

# Black Inc. Book Club Notes

**TITLE:** The Winter Road

**AUTHOR:** Kate Holden

**ISBN:** 9781760640361

**PRICE:** \$32.99

**SUBJECT:** True Crime

## Book description

An epic true story of greed, power and a desire for legacy from an acclaimed Australian storyteller.

July 2014, a lonely road at twilight outside Croppa Creek, New South Wales: 80-year-old farmer Ian Turnbull takes out a .22 and shoots environmental officer Glen Turner in the back.

On one side, a farmer hoping to secure his family's wealth on the richest agricultural soil in the country. On the other, his obsession: the government man trying to apply environmental laws.

The brutal killing of Glen Turner splits open the story of our place on this land. Is our time on this soil a tale of tragedy or triumph – are we reaping what we've sown? Do we owe protection to the land, or does it owe us a living? And what happens when, in pursuit of an inheritance for his family, a man creates terrible consequences?

Kate Holden brings her discerning eye to a gripping tale of law, land and entitlement. It is the story of Australia.



## About the author

Kate Holden is the author of two highly praised memoirs, *In My Skin* and *The Romantic*, and a regular contributor to *The Saturday Paper*, *The Monthly* and *The Age*.



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## Praise for *The Winter Road*

'Kate Holden finds the epic thread in this crime and weaves a quintessential Australian story.' —**CHLOE HOOPER**

'Beautifully written, meticulously researched, carefully plotted and seamlessly stitched together. This book is a major contribution to the canon of Australian land and social history: a bedfellow with Francis Ratcliffe, W.E.H. Stanner, Tim Flannery, Bill Gammage and Bruce Pascoe,' —**CHARLES MASSY, AUTHOR OF CALL OF THE REED WARBLER**

'A gripping account of our land, and our selves.' —**TARA JUNE WINCH**

'I felt utterly in the grip of this agonising and powerful parable ... An enthralling and disturbing tale told with deep insight and compassion.' —**TOM GRIFFITHS**

'Beautifully and compellingly told, shattering in its reverberations, *The Winter Road* is a story for our times – a battle that is being fought the world over as we try to find a better way of managing the land and respecting the forces of nature that sustain us.' —**ISABELLA TREE**

'This is a special book, and I cannot thank Holden enough for writing it. By telling the human story of a man and his land, Holden reveals the timelessness of brigalow country, and threads a narrative that is ecological, humane and grounding.' —**ANNA KRIEN**

## Discussion Points

1. In chapter one we are given a brief history of the land – its settlement, the dispossession of its indigenous owners, and the development of the agricultural lands. How does this frame the story we are about to read?
2. Philosopher Thomas Payne wrote, '[T]he earth, in its natural, uncultivated state was, and ever would have continued to be, the common property of the human race.' Discuss the idea of land ownership – in both its legal and philosophical contexts.
3. 'Land clearing is the watershed issue for tensions between farmers and environmental agencies.' (p. 34) How is land clearing dealt with by both sides?

4. Were you familiar with the case before reading the book? Was your idea of Turnbull and his situation, or Turner and his work, different before reading the book?
5. In one of their interactions, Turnbull says to Turner, 'I had to pay the government a quarter of a million dollars in taxes, and you come here to tell me what I can and can't do.' (p. 47) Discuss this statement and how it relates to landowners generally, and the sentiment of property developers.
6. 'The more an authority and its subjects share beliefs and values, the less likely defiance is.' (p. 62) What does the author mean by this? How might the authorities have failed this in the case of environment regulation?
7. What does the book say about the 'Australian character'? (p. 63) How is it represented?
8. The historical murders of First Nations peoples are noted throughout the book. How does the Myall Creek Massacre (and the community response to it in the years since) relate to the conservation of the native land, and indeed the murder of Turner?
9. Environmental crime has traditionally been seen as victimless. How are public attitudes changing toward this?
10. Turnbull told his son Roger that he had dug graves for Turner and a colleague. Why do you think the warning signs were ignored?
11. How was Turnbull portrayed by the media? How did the community respond to his incarceration? Why do you think the farming community supported him?
12. A recurring theme throughout the book is loss. This includes loss of land, life, family, habitat, wellbeing, future and past. Discuss how the theme threads throughout the book.
13. Has the murder of Glen Turner had an effect on environmental protection law and conservation activism?