

Darling

by Rachel Edwards



With a plot that unfolds over the last six months of 2016 and includes the shocking Brexit vote and the election of Donald Trump, *Darling* is a thriller that's ripe for discussion about timely topics. From mental illness and sexual abuse to racial politics, the rise of the populist right, misogyny, and the vulnerability of teenage girls, *Darling* is truly a thriller for our times.

General Discussion Questions

Did you enjoy reading Darling's and Lola's voices equally, or was there one you preferred reading? If so, which one and why? Which narrator did you relate to more?

Lola says she isn't racist. What do you think?

Who is the more reliable narrator – Darling or Lola?

How did you feel about Darling (the character) by the end of the novel?

How have events in Darling's life shaped the person she's become?

How have events in Lola's life shaped the person she's become? To what extent do you think we should try to judge people's actions in the context of their experiences?

In the wake of the Harvey Weinstein scandal and #metoo movement, do you think any of the events in the story would be less likely to happen now, or handled differently?

**A teenage girl clashes with her new
stepmother in this debut thriller with
an unforgettable twist**



How did you respond to Thomas's character? How much responsibility should he bear for what happens?

Is *Darling* a political novel or a domestic thriller?

Do you find the events in *Darling* believable?

Is *Darling* a realistic representation of life in a family with a step-parent and step-children?

How did you respond to the character of Will and the role he plays in the plot?

How did you respond to the portrayal of racism in the novel?

How is sexuality portrayed in the novel, and how is it different for Lola and Darling? What differences and similarities are there in how they feel about their bodies, and how they feel about sex?

What role does food play in the novel?

How does the power dynamic between Darling and Lola shift throughout the novel?

What did you think of the representation of millennials in this novel, and what role do generational differences play in the relationship between Lola and Darling?

"I knew she was trouble from the moment I saw her..."



What role does technology and the internet play in the lives of the characters and their relationships? Could this story have happened in, say, 1996, rather than 2016?

High Desford is a fictional town. Does it remind you of any real-life places?

How accurately does *Darling* represent life in the UK today?

Bright New Britain is a fictional political party. Which real-life political parties is it similar to? How is it different to those parties?

Fairytales and myths are full of 'wicked stepmothers'. Why do you think this is? Is *Darling* a wicked stepmother?

The epigraph to *Darling* is 'If you prick us, do we not bleed?', a line from Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. What do you think this line means, and why do you think the author chose it as the epigraph?

The full quote continues like this: 'If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? if you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?' Does this change how you respond to the quote?

How did you respond to the ad that the novel ends with? Did it change the way you feel about the rest of the novel?