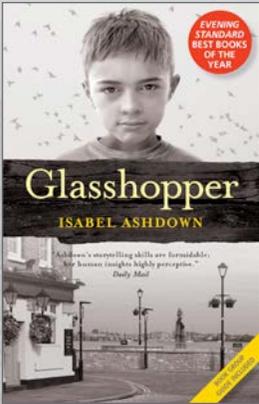


# Reading Group Guide



Isabel Ashdown's first novel, *Glasshopper*, was published to critical acclaim in 2009 and an extract from the novel won the *Mail on Sunday* Novel Competition.

For further details please visit the Myriad Editions website below.

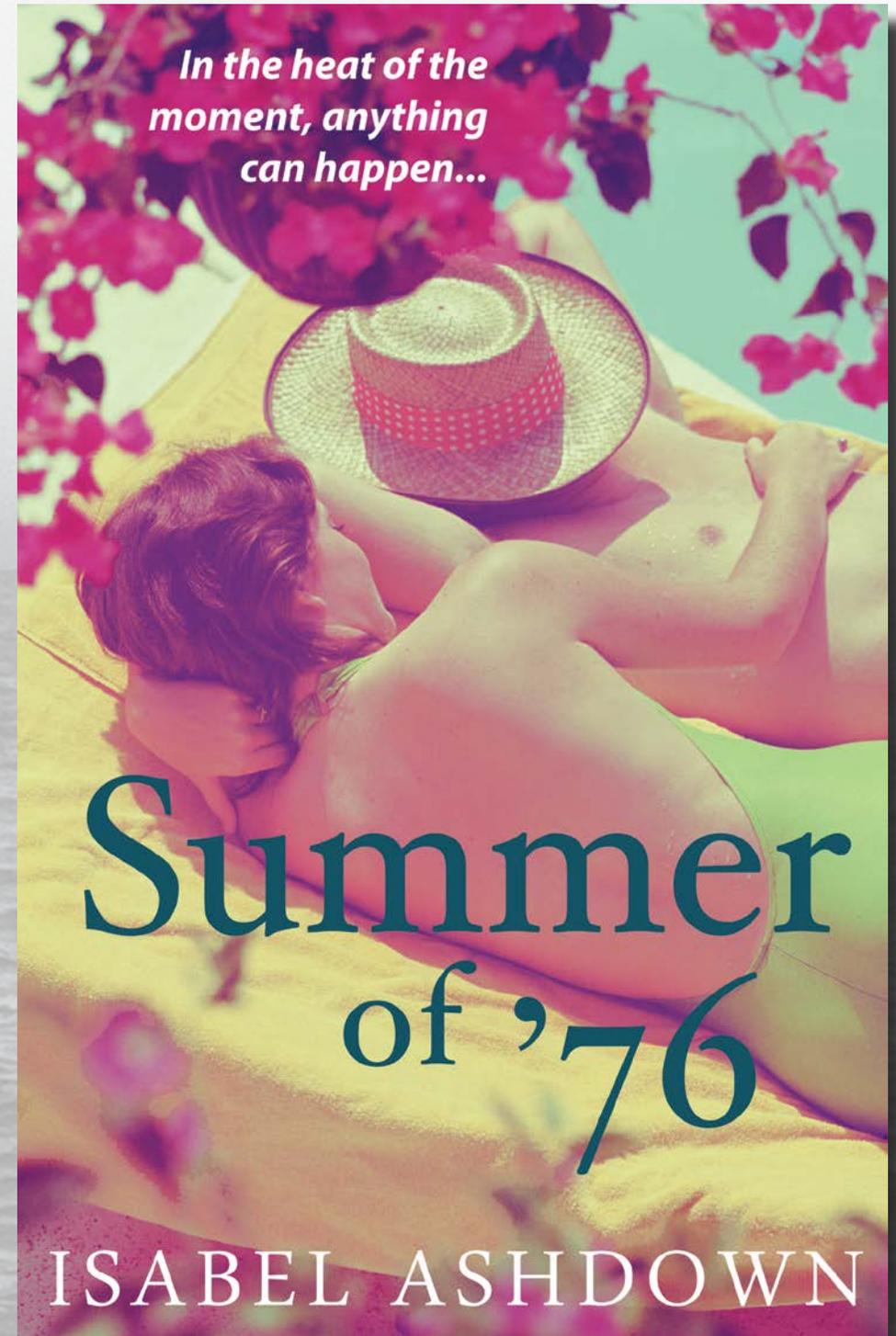
 @isabelashdown  
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[www.myriadeditions.com](http://www.myriadeditions.com)

In this intense novel of secrets and simmering passions, Isabel Ashdown, the acclaimed author of *Glasshopper* and *Hurry Up and Wait*, takes us back to the legendary heatwave of 1976.

It's the start of one of the hottest summers on record with soaring temperatures and weeks without rain; the summer of Abba, T-Rex, David Bowie and Demis Roussos; of Martinis, cheesecake and chicken chasseur; of the Montreal Olympics and the Notting Hill riots – the summer Big Ben stopped dead. Luke Wolff is about to turn eighteen and is all set to enjoy his last few months at home on the Isle of Wight before leaving for college. Life is looking good; his job at a holiday camp promises new friendships, even the possibility of romance, and his parents are too preoccupied with their own problems to worry much about their son's growing independence. But with windows and doors constantly open and life increasingly lived outside, secrets become hard to hide. As Luke listens in, his parents' seemingly ordered existence comes unstuck. Soon the community is gripped by scandal, and everything Luke thought he knew about friendship and family is turned on its head.

Winner of the *Mail on Sunday* Novel Competition, Isabel Ashdown once again unravels the complexity of her characters' lives – and reveals what really lies beneath the surface.



## For Discussion

1. How does the novel conjure up the atmosphere of the heatwave of 1976?
2. Does the representation of that period chime with your own memories?
3. The novel is told from Luke's perspective, but did you identify with other characters in the story?
4. Are there any real villains?
5. Does Luke's work at the holiday camp remind you of your own first summer job?
6. Do you think the McKees' parties could happen in the modern day or are they specific to the spirit of the 1970s?
7. Do you think the characters would have behaved as they did if it hadn't been such exceptional weather?
8. Should Joanna and Richard have acted differently, particularly in terms of concealing or revealing Kitty's paternity?
9. To what extent could the novel be described as a portrait of a marriage?
10. Does the novel make any judgements about good or bad parenting?
11. How might Joanna's experience have been different if the story had a contemporary setting?
12. Did your feelings about Diana change as the novel progressed?
13. Would you consider any of the characters to be feminist?
14. In what ways does Sam use her powers over men?
15. Do you blame Mr Brazier for Martin's lack of confidence?
16. Could Luke have been a better friend to Martin?
17. What do you make of Luke's friendship with Tom?
18. What might the future hold for Martin?
19. Are the sorts of issues and events the characters are dealing with particular to life in a small community? What aspects are universal?
20. How does Luke change in the course of the book? What do you think the future holds for him?