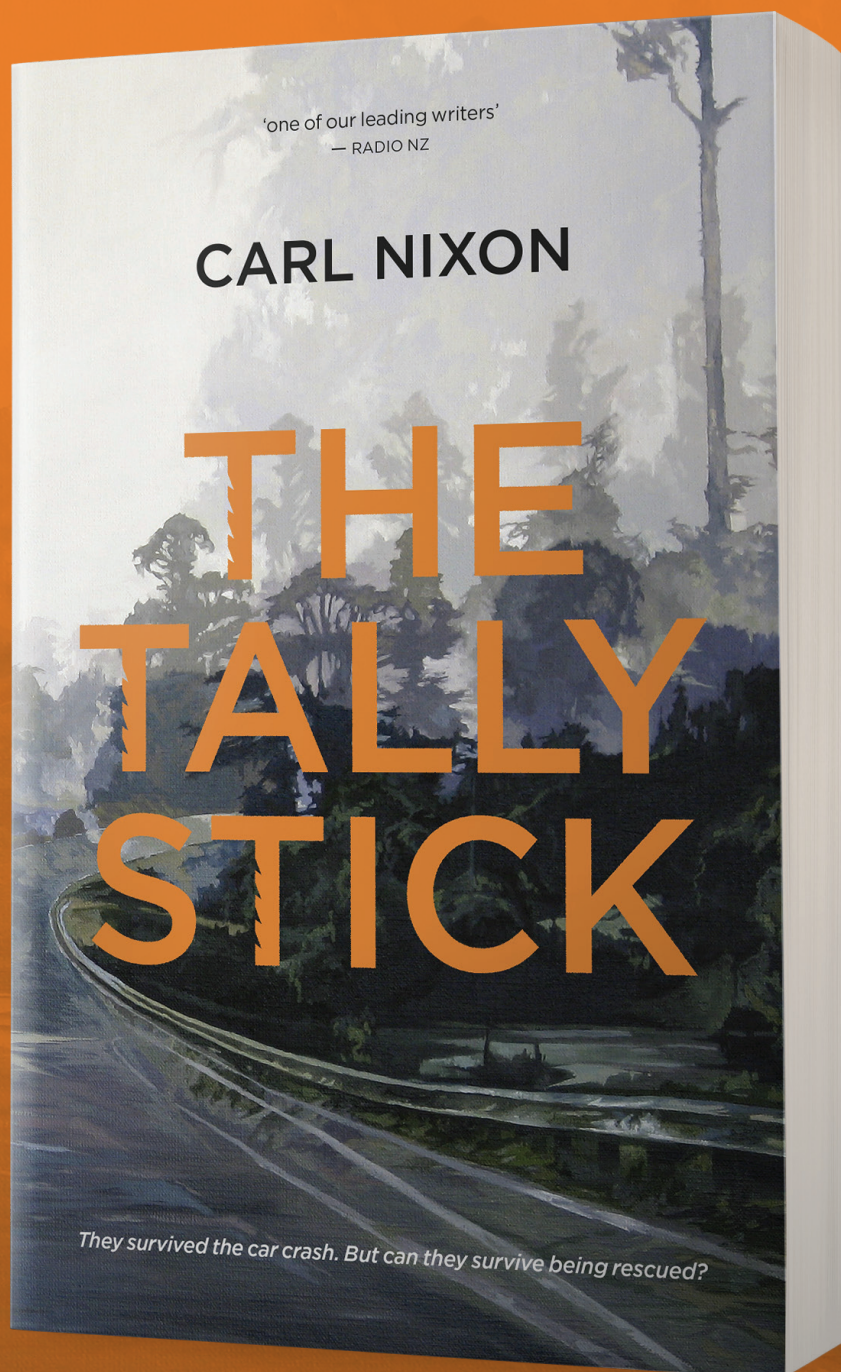




BOOK CLUB CONVERSATION STARTERS





AUTHOR NOTE FOR BOOK CLUBS

It is interesting to watch themes emerge in my own books, ideas that I'm not even aware I'm exploring. My fourth novel, *The Tally Stick*, seems to confirm an ongoing fascination with childhood and how people's early experiences shape who we become. I hope, however, that the book is more than an essay, more than an exploration of a theme. I want you, the reader, to be hooked early on, and then pulled along by the story all the way to the end. On the way I hope you are shocked, amused, moved to tears, puzzled (and then hopefully illuminated as your questions are answered). I want the story to make you think and feel. It's a lot to ask. I'm sure I haven't succeeded in all these goals. I definitely won't have for every reader. All I can say (all any writer can say in the end) is that this book is my best shot.

