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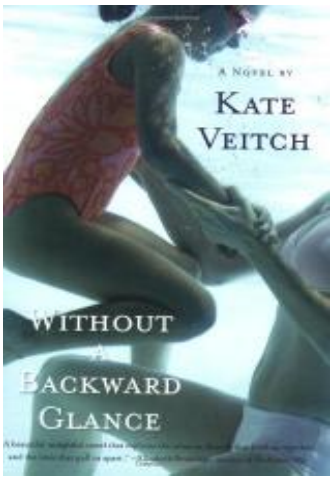
Without a Backward Glance

by Kate Veitch



About the Book

On Christmas Eve in 1967, a London woman unhappily transplanted to the Australian suburbs makes a decision that will change forever the lives of her four young children.

Forty years on, those children are adept at concealing their shared pain. Deborah has a demanding political career; James is a successful artist, Robert a respected school principal. Only Meredith, the baby of the family, seems stuck. But as their father begins to lose his grip on reality, they find themselves floundering in an unfamiliar sea. And their past is about to read into the present in ways that will shock and challenge them all?

A spellbinding contemporary novel, **Without a Backward Glance** draws us deep into the intensely private world of family life and brilliantly illuminates the joys, sorrows, and sustaining comfort that we find there.

Discussion Guide

1. While you were reading, did you have an ?a-ha? moment about the title, **Without a Backward Glance**? And what do you feel is the significance of someone taking ?a backward glance?: does it represent regret, or reflection, or something else?

2. To what extent were the lives and personalities of each of the children shaped by their mother?s departure and absence? Do you think they would have had similar personalities and traits if she hadn?t gone?

3. Was the situation Rosemarie faced in Australia in 1967 much different from the one she would have faced if she had been living in America? Was the Australian setting an important part of the novel for you?

4. Do you believe perfect parental love exists? If so, what shape does it take?

5. Did you find Rosemarie?s abandonment of her family believable? Forgivable? Why do you think a woman leaving her children is still such a taboo?

6. What might Rosemarie?s life have been like if she had stayed? What sort of family do you think the McDonalds would, or could, have been?

7. There are many instances of secrecy in **Without a Backward Glance**. Does every family have secrets? What is their role?

8. What value does truth have to the McDonald family? What value does truth have to you?

9. Does Alex?s dementia deepen the rifts between the members of his family, or draw them together? How do you think they will cope as it worsens?

10. After James finds his mother, his sexual relationship with his wife, Silver, blossoms. Why was it so lacking before this? And what was it about finding his mother that influenced such a change?

11. Why does Olivia have so few friends her own age? What do you think of this?

12. Would Angus have entered into the affair with Marion if his home circumstances had been different? Who is responsible for this?Angus? Deborah? Marion?

13. Do you think Laurence has been harmed by his mother?s alcoholism?

14. Do you believe the characters in **Without a Backward Glance** are held accountable for their faults and misdeeds? If not, how does this make you respond?

Author Bio

Kate Veitch was born in Adelaide in the mid-1950s and left home and school early, eager for color and movement. Her work over the years includes writing articles and reviews for the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Vogue*, collaborating with other mothers on **Feeling Our Way**, a book about becoming parents, and producing a series on women writers, *Their Brilliant Careers*, for Radio National. She lives part-time in Manhattan and part-time in Melbourne, while she and her partner build a home for themselves in northern New South Wales. **Without a Backward Glance** is her first novel. To read more about Kate, go to www.kateveitch.com.

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