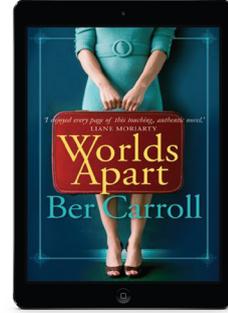


Reader Discussion Points for  
*Worlds Apart* by Ber Carroll



Worlds Apart has a big Irish family at its centre, and the relationships within the family are an important part of the plot, as is a long-held family secret.

Erin leaves her sick mother for a sanity break in Australia. The change is exactly what she needs and she promptly falls in love with her new life. The only problem is that she cannot stay.

Laura, Erin's cousin, feels torn down the middle as she struggles with the challenges of being a busy mother, wife and career woman. This is not how she pictured her life.

Ber used Erin and Laura and their extended family to explore some pertinent issues in today's world.

- 1** What happens to the family dynamics when one family member becomes ill? Who should take responsibility? At what point does the burden become too much? Is it okay to put your own needs or ambitions first?
- 2** Mothers. Most of them are warm and indispensable and one-hundred-per-cent committed. But what about the ones who aren't? The ones who struggle and find it all terribly difficult. The ones who've had children because someone has expected them to rather than because of a genuine maternal instinct. Are some women just not cut out for motherhood?
- 3** Romantic love versus family love. Is it okay to leave your family to pursue a romantic relationship? To go and live on the other side of the world, knowing full well that your choice means that you will only see your family once or twice a year, at most? To know that there is always the risk of a family member falling ill or dying and that you will not be there for them at their time of need.
- 4** Diversity. The novel is scattered with minor characters from all corners of the world, who exist for an important reason: to teach Erin and Laura important lessons about belonging, bravery and making changes to one's life. Do we all have something to learn from nationalities and cultures different to our own?
- 5** Family secrets. Ber thinks it's the 'close' families who are the most secretive, because there's more at stake. There's often a driving instinct to protect the other family members, or an overwhelming need to save face, or not to hurt, upset or embarrass those you love. And it has to be said that sometimes secrets are for the overall good of the family. The things we don't tell each other in the name of love. Do you have a family secret, old or new?