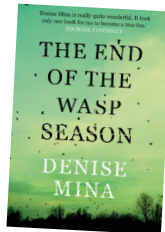


Book Prize Roundup

Scottish author **Denise Mina** has scooped The Theakstons Old Peculiar Crime Novel of the Year Award with her ninth book, *The End of the Wasp Season*.

The Man Booker Prize 2012 longlist was announced in July, and the titles are:

- **Nicola Barker**, *The Yips* (Fourth Estate)
- **Ned Beaman**, *The Teleportation Accident* (Sceptre)
- **André Brink**, *Philida* (Harvill Secker)
- **Tan Twan Eng**, *The Garden of Evening Mists* (Myrmidon Books)
- **Michael Frayn**, *Skios* (Faber & Faber)
- **Rachel Joyce**, *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry* (Doubleday)
- **Deborah Levy**, *Swimming Home* (And Other Stories)
- **Hilary Mantel**, *Bring up the Bodies* (Fourth Estate)
- **Alison Moore**, *The Lighthouse* (Salt)
- **Will Self**, *Umbrella* (Bloomsbury)
- **Jeet Thayil**, *Narcopolis* (Faber & Faber)
- **Sam Thompson**, *Communion Town* (Fourth Estate)



Peter Stothard, Chair of judges, commented: *“Goodness, madness and bewildering urban change are among the themes of this year’s longlist. In an extraordinary year for fiction the ‘Man Booker Dozen’ proves the grip that the novel has on our world. We did not set out to reject the old guard but, after a year of sustained critical argument by a demanding panel of judges, the new has come powering through.”*

The 2012 longlist includes four debut novels, three small independent publishers and one previous winner. Of the 12 writers, seven are men and five women; nine are British, one Indian, one South African and one Malaysian. The eldest on the list is Michael Frayn at 78 and the youngest is Ned Beaman at 27.

The shortlist of six authors will be announced at a press conference at the Man Group headquarters on Tuesday 11 September 2012. The winner of the 2012 prize will be announced at a dinner at London’s Guildhall on Tuesday 16th October, in a ceremony covered by the BBC. Each of the six shortlisted writers is awarded £2,500 and a specially commissioned beautifully handbound edition of his/her book. The winner receives a further £50,000.

Peter Stothard, Editor of the Times Literary Supplement, is joined on the 2012 Man Booker Prize for Fiction judging panel by: Dinah Birch, academic and literary critic; Amanda Foreman, historian, writer and broadcaster; Dan Stevens, actor, and Bharat Tandon, academic, writer and reviewer. 2012 marks the 44th year of the prize, which began in 1969.



Hello from the editor...

Welcome to the September 2012 edition of Read On! It has been a little while since our last edition, but normal service has now been resumed.

We have the usual round up of book prizes; information about upcoming author events; book reviews from Linda Hepworth, A Reader On The Moor; and news about changes to our online reading group set list.

As always, if you wish to submit any news, book reviews or articles for future editions, just get in touch with me – my contact details can be found on the back page of this newsletter.

Happy reading!

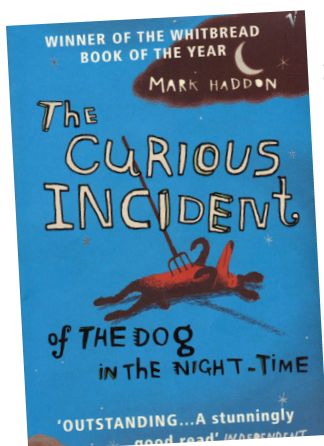
Helen

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A Reader on the Moor



The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time by Mark Haddon

Christopher Boone is fifteen years old and has Asperger's Syndrome. He is excellent with numbers and puzzles but hates to be touched: he likes routines but is bewildered by relationships and emotions. He finds it impossible to lie and finds it disturbing when other people lie to him, even when they think that by doing so they are protecting him. He knows he is different and that people

find it just as difficult to understand him as he does to understand them. Late one night he discovers his neighbour's dog murdered: it is lying on the front lawn, skewered through the heart with a garden fork. Who would do such a dreadful thing, and why? Christopher loves solving puzzles: the dog's death is a puzzle and therefore a mystery to be solved. So, encouraged by his teacher, Siobhan, to write an account of his investigations, he embarks on his quest to solve the mystery. In the process he uncovers, and solves, other mysteries in his life, and discovers that by being brave and taking risks he is able to achieve far more than either he or others expected.

I first read this story shortly after it had won the Whitbread Book of the Year award in 2003. I found it just as enjoyable, engaging and thought-provoking then as I have on re-reading it for our reading group. The writing still feels fresh, original and memorable and, generally, believable; although deceptively easy to read, it challenges so much of our thinking about people who are different. It makes the reader reflect on what is normal or abnormal behaviour, about what constitutes ability or disability, about truth and honesty; it also encourages an exploration of prejudice and stereotyping. The story is full of emotion, humour, sadness and optimism, and provides lots of opportunity for lively discussion and debate.

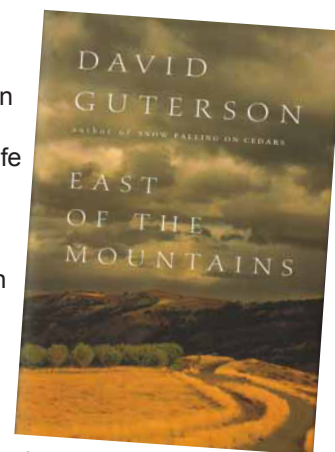
In Christopher, Mark Haddon has given a voice to people on the autistic spectrum and, more generally, to anyone, whose thought processes and behaviour are different from the norm. His experience of working with people with mental and physical difficulties certainly lends authenticity, insight and sensitivity to his writing: he neither sentimentalises nor does he condescend. I am aware that over the years his book, although generally very well received, has, through the descriptions of Christopher's behaviour, also been criticised for stereotyping people with autism, and over-dramatising their dysfunctional behaviour. However, I think that any reflective reader will allow for this – isn't it, after all, a feature of much fiction writing! If one function of a novel is to open up other worlds for the reader to explore, then in my view, Mark Haddon has succeeded brilliantly with this book – I think it is a wonderful achievement.

