Into the Wilderness

Mandy Hager

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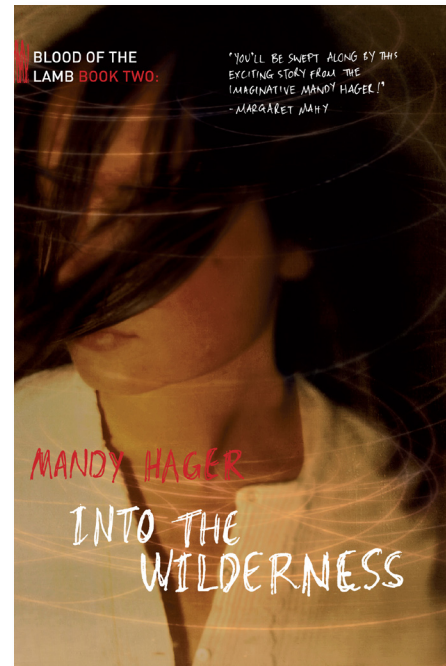
Into the Wilderness is the second book in the thrilling Blood of the Lamb trilogy.

Maryam, Ruth and Joseph have fled Onewēre, reluctantly lumbered with Joseph's troublesome cousin, Lazarus, as well. They arrive at their destination, Marawa Island, filled with hope for rescue and reprieve. But at first glance the island appears to be solely populated by birds … Perhaps the Apostles' dire warnings about the fall-out of the Tribulation were true after all?

As Maryam and Joseph experience all the topsy-turvy misunderstandings and sexual tension first love entails, the antagonism between Maryam and Lazarus reaches explosive proportions. But when disaster brings the crushing realisation that time is now against them, all four must decide just who they can risk turning to for help …

Mandy Hager is a Wellington writer and educator. She won the Esther Glen Medal for Fiction in 2008 with her novel *Smashed*. The first book in the Blood of the Lamb trilogy, *The Crossing*, has been shortlisted for the 2010 NZ Post Children's Book Awards.

BLOOD OF THE LAMB BOOK TWO:

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INTO THE WILDERNESS

SPECIFICATIONS:

Imprint: Random House NZ
Classification: NZ YA Fiction
Publication: April 2010
ISBN: 9781869793296
RRP: $19.99
Format: Paperback
Extent: 352pp
Readership: 15+

RESOURCE KIT CONTAINS:

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TOTALLY RANDOM INCREDIBLE BOOKS

Meet the author

Mandy Hager is a Wellington author and educator. Mandy's parents were born in Vienna and Zanzibar, meeting in Otaki in the 1950s. Their interest in the arts, social development and politics permeated the raising of their four children — all of whom have gone on to careers that reflect these values (Mandy's brother Nicky is a world renowned investigative journalist and writer, sister Debbie a Master of Public Health with a passion for supporting women with domestic violence and mental health issues, and youngest sister Belinda is a successful contemporary jeweller.)

Mandy is a trained primary school teacher and specialised in working with people with learning disabilities. She also has an Advanced Diploma in Applied Arts (Writing) from Whitireia Polytechnic and a Master of Arts in Creative Writing from Victoria University. She is married with two adult children.

Her first book, *Tom's Story*, a picture book about the death of a parent, won an Honour Award in the 1996 AIM Children's Book Awards. She has written many titles for Learning Media, and in a three year contract with Global Focus Aotearoa she wrote resources on such global issues as climate change, indigenous issues, violence against women, corporations, illegal trafficking, non-violent resistance, hip hop and fair trade.

She has written a series of programmes for the DARE Foundation of NZ based around her young adult novels *Run For The Trees* and *Smashed* — Dare To Be You and Dare To Move On — aimed at giving teens the skills they need to reach their full potential, by asking the hard questions about the real issues affecting us all today. The programmes are designed to challenge children, parents and their communities to develop skills in DARE — Decision making, Assertiveness, Responsibility and Esteem — and enable them to make informed choices to live a powerful life. Mandy has also been a member of the DARE board and currently helps with the training of facilitators in the two community programmes.

Smashed was named a Notable Book by the Children's Literature Foundation in 2008 and went on to win the Esther Glen Award for the most distinguished book of children's fiction in 2008 (presented by LIANZA). A script adaptation written by Mandy was placed as a finalist in the prestigious Moondance Film Festival in the USA.

In 2008, Mandy collaborated with her sister Debbie to write a 25 minute DVD teaching resource directed by documentary maker Shirley Horrocks, titled *He Drove Me Mad*, which helps to explain the situation of women who have mental health and/or substance abuse problems as a result of domestic violence.

Mandy also teaches a novel writing course for Whitireia Community Polytechnic and she writes a monthly column in the online newspaper, the Kapiti Independent News.

Discussion starters

1. Why is Maryam so antagonistic towards Lazarus at the start of the novel? Is she justified in feeling like this? Why/why not? How does her opinion of him change over the course of the novel? Why does her opinion change? Is this change wise?

2. How does Lazarus feel about Maryam at the start of the novel? How does his opinion of her change over the course of the novel? Why does his opinion change? Is this change wise?

3. What did Lazarus mean when he said 'hate needs love to define it'? (p.22).

4. Maryam thinks that 'Fear is something you have to learn first hand.' (p25) What do you think she means by this?

5. What does Maryam realise all Ruth's turmoil stems from (p32)? Do you think she is right? Why/why not? What else could be affecting the way Ruth behaves?

6. Lazarus says to Maryam: 'Your blood may have given him a boost, but, believe me, Te Matee Iai does not give up its own so easily.' (p44) What is he really saying and how does Maryam react?

