

Australia Day

by Melanie Cheng

ABOUT THE BOOK:

Australia Day is one of the six books shortlisted for the 2017 Readings Prize for New Australian Fiction.

Australia Day is a collection of stories about people who are young, old, rich, poor, married, widowed, Chinese, Lebanese, Christian, Muslim. What they have in common is the desire we all share to feel that we belong. The stories ask crucial questions about the possibility of human connection in a globalised world.

JUDGES' COMMENTS:

'The stories that make up *Australia Day* illuminate the lives of characters living in modern Australia who are not typically represented. Cheng is talented at both creating characters, and writing compelling literature.'

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Melanie Cheng is a writer and general practitioner. Of Chinese-Australian heritage, she was born in Adelaide, grew up in Hong Kong and now lives in Melbourne. *Australia Day* is her debut story collection and the winner of 2016 Victorian Premier's Literary Award for an Unpublished Manuscript.

DISCUSSION POINTS:

1. What themes unify the stories in *Australia Day*? Do you think they are successful at making this a cohesive collection?
2. Do you believe stories should be read in the order they are listed in a collection? How do you think collections are ordered, and is it an advantage to read them in order? How does this apply to *Australia Day*?
3. Melanie Cheng is a general practitioner as well as a writer. How do you think her experiences as a doctor have helped shape these stories?
4. Cheng employs many different perspectives in this collection. What tools does she use to define each character?
5. The epigraph at the start of *Australia Day* is a quote from Malcolm Turnbull: 'There has never been a more exciting time to be an Australian.' Is the author using this epigraph seriously or ironically? How does this quote inform the stories that follow?
6. Share your favourite/least favourite story from the collection, and the reasons for your choice.