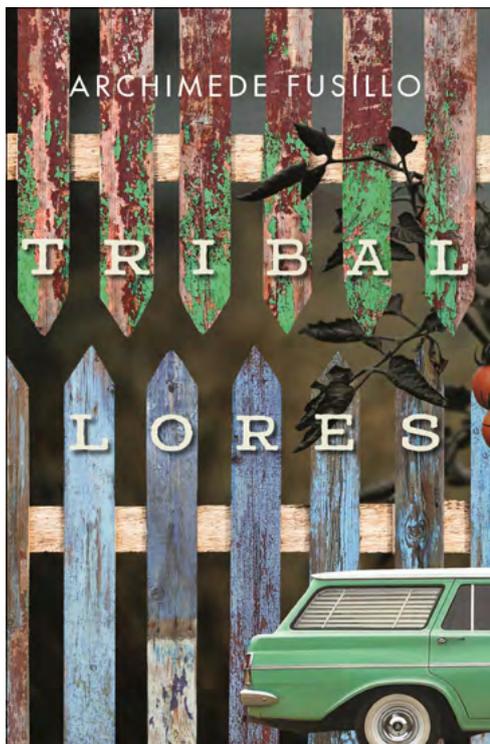


BOOK CLUB NOTES

TRIBAL

LORES

ARCHIMEDE FUSILLO



A moving and explosive tale about what happens when tradition and the need to belong collide.

Frankie Rescio is struggling with the death of his sister. Next door, Lochie Marsh is about to have his world invaded by his estranged, pregnant half-sister and her layabout boyfriend.

Despite tensions simmering just below the surface for both boys and their families, they form a bond that connects their different worlds.

Until tribal lores threaten to bring everything crashing down.

FOR READERS AGED 14+
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PAPERBACK

Discussion questions

1. “*Ostragliani have different ways to us. Different traditions. They think differently to us,*” he said finally,” (page 107*). How do the Rescio and Marsh families celebrate or mark occasions differently? Are there any ways the two families are similar?
2. Family is at the core of *Tribal Lores*. What does “family” mean to Frankie, and what does it mean to Lochie? How have their families shaped who they are, and how they act?
3. “*We are powerless in the face of death, Francesco, unless we decide not to be consumed by grief,*” (page 413*). There are many moments of sadness and loss in the novel – including Emma’s baby, Lochie’s ‘grandmother,’ Amelia, Lochie and Spicks. How do different characters in the novel work through their grief? Is there a right or wrong way to process it? How do characters use rituals and/or ‘mementos’ to feel a connection with someone they’ve lost?
4. “*Really, Lochie,*” I said dismissively, “*you’re still using wog like it carries some punch,*” (page 40*). How is racism presented in the novel? Did you think any of the characters were racist in the language they used towards the Rescio family or to China?
5. “*...a keening, inexplicable urge to defend what was indefensible, simply because it was blood,*” (page 209*). At what points in the novel do different characters feel obliged to say or do certain things out of a sense of familial duty, or because they would feel guilty if they didn’t? Is it different in the younger generation versus the older, or the Rescios versus the Marshes?
6. Lochie and Frankie are each-other’s best mates, but do you think their friendship was a healthy one? Why or why not? What did they bring out in each-other?
7. “*You talk as though we are something apart, Frankie,*” she whispered in Italian. “*After twenty years surely your father and I are Australians too, no?*” No. *Not even after one hundred and twenty years, I wanted to tell her. You’ll always be wogs who took out Australian citizenship. That’s who you are,*” (page 57*). Do you agree or disagree with Frankie? What does *Tribal Lores* say about what it means to be ‘Australian’? How would you define it?
8. How does the novel present Italian culture? How did you feel about the Italian phrases woven throughout, and could you understand their meanings each time?
9. “*But you’re from different tribes, Frankie. Us and them, we’re from different places mentally, historically, geographically, you know. It courses in our blood, all that stuff our parents brought over with them from the old country, even if we were born here. It’s part of who we are, good or bad,*” (page 347*). Do you agree with this quote from Gabby? How does Frankie’s family heritage shape his identity? It is positive, negative, or a mix of both?
10. How are right and wrong presented in the novel? Are some characters presented purely as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ or are there shades of grey in everyone? Did you find yourself forgiving some characters for their actions easier than others?

*Please check page references against a final copy.

Q&A with Archimede Fusillo

What can readers expect from *Tribal Lores*, and what inspired you to tell Frankie's story?