7. When they reach Marawa Island why is it not what they had hoped for?

8. What type of religion do you think used to be practised on Marawa Island? Give reasons/examples to back-up your answer.

9. On p86 Maryam makes a joke referencing Adam and Eve. Explain the context and the thematic connection to the story.

10. When Maryam sees that Joseph has the symptoms of Te Matee Iai again, how does she respond and what does she try to do? Why? How does Joseph respond?

How does Lazarus respond? Whose response do you think is most realistic? Why?

11. What is discovered about Lazarus's past over the course of the novel? How does what he has experienced affect the way he thinks? Why?

12. When Ruth urges Maryam to pray for a message about what to do next (p114), what conclusion does Maryam come to about the act of prayer? Do you agree with her? Why/why not?

13. How does Joseph's death affect Maryam? Do you think her response is believable? Why/why not?

14. Who rescues them off the sinking boat and what are the rescuers' motives? Can you think of any current examples of this scenario? Describe.

15. How does Maryam go about sourcing the medicine Lazarus needs? What could have gone wrong with this plan? What else could she have tried instead?

16. What does Maryam ultimately decide to do at the end of the novel? Explain her thinking.

17. The book begins with a quote from Mohandas (Mahatma) Gandhi which states: 'Satan's successes are the greatest when he appears with the name of God on his lips.' What do you think this statement means?

Themes to explore

Religious indoctrination: Maryam and Ruth process everything through the religious teachings by which they were raised.

- Essay: Discuss the differences between the four main characters in how they think about and practice the religious beliefs they have been raised to obey. Reflect on why these differences have occurred between them and how they impact on each individual.

Hypocrisy: Both the Apostles and the Christian Territorials claim to live by the Bible's religious code, yet they behave very differently from its teachings of love and compassion.

- Essay: Find examples in the book that highlight this hypocrisy. Explain your choices, and why you think the actions you have identified are hypocritical.

Colonisation: The author has said that she believes one of the trilogy's themes is about the destructive impact of colonisation on indigenous people.

- Essay: Moana Jackson, New Zealand lawyer (of Ngati Kahungunu & Ngati Porou descent) says: 'Colonisation imposed a terrible separatism on us – separated us from our land; separated us from our rights; separated us from our power…' Discuss whether the sentiment of this quote could be applied to *Into the Wilderness*. Give examples to back up your claims.

Treatment of refugees: The camp that Maryam and her companions end up detained in is designed to keep refugees out of the Confederated Territories.

- Research: Find out the story of the 'Tampa' and the detention camp that was situated on Nauru at the time. Compare and contrast this story with what happens in *Into the Wilderness*.

- Essay: Consider the issues raised about refugees in *Into the Wilderness* and discuss them in the context of current-day attitudes and actions around 'boat people' and other illegal refugees, keeping such global issues as climate change in mind.

Grief and loss: All three of the characters are confronted with both grief and loss in the course of this book.

- Essay: Identify the range of loss and grief that each of the main characters experiences, then discuss how this impacts on them in terms of character development and relationships.

Love: Maryam is the heart of the story. The focus is on how she deals with love and hate, mainly with Joseph and Lazarus.

- Essay: Examine Maryam's feelings towards others, how her attitudes change, and discuss her growing awareness of what 'love' means.

Control: This is a novel about power, control and 'survival of the fittest' (p.240). 'The Apostles were formed from a desire for power . . . they were able to manipulate people's fear to seize control . . .'

- Essay: Discuss these questions, using examples from the book:

1. Can people be completely controlled?

2. Why is access to knowledge vital for freedom?

3. How could 'goodness' (obedience) be used to control people?

4. What is the main problem with control by a dictator or small group?

Exploring language and style

1. Maryam often uses similes and metaphors based on her observations of the natural world around her e.g. 'There was the crab-like constellation Tairiki off to the north; that hungry shark Te Bakoa, with his gaping mouth and glowering red eye, lurking around the reef of stars in the north-east. And there, flowing between them all like a silted tidal stream, the wash of stars the Apostles called the Milky Way.' (p17) Find five other examples in the text.

2. The narrative is written in a more formal language than contemporary stories, in keeping with Maryam's strict bible-based education. Find five examples of where this more formal language differs from the way we talk, think or describe things today.

3. Find examples of Maryam's native language used throughout the book, and see if you can explain their meaning from the context. Then consider what Maori words are now commonly used by all New Zealanders and list some of them, comparing their original Maori meaning with their current meaning.

4. There are many passages that evoke the sea in all its moods. For example: 'the moonlight fractured on the breaking peaks and swells' (p12). Read the storm scene (pp136,137) and analyse the use of verbs, adjectives and imagery to create tension.

Creative responses

- From your understanding of the layout of the camp, draw a map that includes all the places mentioned in the book, including: the administration block and fences, the stone cell block, the accommodation huts, the walkways, the separate men's section, the courtyards where the women eat, the shower and toilet blocks, the gardens and open ground etc.

- Imagine Maryam is interviewed by a reporter from the Confederated Territories who wants to write an article to spread the word about the horrific conditions at the camp. Write the article.

- Write a letter to Sergeant Littlejohn, asking him to provide better healthcare for the detainees.

- Design an alternative book cover for *Into the Wilderness*, reflecting the novel's Pacific setting.

- Draw a cartoon strip about the fishing competitions Maryam, Joseph, Lazarus and Ruth have while on the boat.

- Write a farewell poem to Joseph from Maryam.

- Create a picture or painting representing the fury of the storm at sea.

- Re-read the sections describing the crumbling village and the temple complex and draw a series of 'snapshots' of it, as if you were a tourist taking photographs of your visit there.