

THE EXILES Reading Group Guide

1. Were you familiar with this part of Australia's history before reading? Was there anything new you learned that particularly surprised you?
2. Mathinna and Evangeline are both orphans, and Hazel has a difficult relationship with her mother. What impact does this have on their characters, and how do you think their stories would have been different if their families were still alive?
3. Compare the different treatments of male and female convicts aboard the *Medea*. Though the male convicts are also being punished, they are still in a position of authority over the female prisoners. What does this say about British society in the 1800s?
4. The Franklins make Mathinna feel like she doesn't belong in Hobart Town, yet Mrs. Wilson tells Mathinna that they are the ones who don't belong. What does it mean to belong to a place? Who decides who does and does not belong?
5. Were you surprised by Evangeline's fate? Why or why not?
6. What is the significance of Mathinna losing her language? Of all the ways she changes after leaving Flinders, why does this loss feel the most important to her, and mark such a clear divide from her old life?
7. Throughout the book, multiple characters reference and find comfort in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. If you've read *The Tempest*, why do you think the author chose this play in particular? What connections and common themes does it share with *The Exiles*?
8. At one point, Mathinna thinks to herself "She was tired of feeling as if she lived between worlds. This was the world she lived in now." In what way does Van Diemen's Land act as a "between world" for the different characters? How do they each struggle with leaving behind their old lives and adapting to new ones?
9. Do you think Hazel really could have forgiven Buck if he had let her? Would you have been able to forgive him after everything he did?
10. Ruby thinks about her "many mothers," and how each played a key role in taking care of her and making her the person she became. What role do found families, and found mothers in particular, play throughout the story?
11. Dr. Garrett reflects on the privileges granted the residents of Van Diemen's Land, saying, "It is my sense that, despite its hardships and limitations, living in a new world accords one certain freedoms. Social hierarchies are not as rigidly enforced." In what ways is this both true and not true for each of the characters in *The Exiles*? What are the limitations of these freedoms – which characters are allowed them, and why are others excluded?
12. What connections do you see between the historical world of *The Exiles* and today?