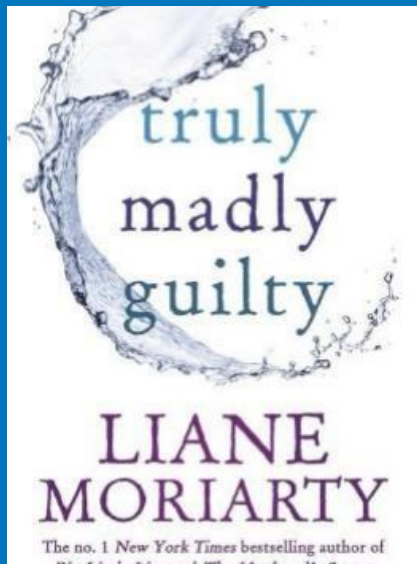


Truly Madly Guilty



Author Background

- Born— Sydney, 1966
- Resides—Sydney

Liane Moriarty is the eldest of six siblings, three of whom are authors (sisters Jaclyn and Nicola write young adult literature and contemporary chick-lit, respectively). Moriarty's childhood was busy and varied – with her mother fostering over forty children.

Moriarty began her career in marketing, working at a legal publishing company and embracing corporate life. She eventually started her own business called The Little Ad Agency, before establishing herself as a freelance advertising copywriter.

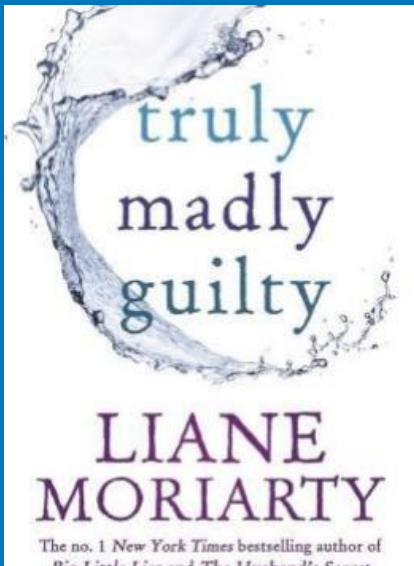
Having produced some short stories and first chapters of novels that got no further, Moriarty may have never completed a novel if it hadn't been for her younger sister Jaclyn publishing an award-winning novel of her own, *Feeling Sorry for Celia* (2000). Spurred by friendly sibling rivalry, Moriarty enrolled in a Masters Degree at Macquarie University and as part of that degree produced her first novel, *Three Wishes* (2003).

Three Wishes went on to be published internationally. Since then Moriarty has published six more novels *The Last Anniversary* (2005), *What Alice Forgot* (2009), *The Hypnotists Love Story* (2012), *The Husband's Secret* (2013), *Big Little Lies* (2014), and *Truly Madly Guilty* (2016), as well as the *Nicola Berry: Earthling Ambassador* (2009-2010) series for children. Moriarty's seventh novel *Nine Perfect Strangers* is due for publication in late 2018.

Moriarty's sister Jaclyn Moriarty, whose success initially inspired her, continues to be published. Meanwhile younger sister Nicola Moriarty has also become a published novelist.

Sources: *The Sydney Morning Herald*; Author's Website; Pan MacMillan Website; *LitLovers* Website; *Fantastic Fiction* website, *Wikipedia*.

Truly Madly Guilty



Book Summary

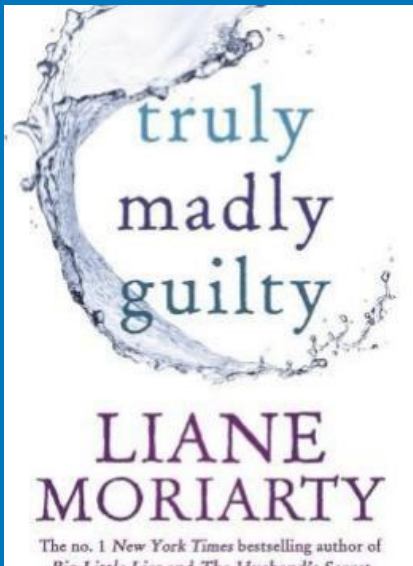
Sam and Clementine have a wonderful, albeit busy, life: they have two little girls, Sam has just started a new dream job, and Clementine, a cellist, is busy preparing for the audition of a lifetime. If there's anything they can count on, it's each other.

