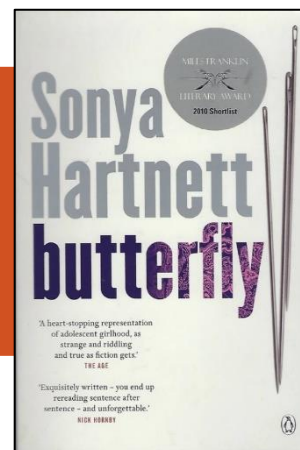




# Butterfly

Sonya Hartnett



## Author Background

Sonya Hartnett is an Australian author of fiction for adults, young adults, and children. She was born in Box Hill, Victoria.

Hartnett's work has won numerous Australian and international literary prizes and has been published around the world.

Hartnett won the Guardian children's fiction prize in 2002 for *Thursday's Child* and the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award from the Swedish Arts Council in 2008, the biggest prize in children's literature, for her career contribution to children's and young adult literature. *Butterfly* was shortlisted for the Miles Franklin award in 2010.

Hartnett has been called "the finest Australian writer of her generation". She has published books under the names Sonya Hartnett, S. L. Hartnett, and Cameron S. Redfern.

## Book Summary

*Butterfly* is a coming-of-age tale of what a teenage girl will do to keep her friends.

It's 1980 and on the verge of her 14th birthday, Ariella Coyle, nicknamed Plum, knows her life will change. But she has no idea how.

Her old life and her old body will fall away, and she will become graceful, powerful, and at ease. The strength of the objects she stores in a briefcase under her bed – a crystal lamb, a yoyo, an antique watch, a coin – will make sure of it.

Over the coming weeks, her neighbour, Maureen, a housewife, with a four-year-old son, takes Plum under her wing. But does Maureen have her own agenda? And Plum's adored, secretive, older brothers, Justin and Cydar, court catastrophe in worlds that she barely knows exist.

Her friends - her worst enemies - range from the ruthless manipulator to the charismatic princess to the careful hangers-on. They agree to come to her birthday party on two conditions: that her brothers attend and that she lets them pierce her ears. She submits to both demands.

The day of the party arrives, and catastrophe swiftly follows. Secrets and lies are uncovered that mark endings and beginnings.

## Discussion Questions

- ❖ There's a seething banality to *Butterfly*, a quiet dissembler. Discuss some examples of the ordinary, trite events that occur in Plum's family life. Do they resonate with you and your family?
- ❖ Our society insists that family values comprise the moral code we must have to shape our lives, our unofficial Constitution, our credo. What principles do Plum's family have and do they live by them?
- ❖ How does Plum feel about her changing body? What comparisons are made between what the world can offer her as opposed to her brothers? Discuss how the title *Butterfly* is a metaphor for Plum.
- ❖ What is the secret that is exposed during Plum's birthday party and what effect does this have on her? How does it contribute to the unravelling of Plum's superficial family harmony?
- ❖ What role does honesty play in *Butterfly*? Why do you think certain members of Plum's family conceal elements of their lives?
- ❖ Plum's friends are hurtful, catty, malicious and gossipy. Why do you think Plum yearns for their approval? Have you ever desperately wanted affirmation from a friend(s)? How did it feel when you did / didn't receive it?
- ❖ Do you think this is a book written for young adults or adults? Does it matter if books have a target audience or not?

## References

- ❖ Wikipedia – Sonya Hartnett: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sonya\\_Hartnett](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sonya_Hartnett) and Miles Franklin Award: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miles\\_Franklin\\_Award#2010s](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miles_Franklin_Award#2010s)
- ❖ Penguin – *Butterfly*: <https://www.penguin.com.au/books/butterfly-9780143203056>
- ❖ BookBrowse – *Butterfly*:  
[https://www.bookbrowse.com/bb\\_briefs/detail/index.cfm/ezine\\_preview\\_number/5368/butterfly#reader\\_reviews](https://www.bookbrowse.com/bb_briefs/detail/index.cfm/ezine_preview_number/5368/butterfly#reader_reviews)
- ❖ Reading Matters Blog: <https://readingmattersblog.com/2010/04/18/butterfly-by-sonya-hartnett/>
- ❖ The Guardian Book Review by Lavinia Greenlaw 6 June 2009:  
<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2009/jun/06/butterfly-sonya-hartnett>
- ❖ The Monthly – “Unhappy Families”:  
<https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2009/february/1274504526/craig-sherborne/unhappy-families#mtr>
- ❖ Sonya Hartnett School Resources: <http://www.sonyahartnett.com.au/pdf/Butterfly.pdf>
- ❖ Confessions of a Book Addict:  
<http://www.confessionsofabookaddict.com/2010/04/review-of-butterfly.html>