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2012

Reader's Guide



Other novels by Deborah Levy

Billy and Girl (1996)

The Unloved (1994)

Swallowing Geography (1992)

Beautiful Mutants (1987)

Swimming Home Deborah Levy

And Other Stories

Paperback £10

Ebook £8

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About the author

Deborah Levy writes fiction, plays and poetry. Her work has been staged by the Royal Shakespeare Company, and she is the author of highly praised novels including *Beautiful Mutants*, *Swallowing Geography* and *Billy and Girl*. Her latest novel, *Swimming Home*, was serialised on Radio 4 as a *Book at Bedtime*.

Swimming Home

As he arrives with his family at the villa in the hills above Nice, Joe sees a body in the swimming pool. But the girl is very much alive. She is Kitty Finch: a self-proclaimed botanist with green-painted fingernails, walking naked out of the water and into the heart of their holiday. Why is she there? What does she want from them all? And why does Joe's wife allow her to remain?

Swimming Home is a subversive page-turner, a merciless gaze at the insidious harm that depression can have on apparently stable, well-turned-out people. Set in a summer villa, the story is tautly structured, taking place over a single week in which a group of beautiful, flawed tourists in the French Riviera come loose at the seams.

Deborah Levy's writing combines linguistic virtuosity, technical brilliance and a strong sense of what it means to be alive. *Swimming Home* represents a new direction for a major writer. In this book, the wildness and the danger are all the more powerful for resting just beneath the surface.

With its biting humour and immediate appeal, it wears its darkness lightly.

'*Swimming Home* is a statement on the power of the unsaid. Magisterial... themes, phrases and images recur in rhythmic cycles through this fugal novel. Levy's cinematic clarity and momentum convey confusion with remarkable lucidity.' Abigail Deutsch, *Times Literary Supplement*

Discussion points

Swimming Home is told from multiple viewpoints, did you find one character more sympathetic than another?

Why does Isabel ask Kitty to stay at the villa? Is Isabel a victim or is she colluding in her husband's infidelity in order to facilitate her own escape?

How are the themes of loss and longing explored in *Swimming Home*?

Nina, in the absence of Isabel, has been Joe's companion and together they have lived with his depression. What are the strengths and weaknesses in their relationship?

The end of *Swimming Home* has been described as 'hugely surprising' and 'shocking'. What is your reaction to the end of the novel?

Themed reading

Virginia Woolf *Mrs Dalloway*
Françoise Sagan *Bonjour Tristesse*
Tom McCarthy *C*
Marguerite Duras *The Lover*

Useful links

[Author's website](http://www.deborahlevy.co.uk)
<http://www.deborahlevy.co.uk>

[Publisher's website](http://www.andotherstories.org)
<http://www.andotherstories.org>

[Introduction to *Swimming Home* by Tom McCarthy](http://surplusmatter.com/writings/blue-sugar-mice-and-the-death-drive/)
<http://surplusmatter.com/writings/blue-sugar-mice-and-the-death-drive/>