

Black Inc. Book Club Notes

TITLE: See What You Made Me Do

AUTHOR: Jess Hill

ISBN: 9781760641405

PRICE: \$32.99

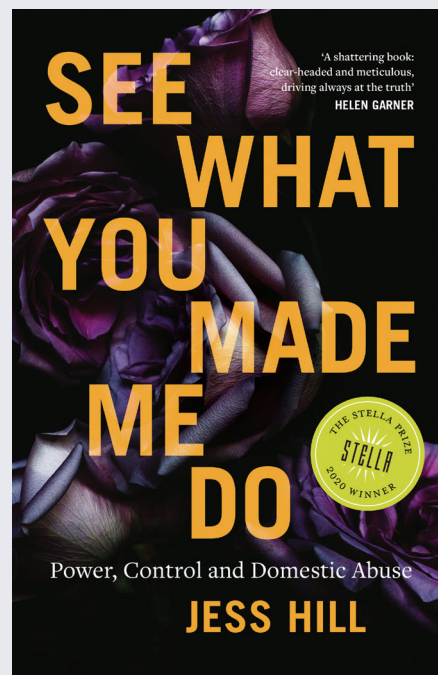
SUBJECT: Society & Culture

Book description

Domestic abuse is a national emergency: one in four Australian women has experienced violence from a man she was intimate with. But too often we ask the wrong question: why didn't she leave? We should be asking: why did he do it?

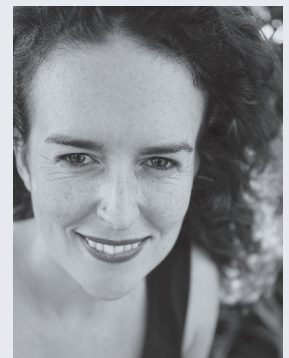
Investigative journalist Jess Hill puts perpetrators – and the systems that enable them – in the spotlight. *See What You Made Me Do* is a deep dive into the abuse so many women and children experience – abuse that is often reinforced by the justice system they trust to protect them. Critically, it shows that we can drastically reduce domestic violence – not in generations to come, but today.

Combining forensic research with riveting storytelling, *See What You Made Me Do* radically rethinks how to confront the national crisis of fear and abuse in our homes.



About the author

Jess Hill is an investigative journalist who has been writing about domestic violence since 2014. Prior to this, she was a producer for ABC Radio, a Middle East correspondent for *The Global Mail*, and an investigative journalist for *Background Briefing*. She was listed in *Foreign Policy*'s top 100 women to follow on Twitter, and her reporting on domestic violence has won two Walkley awards, an Amnesty International award and three Our Watch awards.



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Quotes

'A shattering book: clear-headed and meticulous, driving always at the truth' —**HELEN GARNER**

'One Australian a week is dying as a result of domestic abuse. If that was terrorism, we'd have armed guards on every corner.' —**JIMMY BARNES**

'Confronting in its honesty this book challenges you to keep reading no matter how uncomfortable it is to face the profound rawness of people's stories. Such a well written book and so well researched. *See What You Made Me Do* sheds new light on this complex issue that affects so many of us.' —**ROSIE BATTY**

'If *See What You Made Me Do* is a call for action then it is unlike any that has yet been written in Australia in its accessibility, depth of research and in its capacity, unlike government or academic reports, to capture the visceral feeling of domestic terror.' —**ALECIA SIMMONDS, SYDNEY REVIEW OF BOOKS**

'Sometimes you begin reading a book and everything else you need to do or think about instantly recedes. *See What You Made Me Do* by Jess Hill is one such book . . . To call it courageous is a gross understatement.' —**ELKE POWER, READINGS MONTHLY**

'In the present climate it's hard to make predictions, but it's my bet that *See What You Made Me Do* will be the definitive text on domestic abuse for some time.' —**SARA DOWSE, INSIDE STORY**

'The shared stories of coercion and control, the way in which Hill draws out the intimate and the personal to provide a picture of what happens in our country today should be compulsory reading for politicians at every level.' —**JENNA PRICE, THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD**

'This book represents a new way of thinking about and acting on domestic abuse in Australia, and is an example of exceptional research and the power of storytelling in non-fiction.' —**THE GARRET PODCAST**

