

**BOOK DETAILS**

Format: Paperback

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**AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY**

Peggy Frew's debut novel, *House of Sticks*, won the 2010 Victorian Premier's Literary Award for an unpublished manuscript. Her story 'Home Visit' won *The Age* short story competition in 2008. She has been published in *New Australian Stories 2*, *Kill Your Darlings*, and *Meanjin*. Peggy is also a member of the critically acclaimed and award-winning Melbourne band Art of Fighting.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How is the way in which Bonnie responds physically to her surroundings used in the development of her character and the evolution of the story?
2. What does Doug represent to Bonnie? What does he represent to Pete? Who do you think sees him more clearly?
3. For much of the novel, Bonnie barely tolerates Doug, in contrast to Pete, who is open-hearted and generous. Why do you think this is? Does Pete have a freedom to be generous that Bonnie is denied?
4. How does Bonnie view Mickey? How does the contrast between their lives explore the idea of identity?
5. With live-in extended family members a vanishing phenomenon, and baby-boomer grandparents staying 'younger' longer and busy with their own lives, are today's parents facing more of a challenge than those of previous generations?
6. Do you think Bonnie should have given Pete the go-ahead to put the bet on? Why or why not?
7. Mel and Bonnie discuss an inner-city community in which neighbours have taken down the fences between their houses. Bonnie finds the idea confronting, but semi-communal living could be one way in which parents like Bonnie and Pete gain the support they're not getting from extended family. What do you think?
8. How does the experience of motherhood differ for today's women compared to the mothers of the two previous generations?

REVIEWS

‘Peggy Frew’s crystalline eye observes the shoreline of domestic life ... Helen Garner meets Henry James in this suburban gothic, where innocence can turn to menace in a moment, love to resentment, and trust to prickling suspicion.’

— KATE VEITCH

‘Brilliant. Peggy Frew is a superb writer, and this is a remarkably confident debut.’

— CLARE BOWDITCH

Peggy Frew ‘shows real talent in her debut novel, which is sophisticated and extremely well written ... Readers of all ages will enjoy Frew’s engaging prose.’
[FOUR STARS]

— *Bookseller & Publisher*

‘*House of Sticks* affords an achingly lifelike glimpse into contemporary Australian domesticity. Frew’s style is colloquial, photorealistic, and yet in its knife-edge focus it is able to slip into a darker, hidden world of psychological fissure and urban dread

— *Canberra Times*

‘My debut Australian novel of the year is Peggy Frew’s terrific domestic/rock’n’roll tale, *House of Sticks*’

— *Australian Book Review*

9. The idea of boundaries is a recurring one in *House of Sticks*: when the family visit the country, Bonnie and her children talk about why they can’t cross the fence-line into a neighbouring property unless invited. In what other ways are boundaries explored? What boundaries are crossed, and by whom?
10. How do you think Bonnie balances what she’s lost — freedom, career — with what she’s gained by having children? Do you think Bonnie regrets her life choices?
11. What do you think of Doug by the end of *House of Sticks*?
12. “*But you know it can’t ... ever be the same*” says Pete towards the end of the novel. Why not? What constitutes betrayal in a relationship? What do you think the future holds for Bonnie and Pete?



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