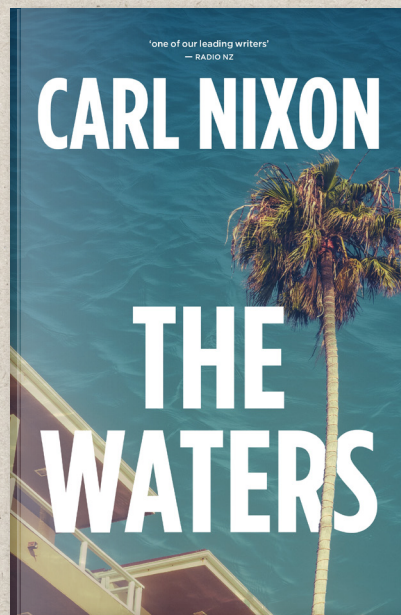


# THE WATERS

## BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS



**Published:** August 23  
**ISBN:** 9781761047121  
**RRP:** \$37.00

### Synopsis

A novel in 21 stories. One Family. Forty Years.

The Waters kids — practical, athlete Mark; the physically beautiful dreamer Davey; and the baby of the family, Samantha — have had to face more than their fair share of challenges. 1979 was the year their father sold up the farm and invested all the family's money in a doomed property development next to the ocean in Christchurch. Is that when 'everything started going wrong', as Mark believes?

Will their bond survive the passage of time or will the three siblings succumb to their parents' legacy of failure? Can the past be overcome . . . and forgiven?





## A note from the author

The oldest story in *The Waters* dates from 2003. The most recent was written in 2022. A few were outtakes from my first collection, *Fish 'n' Chip Shop Song*, which was published in 2006, ones left out because they didn't fit with the other stories. I wrote others for the express purpose of entering short fiction competitions. During those twenty or so years I've mainly focused on writing

novels and theatrical scripts, so the new stories were written sporadically in fits and starts between other projects with the (very) vague idea of one day being included in a conventional short story collection – the type of collection where all the stories are different.

However, the more stories I wrote, the more I noticed that a strange thing was happening. The realisation didn't strike me immediately, it came slowly, but eventually it was undeniable. I was writing about the same people over and over. They were a family – eventually I called them the Waters, although at times they had other names – and they lived, for a while, in the late seventies and eighties in New Brighton, a beach suburb of Christchurch (which was the area where my own father grew up). There were three kids in the Waters family; a tough older brother, a second son, who from a young age dazzled everyone with his beauty; and a much younger sister. It turned out that the father was alcoholic, a philanderer, and that their mother was depressed – lost in a mental fog for a lot of time.

The really fun thing, at least for me as a writer, was that the stories took place at different times – over a whole forty years in fact. (I was subsequently informed by a retired professor of English Literature that this form has a name: 'discontinuous narrative'). Whatever it's called, writing in this way is a real gift. It's a joy to be able to jump (like that character in the 80s television show, *Quantum Leap*) through time into the skins of a range of different characters. I hope you have as much pleasure reading this book as I did writing it.

**Carl Nixon**

Christchurch, March 2023



## Questions

- Do you like the way the book works as a novel but also as a collection of short stories? Have you read other books like this?
- Do you think the order of stories made you regard the characters differently than if you had read about them chronologically?
- The stories are from different perspectives – how does this reflect reality? Did you have any favourite voices? What does it suggest that we never hear Marika's viewpoint?
- Is Davey's beauty a blessing or a curse? Does it influence how people regard him?
- What different kinds of damage and injury run through the stories?
- How do the stories explore different types of attraction between individuals?
- How many variations on parenting crop up? Do the stories suggest the wider community has a part to play in caring for children?
- A dead cat, an empty tortoiseshell, a windsock that looks like a dead stoat, dead baby crocodiles, the dead wood pigeon, dead blowflies – what do these suggest about nature/life/humanity?
- Does the novel end on a negative or positive note?
- Do the Waters' children escape the legacy of their parents? Can we ever? Is the past always present as the Faulkner quote at the beginning says?

