



The mountain

By Drusilla Modjeska

First published in 2012

Genre & subject

Papua New Guinea - Fiction

Synopsis

In 1968 Papua New Guinea is on the brink of independence, and everything is about to change. Amidst the turmoil filmmaker Leonard arrives from England with his Dutch wife, Rika, to study and film an isolated village high in the mountains.

Drusilla Modjeska's sweeping novel takes us deep into this fascinating, complex country, whose culture and people cannot escape the march of modernity that threatens to overwhelm them. It is a riveting story of love, loss, grief and betrayal.

Author biography

Drusilla Modjeska was born in London on 17 October 1946 and was raised in Hampshire. She spent several years in Papua New Guinea before arriving in Australia in 1971. She studied for an undergraduate degree at the Australian National University before completing a PhD in history at the University of New South Wales which was published as *Exiles at Home: Australian Women Writers 1925-1945*.

Modjeska's writing often explores the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction. The best known of her work are *Poppy* (1990), a fictionalised biography of her mother, and *Stravinsky's Lunch* (2001), a feminist reappraisal of the lives and work of Australian painters Stella Bowen and Grace Cossington Smith. She has also edited several volumes of stories, poems and essays, including the work of Lesbia Harford and a 'Focus on Papua New Guinea' issue for the literary magazine *Meanjin*.

In 2006 Modjeska was a Senior Research Fellow at the University of Sydney, "investigating the interplay of race, gender and the arts in post-colonial Papua New Guinea". She has also taught at the University of Technology, Sydney.

Discussion starters

- How did the character of the mountain develop in the novel? Describe the character of the mountain.
- How did the setting shape the relationship of the human participants?
- The history of Papua New Guinea feature large in this book. How does the theme of colonialism (and Australia's part in it) direct the plot? Did you learn anything new about the history of Australia's involvement? What?
- The characters relationships are intense, complicated and cross-nations - how much of what happens to them is in their hands? How much is beyond their control and how much is determined by someone else?

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