

Book Club Discussion Guide



The Wake by Linden MacIntyre, Page 1 (May 2022)

The Wake: the Deadly Legacy of a Newfoundland Tsunami

By Linden MacIntyre

About the author:

LINDEN MACINTYRE was the host of Canada's premiere investigative television show, *The Fifth Estate*, for nearly twenty-five years. Born in St. Lawrence, Newfoundland, and raised in Port Hastings, Cape Breton, he began his career in 1964 with the *Halifax Chronicle-Herald* as a parliamentary bureau reporter. MacIntyre later worked at *The Journal* and hosted CBC Radio's *Sunday Morning* before joining *The Fifth Estate*. His work on that show garnered an International Emmy, and he has won ten Gemini Awards. His bestselling first novel, *The Long Stretch*, was nominated for a CBA Libris Award, while his boyhood memoir, *Causeway: A Passage from Innocence*, was a *Globe and Mail* Best Book of 2006, winning both the Edna Staebler Award for Creative Non-Fiction and the Evelyn Richardson Non-Fiction Award. His second novel, *The Bishop's Man*, was a #1 national bestseller and the winner of the Scotiabank Giller Prize, the Dartmouth Book Award for Fiction and the CBA Libris Fiction Book of the Year Award. His other novels include *Why Men Lie*, *Punishment* and *The Only Café*. MacIntyre lives in Toronto with his wife, CBC radio host and author Carol Off. They spend their summers in a Cape Breton village by the sea.

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Source: Publisher's website: (<https://www.harpercollins.ca/>)

About this book:

In the vein of Erik Larson's *Isaac's Storm* and *Dead Wake* comes an incredible true story of destruction and survival in Newfoundland by one of Canada's best-known writers

On November 18, 1929, a tsunami struck Newfoundland's Burin Peninsula. Giant waves up to three storeys high hit the coast at a hundred kilometres per hour, flooding dozens of communities and washing entire houses out to sea. The most destructive earthquake-related event in Newfoundland's history, the disaster killed twenty-eight people and left hundreds more homeless or destitute. It took days for the outside world to find out about the death and damage caused by the tsunami, which forever changed the lives of the inhabitants of the fishing outports along the Burin Peninsula.

Scotiabank Giller Prize-winning writer Linden MacIntyre was born near St. Lawrence, Newfoundland, one of the villages virtually destroyed by the tsunami. By the time of his birth, the cod-fishing industry lay in ruins and the village had become a mining town. MacIntyre's father, lured from Cape Breton to Newfoundland by a steady salary, worked in St. Lawrence in an underground mine that was later found to be radioactive. Hundreds of miners would die; hundreds more would struggle through shortened lives profoundly compromised by lung diseases ranging from silicosis and bronchitis to cancer. As MacIntyre says, though the tsunami killed twenty-eight people in 1929, it would claim hundreds if not thousands more in the decades to follow. And by the time the village returned to its roots and set up as a cod fishery once again, the stocks in the Grand Banks had plummeted and St. Lawrence found itself once again on the brink of disaster.

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Discussion Questions:

(General nonfiction questions to get book club discussions off to a good start.)

1. If your book offers a cultural portrait—of life in another country or region of your own country, start with questions a, b, and c:
 - a. What observations are made in the book? Does the author examine economics and politics family traditions, the arts, religious beliefs, language or food?
 - b. Does the author criticize or admire the culture? Does he/she wish to preserve or change the way of life? Either way, what would be risked or gained?
 - c. What is different from your own culture? What do you find most surprising, intriguing or difficult to understand?
2. What is the central idea discussed in the book? What issues or ideas does the author explore? Are they personal, sociological, global, political, economic, spiritual, medical, or scientific?
3. Do the issues affect your life? How so—directly, on a daily basis, or more generally? Now or sometime in the future?
4. What evidence does the author use to support the book's ideas? Is the evidence convincing...definitive or...speculative? Does the author depend on personal opinion, observation, and assessment? Or is the evidence factual—based on science, statistics, historical documents, or quotations from (credible) experts?

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5. What kind of language does the author use? Is it objective and dispassionate? Or passionate and earnest? Is it biased, inflammatory, sarcastic? Does the language help or undercut the author's premise?
6. What are the implications for the future? Are there long- or short-term consequences to the issues raised in the book? Are they positive or negative...affirming or frightening?
7. What solutions does the author propose? Are the author's recommendations concrete, sensible, doable? Who would implement those solutions?
8. How controversial are the issues raised in the book? Who is aligned on which sides of the issues? Where do you fall in that line-up?
9. Talk about specific passages that struck you as significant—or interesting, profound, amusing, illuminating, disturbing, sad...? What was memorable?
10. What have you learned after reading this book? Has it broadened your perspective about a difficult issue—personal or societal? Has it introduced you to a culture in another country...or an ethnic or regional culture in your own country?

Source: *LitLovers* (<http://www.litlovers.com>)