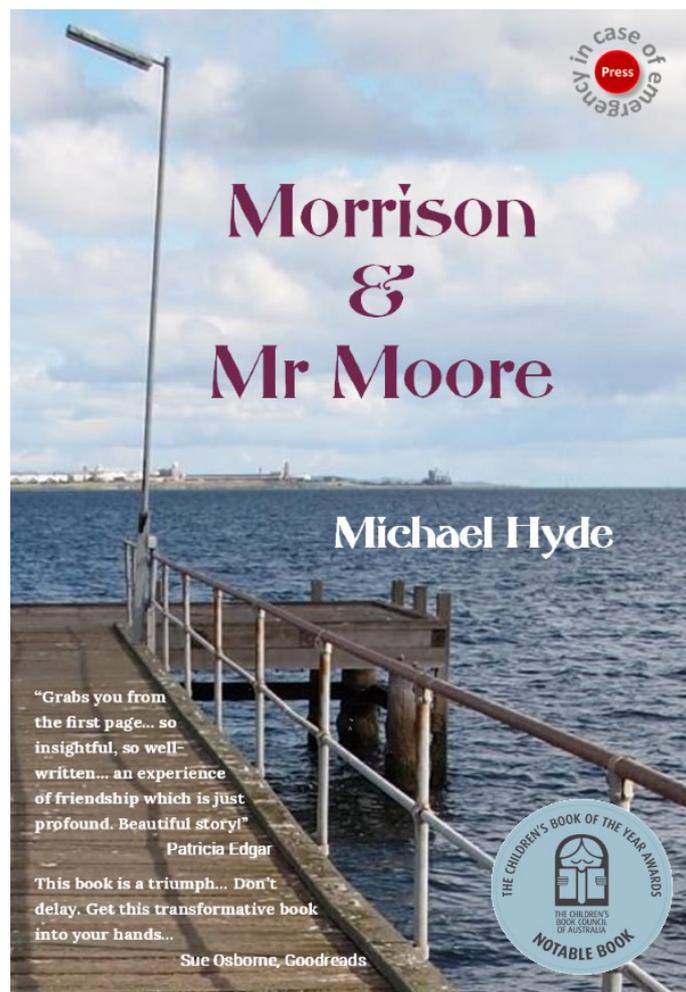




Morrison & Mr Moore

A Study Guide by Michael Hyde



MORRISON AND MR MOORE STUDY GUIDE

This study guide is written by the author, Michael Hyde

Most of the questions below are asking for a written response. However your teachers and/or your class might decide that some of the questions could be better explored through discussion; or as a class talk; or as a digital presentation; or as a film script/synopsis (checkout Morrison's Film Synopsis p52); or...

How did the story make you feel?

A well-known Australian author, Rodney Hall once said that after finishing reading a novel, the most important question you could ask yourself and others was, '**How did it make you feel?**'

Hall is an award winning author. He's won the *Miles Franklin Award* (Australia's biggest literary prize) and been nominated a number of times for the *Booker Prize* (one of the world's biggest literary prize) plus many other awards. So his question about our feelings comes from many years of experience.

1. After reading *Morrison and Mr Moore* how did the story make you feel? (Angry, happy, sad, thoughtful, nothing etc). Try to be specific in your answer. Try to find something that happened in the book that explains or demonstrates what you're saying.

What's the story about?

2. After you've finished reading *Morrison and Mr Moore*, in only two sentences answer the question : What is the story about?

(Writers are often asked this question by editors. It's not always an easy thing to do.)

3. Was it worth reading? Explain in one paragraph giving three reasons for your answer.

What on Earth was that about?!

There are many moments and scenes in this novel that might perplex some readers. And to tell you the truth, sometimes they still perplex me. Even though I wrote the story, every now and then I re-read sections and wonder what I meant by it. Some parts mean different things to different people. Some parts mean different things to you at different times.

The list below asks the simple question:

What did the scene mean to you as the reader?

Give reasons and explanations in your answers. Remember, often readers get different ideas from the same scene, so your answers may vary.

4. The movie, *I know where I come from*, produced by Morrison and his friends. (pp 52-53)
5. Morrison reads *Murder on the 1:30* (p25) – the story written by John Morrison which is studied by Morrison’s English class.
6. On page 50 Morrison tells an anecdote from John Morrison about a friend, Mary, who brings a draft of a story to him for his comments. John Morrison asks his friend a number of questions. What’s he trying to get his friend to understand?

Characters

There are major and minor characters in the novel. Mr Moore, Morrison, Grandma, Roxy, Petticoat, Little Terry, Frankie, Jack Kettle, Mr Hamm, Ms Gerrard and so on.

7. Which character did you like best?

He/she could be a major or minor character. Explain your response, drawing on what they did, how they behaved, specific scenes and maybe how they made you feel.

