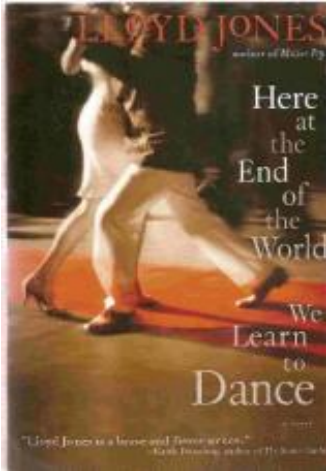

Here at the End of the World We Learn to Dance

by Lloyd Jones



About the Book

In tango, there are no wrong turns. But every dance begins with a backward step.

Taking his cue from the tango, the acclaimed author of **Mister Pip** has written a thrilling and sensuous novel about how we fall in love.

Ranging from rural New Zealand during the final days of World War I to Buenos Aires at mid-century to the present day, this masterful novel intertwines two love stories across three generations. The deep suspicions of an isolated community in the midst of war force Louise and Schmidt --- two near-strangers --- to hide in a cave overlooking the ocean. Desperate for solace, Schmidt teaches Louise the tango, and the iconic dance becomes their mutual obsession and the trigger for an affair that will span continents.

Years later, Schmidt's granddaughter, keeper of the family secrets, owns a restaurant in Wellington where a shy young student named Lionel washes the dishes. One day she snaps her fingers in his direction and says: "I need to dance."

Brilliantly evoking the seductive power of one of the world's most famous dances, Lloyd Jones's novel is a virtuoso performance.

Discussion Guide

1. Your reading group may wish to play recordings of some of the music described in the novel, by artists such as Anibal Troilo or Astor Piazzola. If you do so, ask yourselves what makes this music unique. What specific emotions does it evoke?
2. What did the novel's opening scenes tell you about Schmidt and Louise? What assumptions did you make about their

devotion in life and in death?

3. Why did Rosa first approach Lionel? How did her feelings toward him change throughout the novel? What made their attraction for one another so intense?

4. How were you affected by the passages that were narrated by Lionel? What was he able to reveal through his storytelling voice? Were any aspects of the past beyond his understanding?

5. Discuss the power of dance, tango in particular, as it evolves throughout the novel. As a language, what does the tango allow lovers to say to each other?

6. What does the novel's title say about the turmoil experienced by each generation portrayed in **Here at the End of the World We Learn to Dance**? How did the characters create security for each other? How do they add to one another's peril?

7. What did Schmidt and Rosa teach their dance partners, besides the tango?

8. What did New Zealand and South America represent to the characters? How did the novel's settings create meaningful backdrops for the episodes in their lives?

9. Chapter seven provides details about Louise's youth and the effects of the Great War on her upbringing. What does she have in common with Billy and Henry? How does she manage the problem of equal affections among the men in her life?

10. In chapter fourteen, Louise receives Schmidt's invitation to join him in Buenos Aires, though she has made a comfortable life with Billy. Why doesn't Rosa's husband respond to Lionel in the same way that Billy reacted to Schmidt?

11. What did Lionel's parents teach him about relationships? What other legacies did they impart to him?

12. Discuss Henry's fate. In what small ways are he and Clara able to heal each other?

13. Does Lionel's generation experience romance as passionately as Louise's generation did? How does Lionel's affair with Rosa prepare him for loving Chrissie?

14. What did you discover about the history of World War I by reading **Here at the End of the World We Learn to Dance**? How familiar had you been with its repercussions outside Europe?

15. What themes of solace and comfort recur throughout this novel and the author's award-winning **Mister Pip**?

Author Bio

Lloyd Jones (born in Lower Hutt, 23 March 1955) is a New Zealand author who currently resides in Wellington. His novel Mister Pip won the Commonwealth Writers' Prize and was shortlisted for the Booker.

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Publication Date: February 19, 2013

Paperback: pages

Publisher: Dial Press

ISBN-10: B002WZOZBG

ISBN-13: 9780385342629