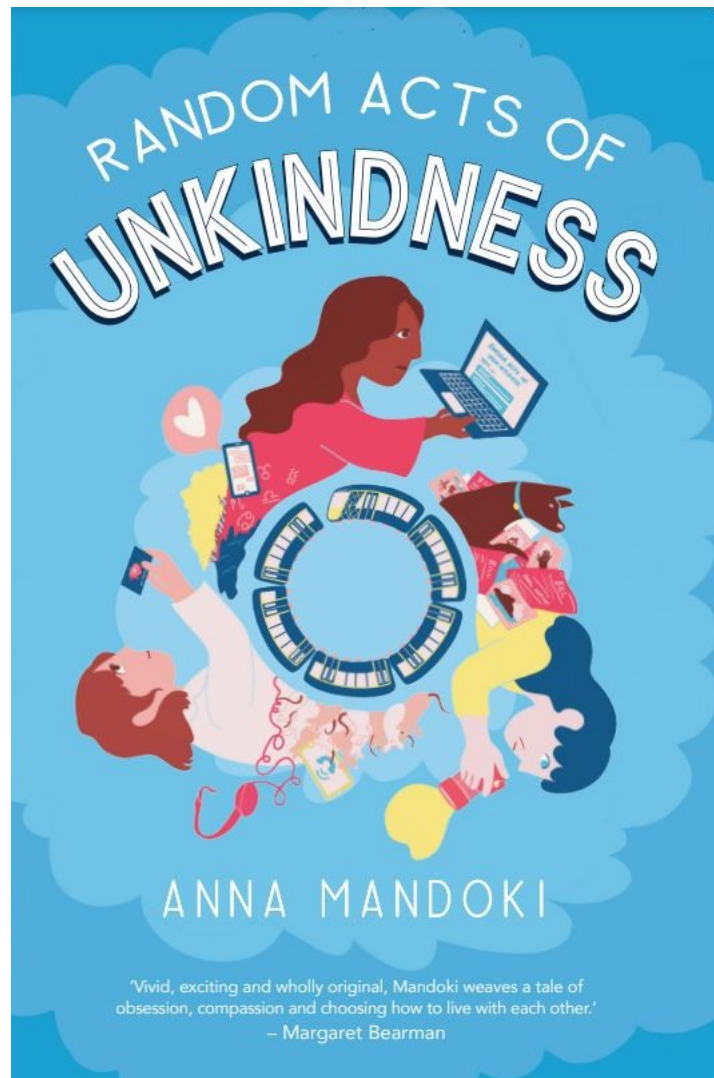


Random Acts of Unkindness

Anna Mandoki

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A Discussion Guide

About the book

In an all-too-recognisable Melbourne of the near future, the lives of three very different women become intertwined.

Emily is a researcher at the University, carrying out experiments on overcrowding in rats. Free-spirited Amala is an international student feeling the strong tug of home. Roz is a struggling photographer who has foreboding visions of the future. When Roz foresees a terrible tragedy, she is driven to act. But can she turn things around once a direction has already been set? As events rapidly escalate, all three women will be pushed to their limits and forced to revisit the choices they have made.

A literary page-turner about kindness and cruelty, which explores the need for human connection in an increasingly fragmented world.

About the author

Anna Mandoki is a British-born writer and artist. She lived and worked in London and Budapest before moving to Australia, and is currently based in Melbourne.



Anna has a Bachelor degree in Psychology from the University of York and a Diploma in Professional Writing & Editing from Melbourne's RMIT. She has worked as an accountant, as a financial counsellor and in dispute resolution.

Her short pieces of fiction and non-fiction have appeared in literary journals, anthologies and on ABC Radio National. She is the author of the non-fiction book **Molotov Cocktails**, about the 1956 Hungarian revolution. **Random Acts of Unkindness** is her first novel.

Questions for discussion

1. There are a large number of characters in the novel, both main and secondary. Who was your favourite character, and why?
2. Amala, Emily and Roz are separated by differences in age, race and class. Do you think they have anything in common, any similarities that connect them?
3. How do the three main characters stand for what is happening more broadly in our society? Are people becoming more connected to one another, or is our society increasingly fractured? Why do you think this is?
4. The novel paints a disturbing picture of the future, particularly in relation to the effects of climate change, energy and food insecurity, economic inequality and social isolation. How realistic do you think the author's vision is?
5. What do you make of Emily's experiments with rats? How do these experiments relate to human societies, and the issues raised in the novel?
6. Some reviewers have suggested that there are no 'nice' male characters in the novel. Do you agree? What do you believe the novel has to say about gender? How do the characters, both male and female, struggle (or not) with society's expectations of them based on their gender?
7. The novel includes multiple instances where characters are unkind or even cruel to one another. What do you think causes the characters to behave in this way? To what extent might their choices be influenced by their upbringing or life experiences? Do these factors excuse, or only explain, such behaviour?
8. Towards the end of the novel, Amala suggests in her blog that people who are unkind mostly deserve our compassion. Do you agree with this? Were you able to feel compassion for all of the characters in the book?

9. The book describes the scientist J B Calhoun's theory that humanity would need a 'compassionate revolution' to avoid environmental and social catastrophe. Can you explore that idea?
10. Roz's 'early warnings' contain very specific visions of the future. To what extent can we, as ordinary people, also predict what is going to happen in the future, for example in relation to the effects of climate change?
11. Towards the end of the book, we are faced with the question of whether the actions of individuals can make a difference. What do you think? Are individual actions alone sufficient to alter our future, or is a whole of community response required? What are some of the obstacles that might prevent us from taking action?
12. What was your overall impression of the book – did you find it bleak and depressing, or did you come away from it feeling a sense of hope?