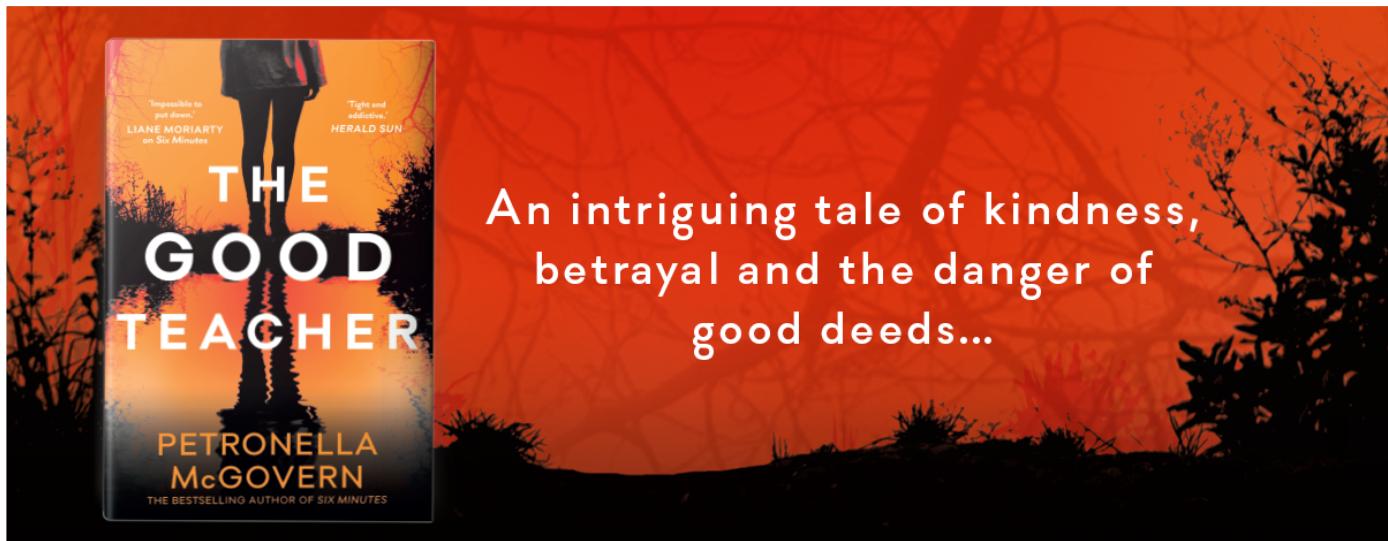


BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS



An intriguing tale of kindness,
betrayal and the danger of
good deeds...

A note from the author, Petronella McGovern

The spark for this book came together in a few different ways – from a newspaper article, through some online stories and while volunteering at my children’s school. Every Friday morning, I helped a cheeky little Kindergarten girl with her reading. My mission was for her to master the alphabet. But a few weeks later, her home life erupted into crisis and I realised she needed more than just my assistance with reading.

It started me thinking about how much help we should give and the difference it can make. And on the flipside, is that help always welcome? Should we trust strangers who rush in to give assistance? Sometimes, they’re helping for their own reasons. And sometimes, that help is misguided. *The Good Teacher* looks at all aspects of giving and taking – the altruism, the motivations, the ability to manipulate others, and the power of bringing a community together for a cause.

I was editing this book during the Australian bushfires and into the beginning of the pandemic. We’ve certainly seen the worst – and the very best – of human nature. These terrible times reinforce what a few characters say in *The Good Teacher*: we need kindness and a strong sense of community to take us into the future.



Petronella McGovern is a writer and editor who grew up on a farm outside Bathurst, NSW. Petronella’s bestselling first novel, *Six Minutes*, was published in 2019. *The Good Teacher* is her second novel. You can find out more at www.petronellamcgovern.com.au or follow Petronella on Facebook or Instagram.

Conversation starters

1. Felix thinks his parents suffer from ‘white knight syndrome’ – they both want to rescue other people. Do you agree with this assessment of Allison and Tony?
2. Maz wants to ‘save’ Gracie for completely different reasons to Allison’s. What do you think about Maz’s motives?
3. Allison says: ‘If we don’t look after them [Gracie and Luke], then what sort of people does that make us?’ (page 313). Do you agree with the following quote: *The measure of a civilisation is how it treats its weakest members?*
4. Does empathy and compassion make us more vulnerable? Is it an essential part of what makes us human?
5. The Wirriga community comes together to help Luke as the sole parent of Gracie. Do you think they would have responded in the same way if he were a single mum?
6. Who do you feel is the most trustworthy character in the book?
7. Luke questions the psychology of online fundraising: What made strangers give to Gracie? (page 134). Why is it that some campaigns attract thousands of dollars while other equally worthy ones struggle to raise more than a few hundred?
8. Maz dreams of a ‘magic pill’ to fix Gracie. Are we becoming more obsessed by miracle cures? Is it because of scientific breakthroughs or due to our ‘on-demand’ society where we can access anything with the click of a button?
9. The wellness industry was worth \$4.5 trillion globally in 2018. Do you think the boom in ‘wellness’ has made us healthier?
10. Maz thinks that true news and cures are found outside the traditional media. In our world of misinformation, how can we figure out what’s real and what’s fake online?
11. At the end of the book, Felix writes an assignment on the Othello quote: *It makes us or it mars us.* Do you think the main characters will be ‘made’ or ‘marred’ by the events?
12. What do you think the future holds for Allison? Will she patch up her marriage?
13. A good teacher can change lives. Do you remember a teacher who influenced your life in some way?
14. When Allison reads Aesop’s Fables to the class, do you agree with what she says? *No-one is too little to do good. Every act of kindness, even a small one, can really matter.*