Here are some conversation starters for your bookclub that might be helpful if you've read *The Tally Stick*.

- 1** The West Coast is a region I have been to many times. I also conducted a research trip to the Haast area while writing the first draft of *The Tally Stick*. Do you think I've captured the atmosphere of The Coast?
- 2** A German publisher told me that he felt the book could have been set anywhere and was 'not really about New Zealand'. Do you agree or disagree? Is there anything apart from the setting that you feel is uniquely Kiwi?
- 3** Despite being the parent of two children (a girl and a boy, now in their late teens), and a former child myself, I found getting inside the heads of Katherine, Maurice and Tommy challenging. Do the children seem authentic to you? Is the way they speak right for children of those ages?
- 4** The three children have very different responses to living in the valley. In the same situation, and at a similar age, what would your own response have been?
- 5** Some episodes in the book are rather violent. Were you ever put off enough to stop reading? Do you feel that any moments were gratuitous and should have been cut?
- 6** The story is structured into several different time periods like cards in a deck that has been shuffled. Did you find this structure confusing? Did it add to the enjoyment of the story?
- 7** What did the story say to you about childhood or family?



ABOUT THE BOOK

The Tally Stick is the gripping new novel from Carl Nixon about subjugation, survival and the meaning of family.

On 4 April 1978 after being in the country for only five days, the Chamberlain family vanished into thin air. The only evidence that the family had ever been there was two smeared tyre tracks in the mud left up on the highway. But by the time anyone had driven past, the tracks had been washed away...

The remains of the eldest Chamberlain child are found over 30 years later showing evidence that he had lived for four years after the family disappeared. Found alongside him are his father's watch and what turns out to be a tally stick, a piece of wood scored across, marking items of debt.

How had he survived? Where was the rest of his family? And what is the meaning of the tally stick?

ABOUT CARL

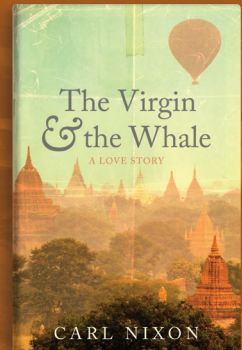
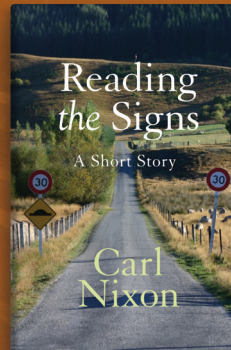
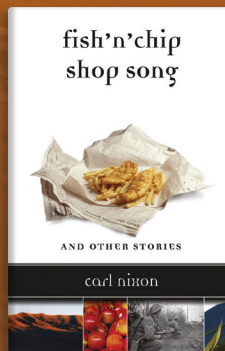
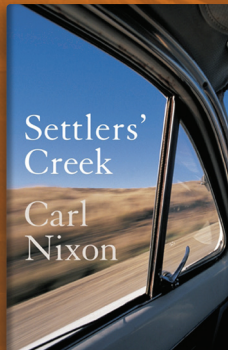


Carl Nixon is the author of four novels, a collection of short stories, and seven acclaimed plays for adults. He was born in Christchurch, New Zealand. He has a Master of Arts degree in Religious Studies from Canterbury University and a Diploma of Teaching.

Carl has twice won the Sunday Star-Times Short Story Awards. He also won New Zealand's top short story prize, the Bank of New Zealand Katherine Mansfield Award, in 2007. His novel *Rocking Horse Road* appeared on lists of the top crime novels of 2012 in Germany.

See more at www.carlnixon.co.nz

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