8. Which character irritated or annoyed you?

Explain your response using the guidelines in question 7.

9. What do you think of Morrison?

Let’s face it, he could be very annoying, amusing, a smartarse, kind, vicious. Did you like or dislike him? Or did your attitude change as you read the story? Maybe your feelings about him kept on changing. Please give examples.

10. How do you feel about Morrison’s mother

Morrison’s mother features throughout the story, usually connected to a bad or sad memory of Morrison. There are parts of the story where her alleged treatment of Morrison horrifies us. Then there are scenes where she is dying; and the funeral where she sits up and chats to her son. How did you feel about her as you read the novel? Did you have any sympathy for her? Did you have sympathy for Morrison? Did you wonder about why she fell into such a deep hole? Does Morrison ever show signs of compassion for his mother? Or any understanding of her life?

Write a response to these questions drawing on scenes and information from the book. You could also use your own imagination as to what her life was like and perhaps what her demons were.

Friendship

To a great extent this story is about friendship. In his story, Morrison often ponders on the question of friendship (p145 and p 127), especially his unique connection to Mr Moore. He also writes a piece on his grandma (pp 88 – 93). However the novel is particularly about an improbable friendship between a rebellious student, Morrison and an ageing school Principal, Mr Moore. There are of course other friendships in the novel as well.

11. How realistic is the developing friendship between Morrison and Mr Moore? Give reasons.
12. How realistic is the friendship group of Morrison, Roxy, Petticoat Boy and Terry?

What binds them together? In what ways are they 'different'? Are they a big band of misfits or not so strange after all? Are they just a bunch of kids who like to be seen as 'different'? Did any of them annoy you? Give reasons.

13. Is there someone in your life who you consider a friend? Or perhaps someone who was a friend but who is no longer around or no longer a part of your life.

Write at least a page about this friend and what they mean (meant) to you.

Refer to how you first met, what they look like, what you do (or did) together, where you spent time. your secrets, their personality, quirks, things you don't like about each other etc.

You might like to refer to the friendships in the book and how they remind you of your friend or how they don't.

NB. Avoid writing in generalities ('they're cool; 'always there when you need them'; 'words can't explain' etc). It's the details you write about which will bring your piece to life and do justice to your friendship.

14. Do you know of any friendships that seem as strange as Morrison and Mr Moore's? Perhaps out of the people you know. Or your family. Or perhaps you don't know them very well but have wondered how come they're friends. Or siblings. Or even married.

Again, write about them using the suggestions in the first question, making sure you describe the 'strangeness' in detail, using big and small observations.

Schools, Teachers and Students

Much of the story happens in and around Morrison's school, Riverside College. He muses on many aspects of school life, often while sitting outside Mr Moore's office. He has some amusing anecdotes and some dark thoughts about what goes on in class, his teachers, other students, and school life in general.

15. How realistic are the school scenes in the novel? Describe how it differs from your school.
16. Morrison reflects on what makes a good teacher. In fact he wonders why people become teachers. He notes a few examples where he thinks a certain teacher is a 'good teacher'. Jack Kettle, Maths teacher, Bernie Kriaris, his literature teacher, Ms Gerrard, Media teachers, Stan and Izzie, and Frankie all receive some small accolades. Mr Moore, of course receives a number of compliments. What does Morrison think makes a good teacher?

(This question might make a good class discussion before answering the above.)

17. Which of Morrison's teachers did you like the best and why?
18. From your own perspective, what characteristics make a 'good teacher'? Some examples will strengthen your answer.
19. You've been attending school for many years now. From kindergarten till now – except for the pandemic! You've experienced many teachers through Primary and Secondary School.

Who was one of the best teachers you had?

What did they teach? How did they teach? How did they communicate with you and the rest of the students? What were their good points? What were their bad points? How well did they know the subject they were teaching? Was there anything unusual about them (the way they dressed, their explanations, humour, seriousness, strange habits, interesting habits, their personal stories, punishments, rewards)? Did you look forward to the time spent with them? Would the rest of the students who had the same teacher, agree with your answer?

20. There's a number of students referred to in *Morrison and Mr Moore*. Roxy, Little Terry, Petticoat Boy, Chris, Billy, the film students and Morrison himself.

Do any of them remind you of any students you might have come across in your schooling?

In what ways did they remind you of the characters in the book? How do you remember them? Why do you remember them? How did they act in class and out of class? Were they all good, all bad or a combination? Do you have any specific stories about them?

Memory

Memory is a pesky little devil. Morrison frequently refers to his memory – its reliability or unreliability. At the start of the novel one of the quotes, by the author Julian Barnes, refers to the question of memory when telling stories from our lives.

And of course there is Mrs Moore who has Alzheimer's, a disease that destroys memory. Her condition is talked about by Mr Moore, and she sits in the background as the story progresses. She also features in the interview done by Morrison, Roxy and Marcus (Petticoat Boy) (pp104-111).

