

BOOK CLUB NOTES

Beyond Carousel, Brendan Ritchie (Fremantle Press)

SUMMARY

Nox, Taylor and Lizzy have just escaped a nightmare. After months of being trapped inside a shopping centre they are finally free. Free to roam the streets of Perth and free to solve the mystery of what happened outside the doors of Carousel.

But the city is not like it once was, and the dangers are far from over. Looters lurk in the otherwise empty streets and packs of dogs are never far behind. Saving those they love will mean risking everything – and time is running out.

‘Ritchie writes with insight and casual elegance.’
– Jen Banyard, *Westerly*

‘Ritchie’s prose is understated but meaningful, and speaks well to a young/new adult audience.’
– Louisa Loder

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brendan Ritchie is a writer and filmmaker from Fremantle, WA.

In 2015 he published his debut novel *Carousel* and was awarded a PhD in Creative Writing. *Carousel* has been critically acclaimed and was long-listed for the 2016 Gold Inky Awards. The sequel, *Beyond Carousel*, was published in October 2016.

In addition to writing, Brendan spends his time lecturing across a range of creative disciplines.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Brendan Ritchie, the author of *Beyond Carousel*, is also a filmmaker. Did this background seem evident to you in *Beyond Carousel*? Were there certain scenes, such as the blaze in the hills, that felt particularly cinematic to you?

- *Beyond Carousel* continues on from the events of *Carousel*. The sequel takes the journeys of Nox, Taylor and Lizzy out into the streets of Perth, as opposed to them being confined to a shopping centre. Which book did you find more effective in terms of tension and character engagement, and why?
- Who do you identify with out of the main characters: Nox, the male writer protagonist, or Taylor and Lizzy, the musician sisters? Is it the gender of a character which enables you to identify with them, or are you more interested in other personal characteristics?
- In the opening chapters of *Beyond Carousel*, Nox mentions Taylor's theory that artists were shielded from the disappearance, and yet, in real life the position of artists might be seen very differently, subject to its own kind of 'disappearance' on the margins. What do you consider that artists contribute to society, however difficult this might be to measure?
- In *Beyond Carousel*, Ritchie describes the disappearance as Pompeii 2.0, having earlier mentioned abandoned vehicles and the packs of pit-bull terriers roaming the streets. Given the apparent notable differences between the two scenarios, why might Ritchie compare them as similar?
- Brendan Ritchie described his *Carousel* series as a reimagining of the *Tomorrow When the War Began* scenario within an existential and artistic context. How is Ritchie's series similar to that of John Marsden's work? How is it different?
- What do you think about the presence of Danish documentary film student Tommy in the book? How do you see his role, in contrast to the three main characters?
- How do Ritchie's thoughts and beliefs on consumerism surface throughout the novel? Do your own thoughts and feelings differ from Ritchie's? If so, in what ways?
- How do you imagine life panning out for Nox, Taylor and Lizzy after the events in *Beyond Carousel*? How is each character different from when the book began?
- In the course of the novel, Nox encounters Georgia, an acting student originally from Ohio, and they begin a brief, heated affair almost immediately. Does crisis bring people closer together? Are they more willing to be intimate when the threat of death lingers over them?
- If you were stuck in a post-apocalyptic situation, who would you want to be with, and why?
- If you have also read *Carousel*, do you now feel a sense of closure in the series? Are these characters you'd like to return to or do you feel that their journey is now complete?
- In the acknowledgments, Brendan Ritchie mentions that *Beyond Carousel* has provided all of the answers 'except for a special few'. What do you think he's referring to? Is an author obliged to fully explain the origins of their fictional universe, or is there space for an element of mystery?

- What are your thoughts in regard to the relationship between fame and creativity?
 - Ed Carrington asserts that the art world has crept into dangerous territory. “Artists are being forced to chase fame harder than ever before. Fine art is all about winning awards and being represented by galleries. Cinema is full of sequels, prequels and remakes. Music has lost its gatekeepers but also a lot of its soul.” Do you agree with this assessment?
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If you liked this book you might also like:

Carousel, Brendan Ritchie (Fremantle Press)

The Tribe, Ambelin Kwaymullina (Walker Books)