Awards for *See What You Made Me Do*

WINNER, 2020 Stella Prize

FINALIST, 2019 Walkley Book Award

FINALIST, 2019 Australian Human Rights Commission Media Award

SHORTLISTED, 2019 Victorian Premier's Literary Awards

LONGLISTED, 2019 Indie Book Awards

LONGLISTED, 2020 Australian Book Industry Awards, General Non-fiction Book of the Year

LONGLISTED, 2020 Australian Book Design Association Awards, Best Designed Autobiography/Biography/Memoir/Non-fiction Cover

A Readings Best Australian Nonfiction Book of 2019

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Discussion Points

1. Before reading *See What You Made Me Do*, what was your understanding of the domestic abuse situation in Australia?
2. In the introduction of the book (p. 2), Hill talks about Rosie Batty's 2014 statement to the press after her son, Luke, was murdered by his father. This is presented as a moment of pivotal change in the Australian public's understanding of the kind of person who is a victim, and who perpetrates, domestic abuse. Batty said, 'Family violence happens to everybody, no matter how nice your house is, how intelligent you are. It happens to everyone and anyone.' Discuss the idea of a 'type' of victim, and why this particular case had such an impact on the Australian public.
3. In the first chapter of the book, Hill outlines the main tactics of coercive control: isolate, micromanage, humiliate, degrade, surveil, etc. Many of these techniques will seem familiar, if not from real-life situations, from fictional stories (film, TV, theatre, novels). Discuss some of these tactics – where you have seen them, and how they have been presented.
4. Chapter two of the book talks about 'the underground'. What is this underground that millions of women across the globe have occupied? Discuss the often-posed question: *Why doesn't she just leave?*
5. Chapter three looks at the abusive mind and the 1995 Gottman and Jacobson study nicknamed 'The Love Lab'. This study identified two main types of male responses to an argument: 'Cobras' and 'Pit Bulls' (p. 86). Discuss the two response types, and how emotions like shame and 'humiliated' fury do or do not influence their behaviour.
6. How do shame and humiliation play into domestic abuse on the part of the perpetrator and victim? How does this differ from guilt?
7. What is 'patriarchy'? What effect did the #MeToo movement have on the discussion of patriarchy in society? What is the purpose of the men's rights movement?
8. It was only in the 1980s that new laws against marital rape recognised that men didn't have the right to demand sex with their wives. Previously, consent was considered to have been given on the wedding day and never revoked. What societal norms can you think of that exacerbate male privilege? How do boys/men learn that power and control over women are signs of strength?
9. How has the increased creation of – and access to – hardcore pornography portraying acts of violence against women exacerbated male privilege and the normalisation of what previously would have been categorised as acts of torture?
10. How are children affected by domestic abuse, both at the time and later in life? What role does the Family Court play in the protection of children, and how effective is it?
11. In the chapter 'When Women Use Violence', Hill unpacks numerous study findings and claims from family conflict researchers about women's violence against men. Discuss the ways that statistics can alter public opinion and the dangers in presenting unqualified opinion as fact.
12. 'A quarter of Australia's homicides are due to intimate partner violence ... a man kills his current or former partner at least once a week ... every two minutes, police are called out to domestic incidents ... more than 80 per cent of women living underground today have never reported to police.' (p. 233) Do you think the majority of Australians are aware of these damning statistics and if not, why not? With shocking statistics like these, why do you think domestic abuse is not a bigger issue in the media and politics?
13. Women's police stations are becoming increasingly popular around the world in efforts to stem violence against women. How successful have they been in countries like Brazil and Argentina? Do you think these should be introduced in Australia?

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14. Amnesty International has classified coercive control as a form of torture. In 2019, Scotland included coercive control in The Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act, carrying a maximum 14-year sentence. Do you think other countries (including Australia) should be following suit? What effect do you think making coercive control punishable by law might have on the public perception of abuse?

15. Jess Hill interviewed dozens of domestic abuse victims over several years while writing the book. From the cases she outlines, why do you think many incidences of abuse are unreported? Discuss three potential reasons for not reporting.

16. There are a number of examples in the book of male behaviour change initiatives, from both Australia and overseas. Discuss the outcomes from these, and how they might be implemented more broadly in society (i.e. Operation Solidarity in Bourke, NSW, and the High Point, North Carolina initiative).

17. What changes do you think could be made – in both government and the community – to curb domestic abuse in Australia?