

All Our Shimmering Skies

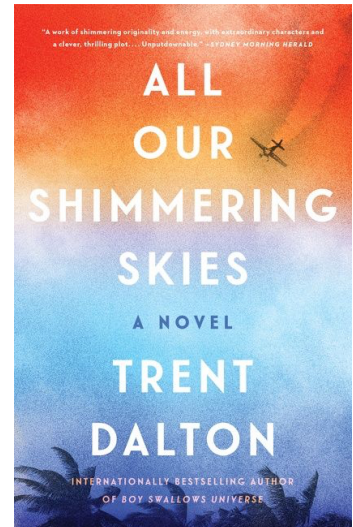
Harper Perennial

By Trent Dalton

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Introduction

From the internationally bestselling and beloved author of the critically acclaimed *Boy Swallows Universe*, a mesmerizing, uplifting novel of adventure and unlikely friendships in World War II Australia—calling to mind *The Wizard of Oz* as directed by Baz Luhrmann.



Darwin, 1942. As Japanese bombs rain down on her hometown, newly orphaned Molly Hook looks to the skies and runs for her life. Inside a duffel bag, she carries a stone heart and a map that will lead her to Longcoat Bob, the deep-country sorcerer whom she believes cursed her family. Accompanying her are the most unlikely traveling companions: Greta, a razor-tongued actress, and Yukio, a Japanese fighter pilot who's abandoned his post.

With messages from the skies above to guide them towards treasure, but foes close on their trail, the trio will encounter the beauty and vastness of the Northern Territory and survive in ways they never thought possible.

A story about the gifts that fall from the sky, curses we dig from the earth, and secrets we bury inside ourselves, Trent Dalton's brilliantly imagined novel is an odyssey of true love and grave danger, of darkness and light, of bones and blue heavens. It is a love letter to Australia and an ode to the art of looking up—a buoyant and magical tale, filled to the brim with warmth, wit, and wonder.

Questions for Discussion

1. The story is in essence a quest narrative. Do you see any resemblances to *The Wizard of Oz* or *The Odyssey*?
2. Have there been times in your life when you have spoken to the sky? Or otherwise looked to nature for answers?
3. What do you think is the real treasure that Molly escapes into the forest to find?
4. Why do you think Greta Maze chooses to join Molly on her quest?
5. What do you think happened to Molly's mother, Violet Hook?

6. The central theme to the story is “own all you carry, carry all you own.” In what ways could this message apply to your life in 2020 and to modern life in general?
7. What role does death and where we go when we die figure in the narrative?
8. Do you believe there is magic to be found in the living world? Not just fantasy, but in the things we normally explain through science?
9. Dalton has said the story is one big metaphor for his life growing up on the fringes of Brisbane in the early 1990s. Did you find thematic similarities between *All Our Shimmering Skies* and Dalton’s semiautobiographical debut, *Boy Swallows Universe*?
10. What do you think happens to Molly and Greta beyond the end of this story?