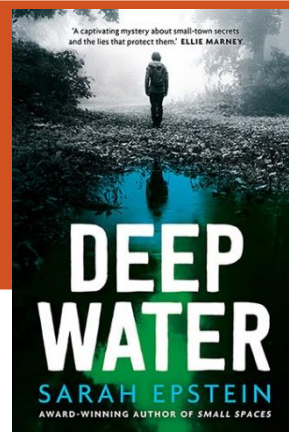




Deep Water

Sarah Epstein



Author Background

Sarah Epstein is an award-winning Australian author, illustrator and designer who grew up in suburban Sydney and spent her childhood drawing and cobbling together picture books at the kitchen table. By her teens she was also writing short stories and angsty poetry, and starting novels that never saw the light of day. After achieving a design degree at university, Sarah embarked on a career in graphic design. It was only after she'd had a baby that Sarah reconnected with her desire to write children's books. When she's not busy writing you can find her designing, illustrating and crafting. She lives with her husband, two sons and rescued dog called Luna. Her debut novel *Small Spaces* won numerous awards and has been optioned for film by Triptych Pictures. Sarah's suspenseful new YA mystery, *Deep Water*, is a CBCA Notable Book and was shortlisted for the Queensland Literary Awards.

Book Summary

Henry Weaver is missing. Three months ago, thirteen-year-old Henry disappeared from The Shallows during a violent storm, leaving behind his muddy mountain bike at the train station. Mason Weaver is trapped. While Mason doesn't know who he is or what he's capable of, he knows the one thing binding him to this suffocating small town is his younger brother, Henry. Chloe Baxter wants answers. Why would Henry run away without telling her? One of Chloe's friends knows something, and she's determined to find out the truth. As Chloe wades into dangerous waters and Mason's past emerges, a chilling question ripples to the surface: how far would you go to keep a secret?

'They checked the stormwater drains for Henry first.' The opening line of *Deep Water* creates an ominous sense of dread. And what follows in the opening chapter is every bit as mysterious and compelling as any of the classic novels set in small towns riddled with secrets. Sarah Epstein builds upon this initial sense of dread, creating new layers of tension that keep the reader engaged and trying to guess what will happen next. The story is told through the first-person voice of Chloe and the third-person voice of Mason, to describe the events leading up to Henry's disappearance. To add even more mystery into the mix, Mason's story includes a ticking clock device – "Fourteen weeks before the storm", "Ten weeks before the storm" – as he counts down to the actual night of Henry's disappearance. And then there is the voice of Henry himself, this time in the mode of a conversation with a stranger via electronic messaging. *Deep Water* is one of the most compelling mysteries you will read. Tension builds upon tension and colours the story and the setting, building up to a cleverly managed and thrilling conclusion.

Discussion Questions

1. Did the first chapter of Deep Water hook you? What effect did the book's first sentence have on you? How has the author used foreshadowing (a warning or indication of a future event) to propel readers into Chapter Two?
2. Why do you think the author decided to use multiple narrators to tell the story of Henry's disappearance? How might your reading experience have changed if the story had been told from Chloe's or Mason's perspective only? Why do you think the author decided to include Henry's online communications but in a much more limited way?
3. For most of the story Chloe's perspective is told in the present tense and Mason's is told in the past tense. Did the switching between time increase the suspense of the story for you?
4. Sarah Epstein has been quoted as saying that, for her, "character drives the story". What were your reactions to, or feelings about, each of the major characters – Chloe, Mason and Henry?
5. 'Everyone may know everyone in small towns, but can we ever truly know anyone?' (p. 93). Discuss.
6. Did you find the ending of Deep Water satisfying?
 - Was it predictable or did it take you by surprise?
 - Did it seem a logical progression of everything that had happened up until then?
 - Was it consistent with the characters as you had come to know them?

References

- ❖ <https://sarahepsteinbooks.com/about/>
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