



All Our Shimmering Skies

Trent Dalton



Author Background

Trent Dalton (born 23 April 1979) is a staff writer for the *Weekend Australian Magazine* and a former assistant editor of *The Courier Mail*. He's a two-time winner of a Walkley Award for Excellence in Journalism, a four-time winner of a Kennedy Award for Excellence in NSW Journalism and a four-time winner of the national News Awards Features Journalist of the Year. His debut novel, *Boy Swallows Universe*, published by HarperCollins in 2018, is a much-loved national bestseller with sales of over 500,000 copies in Australia, winner of multiple awards, and now published across thirty-four English language and translation territories.

Book Summary

Darwin, 1942, and as Japanese bombs rain down, motherless Molly Hook, the gravedigger's daughter, is looking to the skies and running for her life. Inside a duffel bag she carries a stone heart, alongside a map to lead her to Longcoat Bob, the deep-country sorcerer who she believes put a curse on her family. By her side are the most unlikely travelling companions: Greta, a razor-tongued actress, and Yukio, a fallen Japanese fighter pilot. The treasure lies before them, but close behind them trails the dark. And above them, always, are the shimmering skies.

A story about gifts that fall from the sky, curses we dig from the earth and the secrets we bury inside ourselves, *All Our Shimmering Skies* is an odyssey of true love and grave danger, of darkness and light, of bones and blue skies. It is a love letter to Australia and an ode to the art of looking up – a buoyant, beautiful and magical novel, abrim with warmth, wit and wonder.

Discussion Questions

- ❖ The story is in essence a quest narrative – can you see the resemblances to The Wizard of Oz or The Odyssey?
- ❖ Have there been times in your life when you have spoken to the sky?
- ❖ What do you think is the real treasure that Molly escapes into the forest to find?
- ❖ Why do you think Greta Maze chooses to join Molly on her quest?
- ❖ What do you think happened to Molly’s mother, Violet Hook?
- ❖ The central theme to the story is “own all you carry, carry all you own”. In what ways could this message apply to your life now and, moreover, to the story of Australia?
- ❖ What role does death and where we go when we die figure in the narrative?
- ❖ Do you believe there is magic to be found in the living world, not just fantasy, but in the things that we normally explain through science?
- ❖ Dalton has said the story is one big metaphor for his life growing up on the fringes of Brisbane in the early 1990s. Did you find thematic similarities between All Our Shimmering Skies and Dalton’s semiautobiographical debut, Boy Swallows Universe?
- ❖ What do you think happens to Molly and Greta beyond the end of this story?

References

- ❖ Harper Collins: <https://www.harpercollins.com.au/9781460753903/all-our-shimmering-skies/>
- ❖ The Guardian: Book Review by Bec Kavanagh, 2 October 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/oct/02/all-our-shimmering-skies-by-trent-dalton-review-a-quest-fable-follow-up-to-boy-swallows-universe>.