



Tinkering: The Complete Book of John Clarke

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Introduction by Lorin Clarke

This book tells the story of John Clarke's writing life, including the fan letter he sent to All Black Terry Lineen when he was ten, a golf instruction manual unlike any other, *Anna Karenina* in forty-three words, and the moving essays he wrote after the deaths of his parents.

Tinkering is full of surprises, and includes all kinds of puzzles and propositions. Each one has different rules but together they reveal the different facets of John Clarke's comic genius. In these pages you will find Fred Dagg dispensing advice on everything from dentistry to dreaming, the complete history of the lost sport of farnakeling, the famous 'Quiz Answers', and 'Saint Paul's Letter to the Electorates' —a brilliant account of the Rudd–Gillard years that was first inscribed onto stone tablets.

Tinkering also includes previously unpublished material including the 'Doorstop Poems', and the 'Letters from the School' suggesting what a serious matter birdwatching was for John Clarke.

John Clarke was born in New Zealand in 1948. He was and remains one of Australia's best known and most loved faces on TV. A comedian, writer and actor, his appearances included the famous Fred Dagg character, *The Gillies Report* and *The Games*. John's books include *The Even More Complete Book of Australian Verse*, *A Dagg at My Table*, *The Howard Miracle*, *The 7.56 Report* and *A Pleasure to be Here*, *The Best of Clarke and Dawe* (2017). His only novel, *The Tournament*, was published in the UK and the US to great critical acclaim and will be republished in the Text Classics in November. He died in April 2017.

Tinkering: The Complete Book of John Clarke Details

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Martin says

A really enjoyable book, very funny and educational at the same time. However, you probably need to understand the Australian/New Zealand humour to fully understand the brilliance in John's use of language. John will be surely missed, RIP.

Gail says

I so loved John's TV and radio work, and was so thrilled to receive this book as a gift. However, the text didn't, at first read, quite translate into the tittering that I anticipated ... I was a wee bit disappointed, but possibly it just reflects my inexperience at reading 'scripts and work in progress'. Anyway, second attempt was very much rewarded with many a wry smile, smirk and giggle. So clever.....especially the Saints letter to the Electorate....spot on!

Jodaly Daly says

Reading this now, with the recent loss of the wonderfully brilliant John Clarke, is a bittersweet experience. It's great to enjoy his gentle pillory-ing of those who so desperately need a taste of their own humanity, and appreciative observance of those who showed great art in life and living, however I feel I've come to it too late. But still this is a great commemoration of John Clarke's writings. This book exemplifies the great humility and literary and humorist pedigree from which John's writings sprang.

The book starts out with his beginnings, families origins and the literary figures who happened to be sitting in his family's kitchen at any one time, and provides context to his life's work. Most of the writings that follow require some understanding of sport, politics and issues "across the" Australian/New Zealand "ditch" through the 80s, 90s and noughties, hence the ungenerous 4/5, which is more a failure on my part than the authors! But his turn of phrase is deliciously cutting and even without the background, the themes are universal. The last few chapters on sporting heroes, writers and authors and memories and reflections are wonderful in their recounting of stories to show the true characters of the people and moments in life.

Thoroughly enjoyable and highly recommended to those who want a reminder of the brilliance of the satirist and acute observer of life.

Text Publishing says

*'...Assessment of his *The Games* co-writer Ross Stevenson that Clarke was "the great satirist in the English language" is probably pretty close to the mark.'*

Otago Daily Times

'The late John Clarke, aka. Fred Dagg, really was a satirical one-off... Tinkering is packed with puzzles and propositions, with tea-fuelled musings on everything from plumbing to Paul Holmes. A gem.'

North & South

'This book comes with some magnificent pictures of Clarke's beloved birds and they seem to have represented the magic of the reality of the world to him. There is plenty of that magic in this book and everyone who liked John Clarke should buy it and find in it what will soothe their spirit. It will be there.'

Australian

Amanda says

When John Clarke died suddenly in 2017, Australia and New Zealand lost a national treasure. Known widely for his character Fred Dagg and later for his Thursday night spot in Clarke and Dawe, he made a mission of keeping politicians honest.

This collection of his writing (his 'tinkering'), put together by his daughter, shows that there was much more to John Clarke than the above. This is a book of comic and serious writing, one to be dipped into again and again. His letter of St Paul to the Electorates is absolutely laugh-out-loud funny, but there are also thought-provoking pieces as well. Thank goodness he lives on.

Di says

John Clarke read this book to me... I could hear his voice in my head with every word. Marvellous. He really was satire at its best. A comic genius, greatly missed.

Malcolm Frawley says

We are all aware of the impact Clarke's approach to comedy has made on both Australia & his homeland of New Zealand. And he is sadly missed. This book, appropriately entitled Tinkering, includes a variety of his fictional & non-fictional short prose pieces. All are entertaining; for me, especially those that could be regarded as 'true' stories. But I couldn't help feeling that some of these pieces were written for Clarke's own amusement & had never been intended for publication. Which felt kind of sad. However, given the author's untimely demise, sadness may be exactly what I am supposed to feel.
