

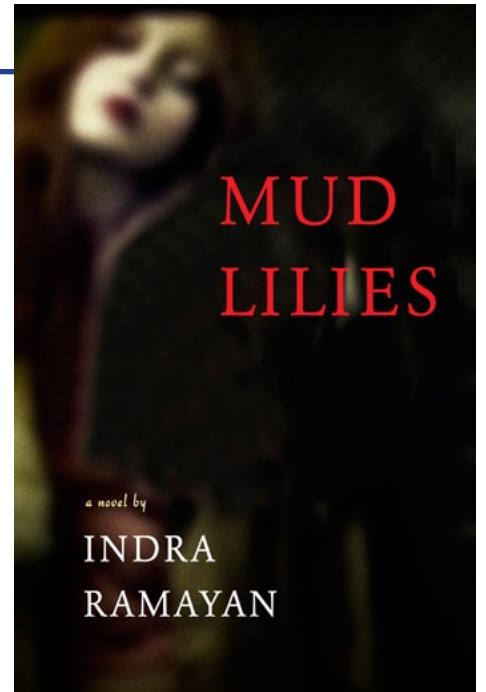
READERS' GUIDE

Mud Lilies by Indra Ramayan

INTRODUCING *Mud Lilies*

The night fourteen-year-old Chanie Nyriker ran away from her abusive parents, she was saved by an older woman who, after building a friendship with the teen, offers her a new life working as a prostitute. With nowhere to turn, Chanie is drawn into Edmonton's dark underbelly, where she survives until arrested four years later. At this time she is given two options: jail or a high school equivalency program for troubled youth.

Reluctantly, Chanie agrees to attend the program — but only so she can maintain her freedom and get to know her new love interest, Blue. As she begins to make strides in the program and meets friends who share similar circumstances, her home life, such as it is, deteriorates. Blue becomes unstable, deceitful, and eventually violent. He puts himself between her and her new friends, between her and the promise of a new and better life.



IMPORTANT THEMES

Identity – Chanie is forced to define and redefine who she is throughout the book. Blue and Brenda define Chanie by her actions and mistakes from the past. At school, Chanie's teachers and friends define her as the smart student that could go far.

Faith vs. Doubt – Chanie struggles with believing that she can better her life while dealing with her doubts about her capabilities and her past. Blue and Brenda do not let her forget her past and push her to live the way she always has. With the help of her school friends and her teachers, Chanie tries to believe that she can change her life for the better.

Trauma/Abuse – Chanie runs away from an abusive situation in her home only to be found by a new group of abusers who offer her false comfort and security. Chanie works to process her past abuse in order to accept better for herself and gain the strength to once again leave an abusive situation.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Chanie provides descriptions of her surroundings and compares them to other experiences. These descriptions often reflect her outlook on her life. How do these descriptions change throughout the book?
2. What are your impressions of counsellor Rie and Pastor Josh? How does their presence in Chanie's life differ from Brenda and Blue's presence in her life?
3. When Chanie finally talks about the root of her sadness in counselling with Rie, Rie suggests finding small and simple things that make her happy. What are some small and simple things that make you happy?
4. When Chanie tries to cover up her bruises after Blue hits her and asks her friends to help her lie about it, how does that make you feel about Chanie as a character? How would you handle Chanie's request for help?
5. What do we know about Blue and his life? What does Blue feel insecure about, and how does he express those insecurities?
6. What events had to happen for Chanie to finally make a concrete plan to leave Blue and the apartment?
7. How did Chanie's life change while she was away from Blue? What were her priorities when she lived with her friends and went to school?
8. The idea of a "dream life" is mentioned a lot in this book. Blue, Ginger, Chanie, and Tuffy all talk about where they would like to live and what they would want to surround themselves with. What life would you imagine for yourself? What would you surround yourself with?
9. We see a number of people in the background who have a major effect on Chanie's life, and ultimately, the direction she takes. Characters like Al and his raggedy stuffed animal, Dingo, Esther and Dan Adams, and other girls she had worked with like Nikki Lynn. Having experienced these characters in the book, do you find yourself looking at people around you differently? Are you noticing people you've never noticed before? Have these characters awakened a curiosity about others and their background stories?



ABOUT INDRA

Indra Ramayan believes in the magic of love poems and the power of daydreams. Inspired by her wild past and writers such as Heather O'Neill and Angie Abdou, Indra wrote her first novel while studying creative writing at Athabasca University. Ramayan is a graduate of the Humber School for Writers. She lives in Edmonton, Alberta with a Boston Terrier named Bodhi.