My own mother died of Alzheimer's and my father wrote a book about looking after her, called *Betty and me – a love story*. So even though my mother's Alzheimer's was very sad, I became intrigued by how memory works, as you can tell by my novel.

Think of an important memory, happy or sad, in your life. It has to be important to you. It could be a break-up in your family; a wedding; a catastrophe; a sadness; something funny; tragic; a mixture of emotions; a special place (see *Special Place* at the beginning of the story).

Write at least a page about this event or place. Tell everything you remember about the event. Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?

When finished, read it through and share with another class member. In discussion with each other check-out how accurate your memory is. How accurate is your re-telling? Was there anything you're not sure of? Anything not quite as it happened? Anything missing? Anything exaggerated?

Once you've done that you might think that even though you might have exaggerated or left out certain things, the story works well. Then again you might feel like writing another version.

John Morrison

Australia has a wonderful history of story-tellers, from First Nations People all the way through to today. John Morrison is an actual Australian writer who died in 1998 at the age of 94. He is the writer from whom Morrison takes his new name. He was mainly known for his short stories and was one of many Australian writers between

the 1940's to the 1960's, who wrote about ordinary working people's lives – which is pretty much the way Morrison describes his stories.

21. Search 'John Morrison' and write a paragraph about him that is more detailed than Morrison's account in the story.
22. Find six more Australian writers who wrote about the same time as John Morrison. Make sure that three of them are women (which won't be difficult because there were just as many, if not more, women authors as men in that era).
23. Read a short story by John Morrison and then explain why his stories might have appealed to Morrison.
24. Knowing Morrison from the story, what other name could he have chosen as his new name that would have fitted the kind of young man he was and the troubles he faced. The name could be made-up, taken from history, or from the present day. Explain why you chose the name, with reference to the kind of character Morrison is.

Essays

25. It has been said that *Morrison and Mr Moore* is a story that is either loved or hated by readers.

Write an essay on why you loved the book

OR

Why you hated the book

OR

Why you loved and hated the book

26. *Morrison and Mr Moore* explores an intergenerational friendship between Morrison and Mr Moore. Discuss.
27. The book examines the crucial issues of authority, respect and trust. Explore how these three issues are dealt with.
28. Many readers would see Morrison, Roxy, Petticoat Boy and Terry as misfits. Discuss how and why they can be seen as misfits and what this says about our society.

29. Morrison displays some real hatred towards his mother and his life as a small child. As the story unfolds there are some signs that there is some softening of his attitude. How is this shown and why does this happen?

A BIG Suggestion

As you read and discussed this novel, some of you have felt or remembered different events, people, anecdotes and stories out of your own lives or the lives of those close to you. You may have heard these stories or only heard bits and pieces from friends and family over the years.

On reflection do you think that these thoughts might be turned into a good story? A strong short story? A play or film script? A song? Poetry? A novel?

I know this is a big ask and perhaps it won't interest some of you, but if it does why not have a go?

How you go about writing your story will take some time and obtaining advice from your teachers and others. While I have some advice for you it would take at least another whole study guide to help you properly.

If this suggestion has made you wonder if you'd like to have a go then the best first piece of advice I can give you is:

'Put super glue on your chair and sit down.'

Good luck.

Bio:

Michael Hyde

Michael Hyde has been writing for over 40 years – mainly for adolescents and Young Adults. Examples of his work are *MAX*, *Tyger Tyger*, *Hey Joe* and *Surfing Goliath* - all critically acclaimed. *All along the Watchtower*, was his memoir of the sixties in Australia.

After 25 years as an English teacher Michael lectured in Creative Writing, Sports Writing and Children's Literature at Victoria University for 20 years. Now retired but still writing, he conducts writing workshops for students and teachers across Australia.

He also received Victoria University's Arts Faculty *Award for Teaching Excellence* and the Vice Chancellor's *Award for Teaching Excellence*. In 2013 he successfully completed

and was awarded a PhD which examined the social and political rebellion of the Sixties in Australia.

He also appeared on the award winning SBS 4 part documentary on ASIO, 'Persons of Interest'.

He has begun work on a children's book on TREES with the renowned Australian children's book illustrator, Roland Harvey.

Also by Michael Hyde:

Website: michaelhyde.com.au

Morrison and Mr Moore (CBC Notable 2022)

Footy Dreaming

MAX

Tyger Tyger

Hey Joe (CBC Notable)

Surfing Goliath

Girl Who Married a Fly (ed)

Hunger (ed) (CBC Notable)

Girls Change the Game (with Gabrielle Gloury)

All Along the Watchtower (Literary Memoir of the 60s)

Persons of Interest (Featured in award-winning SBS documentary on ASIO)