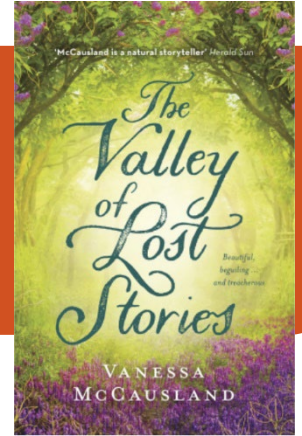




The Valley of Lost Stories

Vanessa McCausland



Author Background

Vanessa McCausland studied English at Sydney University and has worked as a journalist for nearly 20 years. Her writing has appeared in the Daily Telegraph, Sydney Morning Herald, news.com.au, Mamamia, Body+Soul and Kidspot.com.au.

Vanessa has written three adult fiction books: *The Lost Summers of Driftwood* (2019), *The Valley of Lost Stories* (2020), and *The Beautiful Words* (2021).

Vanessa is currently a contributing editor at News Corp. She lives in Sydney with her husband and daughter.

Book Summary

Four women and their children are invited to the beautiful but remote Capertee Valley, west of the Blue Mountains.

Once home to a burgeoning mining industry, now all that remains are ruins slowly being swallowed by the bush and the jewel of the valley, a stunning, renovated Art Deco hotel. This is a place haunted by secrets. In 1948 Clara Black walked into the night, never to be seen again.

As the valley beguiles these four friends, and haunts them in equal measure, each must confront secrets of her own: Nathalie, with a damaged marriage; Emmie, yearning for another child; Pen, struggling as a single parent; and Alexandra, hiding in the shadow of her famous husband.

But as the mystery of what happened seventy years earlier unravels, one of the women also vanishes into this bewitching but wild place, forcing devastating truths to the surface.

Discussion Questions

- ❖ *The Valley of Lost Stories* is divided into two parts – the first, introducing the four women to the reader, and the second is about the women’s stay in the hotel. Each chapter is alternately narrated by the four women and the story from 1948 appears at intervals. Were you able to follow the plot easily? Why/why not?
- ❖ The book is set in a real place, the Capertee Valley in Central West NSW. Have you visited the valley, and if so, were her descriptions of landscape accurate? Did she evoke a convincing spooky atmosphere?
- ❖ The story is multi-layered, with themes around female friendship, motherhood, marriage, contentment, and domestic violence, while weaving a decades-old mystery through the plot. Were the characters relatable? Did you recognise any of them in yourself or people you know?
- ❖ *The Valley of Lost Stories* has been described as *Big Little Lies* meets *Picnic at Hanging Rock*. Is this a fair description? What are the similarities and differences?
- ❖ McCausland’s other novels touch on similar themes as those in *The Valley of Lost Stories*. Will you read her other books? Why/why not?

References

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