

## SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR READING GROUPS

- *The House by the Loch* has a highly developed sense of place. How are Loch Doon and the surrounding landscape so significant to the story, and to Walter in particular? How does the landscape contribute to the atmosphere of the story, and how does the love of the natural world and superstition inform the narrative?
- We first meet Walter as a young boy and the story progresses through several generations of his family; how do the events of the past play out through the best of intentions?
- Families make and remake themselves constantly, as their stories sometimes repeat and sometimes evolve – no family is ever perfect. What are the (fatal) flaws of this family? And how is the family altered by what happens?
- The experience and understanding of mental health issues in the 1950s are vastly different to the more open conversations and attitudes now, but even so, how do the generations compare as they struggle with illness and profound grief?
- One recurrent theme (both in this book and the earlier *The Legacy of Elizabeth Pringle*) is that of being tied to the land, examining those people who have to stay and those who have to go (referenced by Andy Goldsworthy's *Striding Arches*). How does this duality play out in this story? How does the novel reflect the duality within us all?

- The novel explores love and loyalty in all its forms, from romantic love, love of family, love-in-spite-of, the love found in deep friendship and the tenderness of first love. What does the novel say about love and whether it can be relied upon; can it ever be enough to save people from themselves?
- How do the relationships between parents and children compare across the generations? Are the more modern ones necessarily better?
- Each woman in this story is in some way creative and struggling to express it. How successful are they, and how could things have been different?