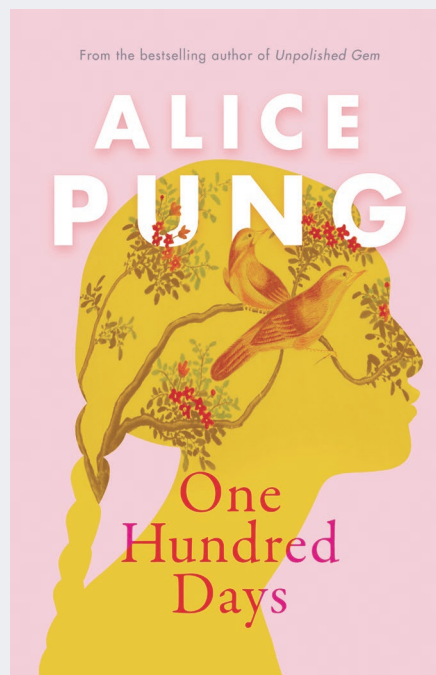
Book description

One hundred days. It's no time at all, she tells me. But she's not the one waiting.

In a heady whirlwind of independence, lust and defiance, sixteen-year-old Karuna falls pregnant. Not on purpose, but not entirely by accident, either. Incensed, Karuna's mother, already over-protective, confines her to their fourteenth-storey housing-commission flat, to keep her safe from the outside world – and make sure she can't get into any more trouble.

Stuck inside for endless hours, Karuna battles her mother and herself for a sense of power in her own life, as a new life forms and grows within her. As the due date draws ever closer, the question of who will get to raise the baby – who it will call Mum – festers between them.

One Hundred Days is a fractured fairytale exploring the faultlines between love and control. At times tense and claustrophobic, it is nevertheless brimming with humour, warmth and character. It is a magnificent new work from one of Australia's most celebrated writers.



About the author

Alice Pung is an award-winning writer based in Melbourne. She is the bestselling author of the memoirs *Unpolished Gem* and *Her Father's Daughter*, and the essay collection *Close to Home*, as well as the editor of the anthologies *Growing Up Asian in Australia* and *My First Lesson*. Her first novel, *Laurinda*, won the Ethel Turner Prize at the 2016 NSW Premier's Literary Awards.



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Praise for *One Hundred Days*

'Pung's characters are so real, I could feel them in the room. There is no word out of place, no sentence that doesn't sing with poetry. This is truly fiction at its fiercest. *One Hundred Days* is a masterpiece, a triumph – Pung's greatest work yet.'

—MAXINE BENEBA CLARKE

'What is astounding about *One Hundred Days* is that while it is fearlessly honest about the damage family members can inflict on one another, it is also full of forgiveness and harmony and grace. Pung's discernment and command as a writer is astonishing, elating. I adore this book.'

—CHRISTOS TSIOLKAS

Discussion Points

1. The book is partly narrated by Karuna as though she's talking directly to you, the reader, though she is actually writing a story for her child. What effect does this kind of narration have?
2. Why do you think Karuna's mother put so much emphasis on Karuna's looks and viability as a potential wife?
3. Karuna's mother says, 'A girl who makes one wrong move is wrecked for life.' What does she mean by this? Why might she think this way?
4. Karuna's relationship with her mother changes as time passes. How do parent/child relationships change over time generally, and what are some of the reasons for this?
5. 'With Tweezer I had a simple friendship – when I was with her I felt the same as I did when alone, but better.' Discuss this simple but moving description of Karuna's friendship with Tweezer. Do you think friendships are less complicated when we're younger?

6. 'But by fourteen I knew that I was separate to her, that she could no longer look at my face and find out what I was thinking, like she could when I was a kid.' What events make Karuna realise her own autonomy? How do these change her behaviour?

7. When she's younger, Karuna's father is the 'good guy' compared with her strict mother, but as she gets older she sees him in a different light. Why does her opinion change? Discuss how her father's abandonment affects her life.

8. 'Girls like me didn't stop men from carrying on with their lives.' How does Karuna relate to men in the book? Why do you think this is?

9. What does Karuna's story say about class and the migrant experience in Australia?

10. What did you think of Karuna's mother? Were you shocked by the way she treated Karuna? Did you think her actions were justified?

11. Did the book end the way you thought it would? If not, how did you think/hope it might end?

12. 'My shadow can completely cover you if I am not careful, I realise, leaving you cold. I vow then and there never to hover over you and block your light.' What does Karuna mean by this? Discuss what you think Karuna's future might look like.