



HOW TO BE AUSTRALIAN

Ashley Kalagian Blunt

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ASHLEY KALAGIAN BLUNT

Ashley Kalagian Blunt is the author of two books: *How to Be Australian* and *My Name Is Revenge*, which was shortlisted for the 2019 Woollahra Digital Literary Awards and was a finalist in the 2018 Carmel Bird Digital Literary Award. Her writing appears in *Griffith Review*, *Sydney Review of Books*, *Westerly*, the *Australian*, the *Big Issue* and *Kill Your Darlings*. Ashley is a Moth StorySLAM winner and has appeared at Story Club, the National Young Writers' Festival, and Sydney Writers' Festival. She lived and worked in Canada, South Korea, Peru and Mexico before moving to Australia.

BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

1. In the opening pages of *How to Be Australian*, we step into a minus 40 winter day in Winnipeg. How does this set up Ashley's experiences throughout the book?
2. Ashley describes herself as 'generations dislocated' and without a homeland. The theme of dislocation and belonging is raised throughout the book, not only for Ashley, but also among diasporan Armenians and for her classmate Noelle and Kamilaroi dancer Matty Shields. What insights about home does Ashley's journey offer?
3. Ashley summarises John O'Grady's advice from *They're a Weird Mob*: 'Return all shouts. Don't be a bludger. Don't lose your temper when your workmates ridicule you – and if they're Aussies, they will. If someone does you a favour, return it, but don't overdo generosity. Abuse your friends to their face, but not in private.' Do you agree with this advice? What would you add?
4. 'I was afraid. I was inadequate. I was failing at something, even if I couldn't say precisely what.' How is Ashley's anxiety influenced by her perspectives on her marriage, career, and sense of home?
5. On her arrival in Australia, Ashley notes, 'I had the dizzying sensation that this was the start of my adult life.' But a few years later, when she and Steve are dealing with visa paperwork, she says, 'I'd transitioned from onset adulthood into what was, apparently, the rest of my life.' How is the theme of adulthood explored throughout the book?
6. 'As Canada's Commonwealth sibling, Australia felt distinct yet familiar.' What assumptions did you have about Canada before reading this book? How were they challenged or upheld?
7. What questions would you expect to find on the Australian citizenship test? What questions would you want to include?