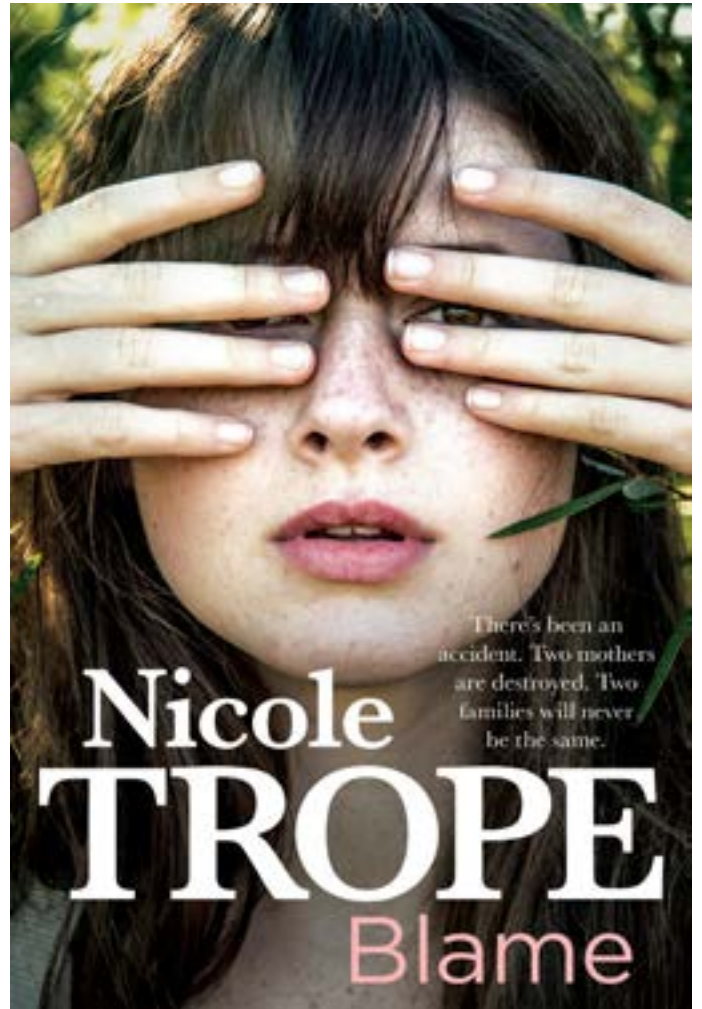


ALLEN & UNWIN



READING GROUP NOTES

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About the book

'I am here because they suspect me of something. I am here because I am a suspect. I know that, she knows that. Everyone knows that.' Anna

'It wasn't my fault. None of this is my fault!' Caro

Caro and Anna are best friends... they were best friends. Over a decade, Caro and Anna have bonded while raising their daughters, two little girls the same age but living two very different lives. The women have supported each other as they have shared the joys and trials of motherhood, but now everything has changed.

There's been a terrible car accident, an unimaginable tragedy that leaves both families devastated. Over two days, as Caro and Anna each detail their own versions of events, they are forced to reveal hidden truths and closely guarded secrets.

The complicated lives of wives and mothers are laid bare as both women come to realise that even best friends don't tell each other everything. And when hearts are broken, even best friends need someone to blame.

A hard-hitting, provocative and gripping read from the queen of white-knuckle suspense and searing family drama.

About the author

Nicole Trope is a former high school teacher with a Masters Degree in Children's Literature. In 2005 she was one of the winners of the Varuna Awards for Manuscript Development. In 2009 her young adult novel titled *I Ran Away First* was shortlisted for the Text Publishing Prize. *Blame* is Nicole's sixth novel. Her previous titles include the acclaimed *The Boy Under The Table*, *Three Hours Late*, *The Secrets in Silence*, and *Hush, Little Bird*.

Reviews

"If you love writers such as Jodi Picoult, Nicole may just be your cup of tea." - *The Hoopla*

"As Trope shines the spotlight on [the] characters, the shadows also appear. Very well done! ... the story [is] extremely readable and addictive and emotionally gripping. I could not put the book down! ... a real rollercoaster ride of emotions for the reader." - *But Books Are Better*

"Without a doubt, *Blame* is a page turner. I found it hard to put down this novel" - *The Blurb Magazine*

"This story blew me away! I never saw the ending coming. A first rate read." - *For the Love of Books*

"This book is hard to put down. I was actually annoyed that I had plans and wasn't going to be home to read. ... If you're looking for a book that packs a punch, pulls you in and makes you think long after you are done, then *Blame* is your book." - *Laura's Book Blog*

For discussion

- ☞ Discuss how you placed blame throughout your reading of the book. How did your opinion change?
- ☞ How important do you think motivations and intentions are when considering a person's actions? Discuss this in relation to the accident and how Anna and Caro act during the police interviews.
- ☞ In terms of blame in an official context, do you feel like the punishments the women received through the legal system were fair?
- ☞ On page 54 Anna thinks "To say you are anything less than totally in love with your child is almost criminal." Discuss how conventional parenting narratives have effected Anna.
- ☞ Caro describes Maya as "hard to love" on page 141. How could this label be applied to some of the other characters?
- ☞ How does the book portray female friendship? Consider their relationship both before and after the accident. Compare it to their marriages.
- ☞ The women's emotion states and Caro's alcoholism are described very vividly in the book. Did you have a visceral reaction while reading?

Suggested further reading

The Boy Under the Table - Nicole Trope

Three Hours Late - Nicole Trope

Secrets in Silence - Nicole Trope

Hush Little Bird - Nicole Trope

The Light on the Water - Olga Lorenzo

The Eye of the Sheep - Sofie Laguna

The Slap - Christos Tsiolkas

Notes on a Scandal - Zoe Heller

The Mother's Group - Fiona Higgins