

The Good People

by Hannah Kent

ABOUT THE BOOK:

The Good People is one of the six books shortlisted for the 2017 Readings Prize for New Australian Fiction.

Set in a remote valley of south-west Ireland in 1825, three women are brought together by a four-year-old boy. Michaél suffers from a mysterious malady. His grandmother, Nóra Leahy, cares for him with help from Mary, a hired girl. When, amid darkening rumours, they seek advice from the resident wise woman, tragedy appears inevitable.

JUDGES' COMMENTS:

'Hannah Kent demonstrates meticulous research in locating this superb novel in rural Ireland of 1825. Here is an accomplished storyteller, with true compassion for her characters.'

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Hannah Kent's first novel was *Burial Rites*, which won numerous awards and was an international bestseller. Kent is also the co-founder and publishing director of Australian literary publication *Kill Your Darlings*. *The Good People* is her second novel.

DISCUSSION POINTS:

1. L.P. Hartley famously said: 'The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there.' How does *The Good People* bring Ireland in 1825 to life? Did it do this well in terms of atmosphere?
2. Discuss the moral ambiguity of the characters in *The Good People*, and how the author draws your empathy despite some of their actions.
3. *The Good People* explores illness and disability in the early nineteenth century. How has society's way of responding to these aspects of human life changed since that point in history?
4. How does the perspective of Mary, Nora's servant girl, assist the narrative in *The Good People*?
5. What is the role of religion and folklore in *The Good People*, and how do these two ideologies determine the plotline?
6. Hannah Kent's first novel, *Burial Rites*, was another work of historical fiction about a woman in a harsh rural setting. Why might Kent be drawn to these kinds of stories?