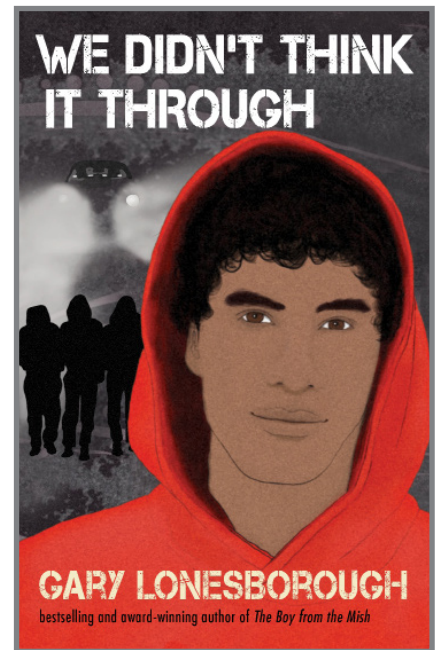


# We Didn't Think It Through

AUTHOR

**GARY LONESBOROUGH**



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**RECOMMENDED FOR:** Upper Secondary  
(Language, Alcohol and Drug References, Sexual Content)

## SYNOPSIS

The justice system characterises Jamie Langton as a 'danger to society', but he's just an Aboriginal kid, trying to find his way through adolescence.

Jamie lives in Dalton's Bay with Aunty Dawn and Uncle Bobby. He spends his downtime hanging out with his mates, Dally and Lenny. Mark Cassidy and his white mates—the Footy Heads—take every opportunity they can to bully Jamie and his friends. On Lenny's last night in town before moving to Sydney, after another episode of racist harassment, Jamie, Dally and Lenny decide to retaliate by vandalising Mark Cassidy's car. And when they discover the keys are in the ignition . . . Dally changes the plan. Soon they are all in Mark Cassidy's stolen car cruising through town, aiming to take it for a quick spin, then dump it.

But it's a bad plan. And as a consequence, Jamie ends up in the youth justice system where he must find a way to mend his relationships with himself, his friends, his family and his future.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gary Lonesborough is a Yuin man, who grew up on the Far South Coast of NSW as part of a large and proud Aboriginal family. Gary was always writing as a child, and continued his creative journey when he moved to Sydney to study at film school. Gary has experience working in youth work, Aboriginal health, child protection, the disability sector (including experience working in the youth justice system) and the film industry, including working on the feature film adaptation of *Jasper Jones*. His debut YA novel, *The Boy From The Mish*, was published by Allen & Unwin in 2021. It was published in the US in 2022 under the title *Ready When You Are*.

## STUDY NOTES

### WRITING STYLE

- "Getting older doesn't make you a man. There are plenty of older people who act like little kids. It's a moment that makes a man. A decision. It's that moment when he grows on the inside. It doesn't matter how much hair a fulla has on his face. You don't become a man until you have that moment, when you make that decision." (p 20) What do you think Jamie's father is saying here? Does Jamie always follow his father's advice? What decision does he make during the novel that enables him to 'grow on the inside'?
- If a 'coming of age' novel is one in which the protagonist is transformed from child to adult, would you describe *We Didn't Think It Through* as a 'coming of age' novel? In your response discuss Jamie's journey in terms of his:

- relationship with his parents and brother
- use of alcohol and drugs
- choice of friends
- ability to channel his emotions positively.
- Which other characters in the novel make the transformation to adulthood and which remain trapped in a child-like state? Compare and contrast the older Travis with Jamie's tormentor Mark Cassidy.
- 'I think the space that poetry leaves you means you don't have to say everything and the reader can read into it. It's not a conversation between the writer and the reader.' Alison Whittaker [Star Observer, April 4, 2016] Does Gary Lonesborough's use of blank verse in key scenes confirm this statement? Choose one example of a scene written in blank verse and analyse the poetic techniques used to intensify the reading experience. Try writing the same scene in prose and discuss the different effect created.
- Read 'Dreamtime' by Oodgeroo Noonuccal and discuss why you think Jamie was so moved by it that he reads the poem repeatedly to calm himself.
- What is it about the poem, 'Daddy' by Sylvia Plath, that speaks to Jamie so powerfully?
- Why do you think Gary Lonesborough intersperses scenes involving a young Jamie with his mother, father and brother throughout the story?
- Archie Roach's music is played in a number of scenes in the novel. Listen to the following songs and discuss their relevance to the scene in which they appear.
  - 'F Troop' (p 185)
  - 'Took the Children Away' (p 223)
  - 'Mother's Heartbeat' (p 272)
  - 'A Child Was Born Here' (p 282)
- Read the article 'Australians urged to ditch 'tough on crime' mindset for youth justice as it does not work' (The Guardian, 25 January 2023) and discuss:
  - Whether the State should ever have the right to imprison children.
  - At what age a young person should no longer be considered a child.
  - Whether our youth justice system should be designed around the concept of deterrence (punishment so that young people will not reoffend) or rehabilitation (educating young people and providing them with better options).
    - Which of these two descriptions best encapsulates the system that Jamie enters at Kinston Juvenile Justice Centre?
  - Whether Jamie changed because of or despite his experience in Kinston.

AUTHOR OF NOTES

**CAROLYN WALSH**