Clementine and Erika are each other's oldest friends. A single look between them can convey an entire conversation. But theirs is a complicated relationship, so when Erika mentions a last-minute invitation to a barbecue with her neighbours, Tiffany and Vid, Clementine and Sam don't hesitate. Having Tiffany and Vid's larger-than-life personalities there will be a welcome respite.

Two months later, it won't stop raining, and Clementine and Sam can't stop asking themselves the question: *What if we hadn't gone?*

In *Truly Madly Guilty*, Liane Moriarty takes on the foundations of our lives: marriage, sex, parenthood, and friendship. She shows how guilt can expose the fault lines in the most seemingly strong relationships, how what we don't say can be more powerful than what we do, and how sometimes it is the most innocent of moments that can do the greatest harm.

Truly Madly Guilty



Discussion Questions

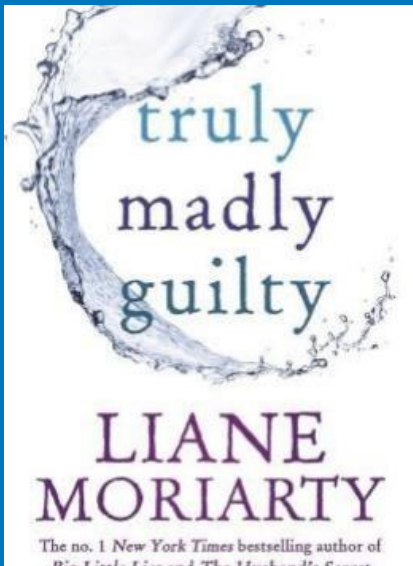
1. What is the nature of the “friendship” between Clementine and Erika? Why do you think that the childhood relationship initiated by Clementine’s mother has continued into adulthood?
2. Which characters feel guilty and why? Should they all feel guilty?
3. In what ways are the adult characters still being influenced by issues from childhood?
4. Did you find the characters and setting of *Truly Madly Guilty* recognisable? Did you find the way the story moves backwards and forwards in time suspenseful or annoying?
5. Erika’s psychologist advises her:
“You’ve got to get this idea out of your head about there being some objective measure of normality...This ‘normal’ person of whom you speak doesn’t exist!”
Do you agree with the psychologist? Why is normality so important to Erika?
6. Clementine’s thoughts about parenthood are brutal in their honesty:
“No one warned you that having children reduced you right down to some smaller, rudimentary, primitive version of yourself, where your talents and your education and your achievements meant nothing.”
Do you agree? Do you think the statement applies equally to the lives of both mothers and fathers?
7. Liane Moriarty prefaces her novel with a Claude Debussy quote: *“Music is the silence between the notes.”* How significant are silences and the unsaid in *Truly Madly Guilty*?

Just for fun

8. Pam’s father ignored his family in favour of writing “the great Australian novel”. What personal goal would you love to pursue—to the exclusion of all your other commitments?

Source: Some questions adapted from the publisher website (Macmillan / Flatiron Books).

Truly Madly Guilty



Reviews

Trying to nail Liane Moriarty's books to a particular genre isn't simple. So is she writing psychological thrillers? Perhaps. Chic [sic] lit? No way. Moriarty is far too erudite to reduce her women to yummy mummies fretting for the freedom of singledom.... Moriarty certainly isn't writing conventional romances.... Moriarty's preoccupations are more with the subterranean complications of [her characters'] marriages. The closest writer I can compare her to is Joanna Trollope. Like Trollope, Moriarty is concerned with the texture and themes of everyday life. But having suggested Trollope, Moriarty offers something more....