Readers can expect characters who are tangible, life situations that are credible, and a ride that will take them from laugh out loud to holding their breath. I wanted to write a story that had depth, a story told by a character the reader could both relate to and empathise with. I was inspired to tell not just Frankie's story – because while his is the story at the forefront, he is also the conduit for several interwoven stories. After all no one life is ever lived totally apart from any other, and it is with Frankie Rescio. His life cannot help but collide with the lives of those around him. Each life is an atom that of itself is less than than the greater whole. I was inspired to create Frankie himself, the character from fragments of so many young adolescent males it has been my good fortune to meet in my more than twenty years speaking to kids both in Australia and abroad. Frankie is the journeyman inside each of those young people who search for validation even as outwardly they appear to seek none.

***Tribal Lores* has a lot to say about trying to find out your identity and where you belong, especially as a young man. Why did you decide to write about these issues, and why do you think they're important for young people to read about?**

Some aspects of a young person's life are universal irrespective of their background. And seeking to know both who you are as an individual and where you fit in amongst your family and peers is a salient aspect of growing into adulthood. The rites of journeying from child to teenager to adult are about more than simply adapting to the social demands put upon your age, but about the circumstances that dictate the challenges put upon you. At adolescence I think the person within begins to call out for recognition and affirmation inside a body and mindset not yet accustomed to knowing where to find the answers-or indeed, whether there are any answers. It is so much trial and error, and so much depends on who and what you have around you to support you when much of what you took for granted comes into question – or at least into such sharp relief that it can hurt to be who you think you are.

What do you think is the biggest difference between the Rescio and Marsh families and how they navigate the events of the novel?

The biggest difference between the Rescio and Marsh families is that the Rescio family are bonded by both a sense of duty and a cultural history of adhering to tradition to help define who they are and what role each plays within the family. The Marsh family on the other hand are more fluid in their sense of familial duty and traditions. For the former the individual doesn't exist for themselves alone, they are bound together by blood ties made rigid by the lores of ancestry. For the latter the individual orbits the lores of generations past, and when a lore is transgressed, the fallout is magnified by the ignorance that allowed this to happen without foresight. *Tribal Lores* is more than a term – it is a manner of being that links generations through time and place – not always seamlessly.

Of course each family navigates their circumstances differently. If they didn't there wouldn't be a story – and that is the story – how do we function or otherwise within a family of which we are, in the scheme of family lores, a bit player. What impact do we have – if any? And what impact is there on us as we push forward against the pull of the past?

Why did you decide to write for teens, and how did you work to get Frankie's voice to feel genuine?

I write for an adolescent audience because you can't hide a patronising voice there. An adolescent will call you out if your characters are stereotypes, plastic, or even worse, condescending. The young adult reader has a huge range of distractions other than your book, so the story better be engaging, the voices better resonate as “of them” rather than “at them.”

And I chose to write for this audience because this time of life is one filled with an abundance of hope amongst waves of uncertainty, time of angst but also incredible vulnerability and frailty. I never pretend to be an adolescent. I let my characters be that. To do that I listen and watch carefully, and I allow myself to remember all the pangs of being that age – without

the veneer of hindsight to colour and mask both the pain and the sheer exhilaration of being at the start of your life journey.

What do you hope readers take away from *Tribal Lores*?

It is patronising for a writer to hope anything specific that a reader should take away from their work. I am not preaching. I am not writing a how-to book. All I truly hope is that once the reader starts my book, once they meet the characters, that they are engaged by them and their story sufficiently enough to want to see the characters' journey through to the end. I want my readers to care about the characters – even if they don't like them. To care enough to want to know what becomes of them – and perhaps to see something of their world in the world I have created in the book through my characters.



Discussion guide may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only. These discussion questions were created by Bethany Nevile. For enquiries please contact educationwba@walkerbooks.com.au. Discussion guide © 2020 Walker Books Australia Pty. Ltd. All rights reserved.

What are your top five favourite reads of all time?

Top 5 reads for me...just 5?

Okay – not in any order....

Bless The Beasts and the Children by Glendon Swarthout
The Chosen by Chaim Potok
Careless Love by Peter Guralnick
Life Is So Good by George Dawson & Richard Glaubman
M by Peter Robb

What's up next for you?

Next up for me... I am working collaboratively on a movie script adaptation of my second novel with a movie director, and on a new YA novel set in regional Victoria in a small town built on the fringes of a prison. I am also constantly going over stories I have written and never polished to publishing standard.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Archimede Fusillo has had nine YA novels published both in Australia and overseas. His novels have won both critical and reader acclaim, with *The Dons* winning Book of the Year in 2001. He has won many prestigious awards, including the Alan Marshall Award, the Henry Savery Award and the Mary Grant Bruce Award, and is the recipient of an International Literature Fellowship – which itself was awarded the Sanciolo Literature Award. He has also written several textbooks on writing, has lectured all over Australia and overseas and has also been the judge of the Victorian Premiers Award and the Children's Book Council of Australia Book Awards. Find out more at archimedefusillo.com.