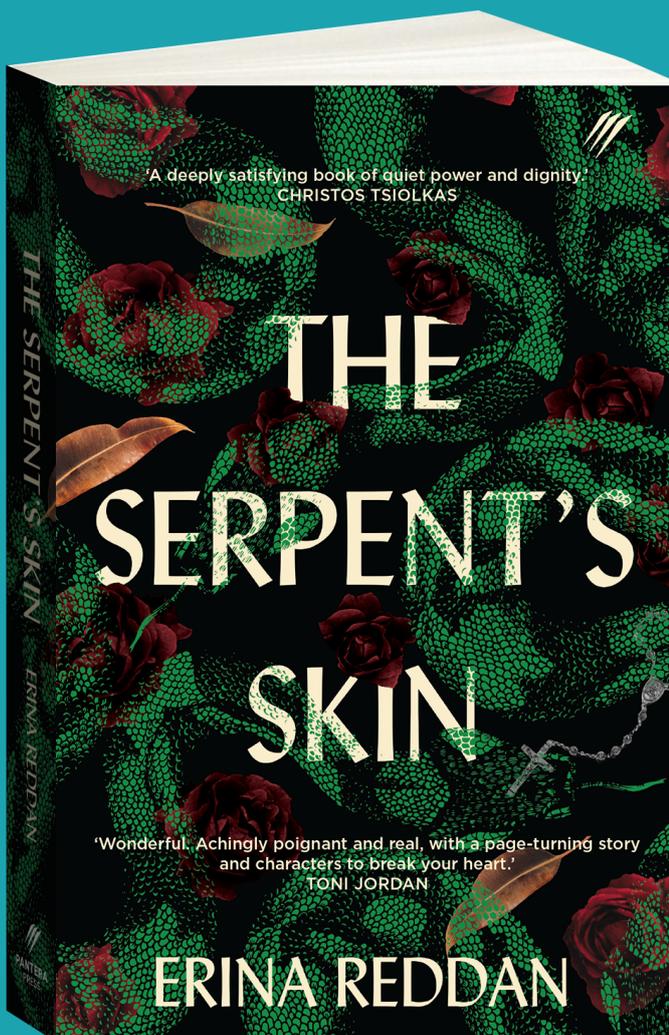




**PANTERA
PRESS**

**SPARKING
IMAGINATION,
CONVERSATION
& CHANGE**

BOOK CLUB NOTES



Praise for *The Serpent's Skin*:

'A deeply satisfying book of quiet power and dignity.'

Christos Tsiolkas

'Wonderful. Achingly poignant and real, with a page-turning story and characters to break your heart.'

Toni Jordan

'A fast-paced and timely novel tracing a family suffocated by mystery, unquestioned power and grief.'

Sarah Schmidt

'The Serpent's Skin is a powerful, gripping read, with a cast of complex, satisfyingly original characters. Erina Reddan has written a rich, memorable Australian novel.'

Graeme Simson

'A powerful and insightful novel that illuminates how secrets stay buried within families and the bombs and the sheer strength and bravery required to stand up to male power.'

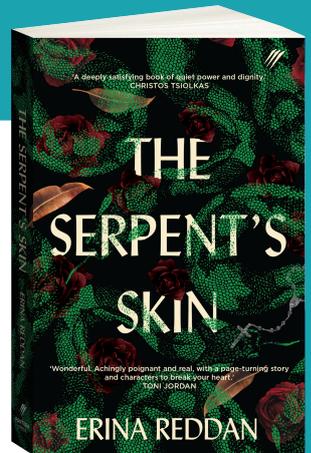
Sarah Macdonald

BOOK CLUB NOTES



SPARKING
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THE SERPENT'S SKIN by Erina Reddan



An extraordinary novel about overcoming male power, the strength of sibling bonds and the secrets that can haunt a family. Most of all, *The Serpent's Skin* is about the many ways we prove our love.

It's a cold and wintry night in 1968 and ten-year-old JJ's mother isn't home. The cows are milked, the pigs fed, and her dad won't answer any questions.

Sarah is the lifeblood of their family, and her absence throws everyone off course: Tessa takes charge, Tim makes mistakes, Philly retreats, and JJ blames herself. Their father works hard to keep up appearances, but something's not right. It's always been JJ's job to cause trouble, and when she can't leave the clues alone, her sleuthing wreaks havoc in their tight-knit community, and she swears off troublemaking for good.

Fourteen years on, JJ has a new life, a loving partner and a good job. But she puts it all in jeopardy when she stumbles across a chance to solve the dark mystery of her childhood. While pretending to have made peace with it, she organises a final farewell for her mother so they can all put the past behind them. Will the explosive truth finally set them free?

Compulsive, gripping and full of heart, *The Serpent's Skin* ushers in Erina Reddan as a brilliant new voice in Australian fiction.

About the author

Erina Reddan is an author and public speaker with a Master's Degree in Professional Writing (University of Technology Sydney). She is currently undertaking a PhD in Creative Writing (La Trobe University) and has lectured in international politics at The University of Melbourne, tutored in creative writing at La Trobe University and taught at Writers Victoria.

Erina has been a television reporter and producer, and was awarded the prestigious Walkley Award for her work as an ABC foreign correspondent.



BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

1. Which McBride sibling do you find most relatable?
2. JJ is accused by those around her as being a troublemaker, both when she's a child and as an adult. Do you think this is fair? How do you think this has affected her?
3. There is a strong presence of animals in this story – as well as the titular snakes, there's also the piglets, the joey, the ferrets, crows, the grey brumby, Doll the dog and Max the bull. Choose an animal and explain what it contributes to the story.
4. How do gender roles affect the members of the McBride family? The women in this novel all display different kinds of strength. What do you think the book has to say about womanhood and girlhood? How is masculinity depicted?
5. How do Jack's values inform his actions? Can they be seen as a justification?
6. Why do you think JJ was more driven to uncover the truth than the rest of her family?
7. JJ is reading Alice in Wonderland when her mother disappears. Fourteen years later, her sister is reading the same book. What significance does this have?
8. Why do you think the community labelled Peg as a mad woman? Do you think she was?

BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

9. What does JJ have in common with the people in her boarding house (Marge, Rocco, Rat-Tail)?

10. Do you think Jack is genuinely remorseful over losing Sarah? Do you think he would do anything differently if he could? Explain why or why not.

11. JJ's mother taught her about flowers and their meanings. How does this play into the story?

12. Why do you think Sarah decided to leave Jack? Do you believe it was for good?