Moriarty's other strength is the art of the interior monologue. Clementine can think for pages and pages about her problematic friendship with Erika but as interior monologues go, these are based on attitudes and moral sensibilities to which the reader readily and greedily relates. This is a world we understand. And it can be fraught, despite the benefits of education and money, which to a large degree explains the universality of Moriarty's writing. From Sydney to New York, certain women can't get enough of her suburban intrigues.

Dianne Dempsey, *The Sydney Morning Herald*

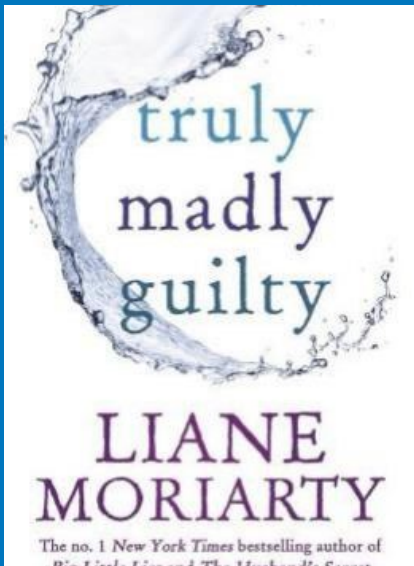
One unfortunate effect of the time shifting narrative and backstory layers, presumably meant to create a mystery to placate Moriarty's fan base, is that the reveal of the actual events of the day falls somewhat flat when it finally occurs. *That's it? That's what's tearing three families apart?* might be a common reader reaction.

The penultimate scene feels secondary to the laundry list of social issues from which each character arises: alcoholism, hoarding, socially engineered friendships, sex workers, kleptomania, overbearing parents, and lies, lies, lies. It would take a lot to overshadow all of these personal problems that exist before *The Barbecue*, and the eventual apex of the story doesn't quite reach that height.

Even so, *Truly Madly Guilty* is an absorbing read. Liane Moriarty has a nice way with characterization and dialogue, and she's taken great care to create layered characters whose personal growth is believable. While this novel might not quite live up to the expectations of fans and the press, it is a well-written story by an inventive writer.

Autumn Markus, *New York Journal of Books*

Truly Madly Guilty



Reviews (continued)

Since Ms. Moriarty is now a brand-name writer, there's a good chance that *Truly Madly Guilty* will be widely read, no matter what. It has all the requisite trademarks of one of her hits (*The Husband's Secret*, *What Alice Forgot*), a three-word title included. It probes some of the things she writes about best: fraught friendships, covert backbiting, stale marriages. And its format has become standard for her, with brief, maddening flashes of Whatever-It-Is that don't gel until she's ready to let them. All of it is formulaic by now. But it's a shame to see her resort to the level of contrivance that this book requires. You'd have to be a very dedicated Moriarty fan to believe much of anything that happens post-crisis. When the recriminations involve one character's blaming himself for trying to open a jar of nuts, the whole book seems to have gone haywire. When everyone is tormented by guilt over and over again, even torment starts to get boring.

Janet Maslin, *The New York Times*

Unfortunately, all of the present-day distress overshadows the final reveal. By the time readers discover what really happened on that "ordinary day," we're preoccupied with things going on in the present. What will happen to Erika's mum? Is Clementine going to win an orchestra seat? Can Tiffany steer her little family in the right direction? Still, Moriarty is a deft storyteller who creates believable, relatable characters. The well-drawn cast here will engage readers and remind them that life halfway around the world isn't much different from life here — families argue, neighbors meddle and children push boundaries.

Bethanne Patrick, *The Washington Post*

Relying less on comedy or edginess than in previous novels (*Big Little Lies*, 2014, etc.), Moriarty explores the social and psychological repercussions of a barbecue in Sydney gone terribly awry. The suspicion and guilt the adults and even children secretly feel in the aftermath cause rifts and secrets to surface within the three marriages and within Erika and Clementine's friendship. The setup here is reminiscent of fellow Australian novelist Christos Tsiokas' *The Slap* (2008), but while Tsiokas uses a minor incident to propel his corrosive examination of middle-class lives, Moriarty's characters resolve their issues too neatly and with too much comforting ease.

Not one of Moriarty's best outings.

Kirkus Review