



INGA SIMPSON

The
Last
Woman
in the
World

Fear is her cage.
But what's outside is worse . . .

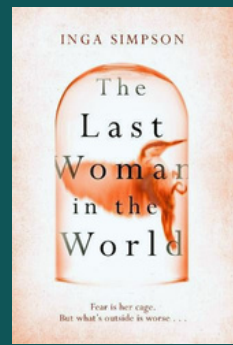
BOOK CLUB
QUESTIONS

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Discussion Questions

The Last Woman in the World

by Inga Simpson



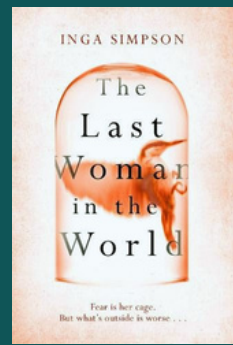
1. How does this book engage with the socially prescribed role of woman as mother and protector? Does Rachel's attitude towards this role change throughout the book? Does the book question or confirm this traditional view of essential motherhood?
2. Did you find the book more frightening given the world's recent context of pandemics? Does such a state of environmental and social collapse seem inevitable?
3. Rachel and Hannah relate to each other at first awkwardly and at a distance, but they grow closer as the story progresses. Did you find their journey towards friendship believable, and moving?
4. The title of this book, *The Last Woman in the World*, seems a bit misleading at first, since we see several female characters throughout the narrative. In another sense, the phrase 'the last woman in the world' sounds like an incomplete statement — Rachel is 'the last woman in the world' we would expect to take on the role of companion and mother; Hannah is the 'last woman' we expect to show such fortitude. How did you interpret the title?
5. Do you think Simpson engages sensitively with the subject of Rachel's trauma? Is her isolated lifestyle and reluctance to trust other people an understandable reaction to what she has been through?
6. Glassblowing as an art form is described in a lot of detail. How do you think this relates to the themes in the book? Is this simply decorative information?
7. What effect does the setting in the Australian forest have on the tone of the book? Did you enjoy the descriptions of the environment?
8. Survival in a harsh environment is part of many Australians' way of life. Is *The Last Woman in the World* a uniquely Australian novel? Could it have been set elsewhere and had the same power? Would Rachel's isolated existence, cut off from the news and social media, have been possible elsewhere?
9. The narrative of *The Last Woman in the World* follows many typical disaster-film tropes. Would you see this if it were adapted into a film? How do you think viewing it would change your experience?



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10. Did you find it unsatisfying that the source and identity of the nameless force (they) in the book were never fully explained? Does their mysterious and malevolent nature work as a metaphor for humanity and society's failings?