In this regular series, Linda Hepworth of Alston Moor Reading Group offers her thoughts on the books which she and her fellow members have been reading. The Alston Moor Reading Group has been meeting since 2004 and over the years they have enjoyed countless books and lively discussions!



East of the Mountains by David Guterson

Terminally ill and in almost constant pain, 73 year old Dr Ben Given, still grieving the death eighteen months earlier of his wife of fifty years, decides to travel east of the mountains – from his home in Seattle to the fruit growing area where he was born and raised. He is tired of his life, of his lack of hope and, wanting to feel in control of his own fate, has decided to commit suicide – to end his life where it had started. To save his family pain he has decided to take his two hunting dogs with him and to stage it to look like a hunting accident. However, a car crash in bad weather conditions disrupts his journey and he is forced to adapt his carefully thought out plans.



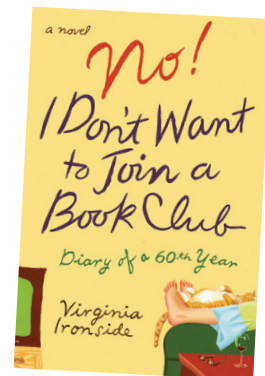
Guterson's wonderful use of language, which at times is almost achingly beautiful and poetic, conjures up a vivid picture of present day, as well as early pioneer days, in the north-western USA. His reflections on social and economic history are subtly woven into the story, adding great depth to the reader's understanding of life in this area. The Washington State countryside is evocatively described and, in fact, becomes a character in its own right as the story evolves. Themes of love, loss, regret, mortality and free will, as well as of joy, melancholy, optimism and despair are all captured with sensitivity and compassion as the reader joins Ben on his journey of reflection on his past, his present and his future. His struggles in dealing with his relentless physical deterioration, and his contemplation of ending his own life, are very moving and challenging. Whilst it is maybe not quite such a complex story as Guterson's *Snow Falling on Cedars*, I found this a compelling, haunting and thought-provoking read.

...continued on next page.



NO! I Don't Want to Join a Book Club by Virginia Ironside

In this fictionalised diary Marie Sharp will soon be 60, and is resisting all exhortations to take up new challenges and hobbies. She doesn't want to bungee-jump, sky-dive, learn Italian, try internet dating (particularly as she has decided to become celibate) or sign-up for the University of the Third Age – and she decidedly does not want to join a book club! She feels that her “coming of age” in the 1960's, and her subsequent marriage, parenthood and career were quite exciting and challenging enough. She now just longs to be 60, to get her London Freedom Pass, to be free to enjoy a more relaxed and less demanding lifestyle, to indulge her hypochondria, and to become a doting and indulgent grand-mother.

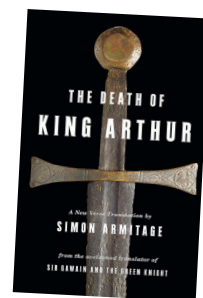


Whilst I found parts of this story mildly amusing, and enjoyed some of the main character's rather acerbic reflections on life, relationships and ageing, essentially I found it a tedious task to finish the book – I certainly would not have done so had it not been one of my choices for the reading group! (In my defence, I had been seduced by the title!!) I thought that the characters were, in the main, stereotypical and one-dimensional, and that the story was full of clichés – a lot of “grumpy old woman”, with just odd flashes of humour and philosophical reflections. Altogether I found it a very superficial way of dealing with the subject – this was possibly exacerbated by the diary-style format.

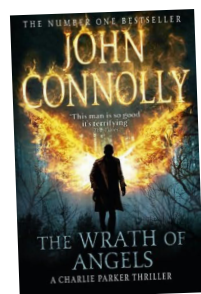
The author acknowledges that the story is highly autobiographical, so I was left wondering why she chose to fictionalise something which so closely mirrors her own life. The book, with its intriguing title, certainly didn't live up to expectations for this reader! I think it highly unlikely that it would have been published had it been written by an “unknown” – a real disappointment.

Forthcoming events

On Friday **7th September**, there is a great opportunity to enjoy an entertaining evening in Carlisle with **Simon Armitage** as he will be talking about his experience walking the Pennine Way, at The Tithe Barn, in an event organised by Bookends. Simon will also read from his translation of *The Death of King Arthur* and will sign books after his talk.



Tickets cost £5, including wine and refreshments, and are redeemable against the purchase of the book at the event. (Book RRP is £16.99, but will be £11.99 at the event). Buy tickets at Bookends or tel **01228 529067** or email bookscumbria@aol.com to reserve them.



John Connolly will be returning to Cumbria for two events in September. He will be visiting Kendal Library on **15th September 2012**, at 7pm to talk about his new novel, *The Wrath of Angels*, then the next day, **Sunday 16th September** he will be at Carlisle Library, at 3pm.

Tickets for the Kendal Library event cost £3, refreshments included, and are on sale now at Kendal Library (Tel: **01539 713520**).

Tickets for the Carlisle event are also on sale now, from Carlisle Library (Tel: **01228 227310**), at a cost of £3. Refreshments are included and there is the opportunity to buy books and have them signed by the author. The books are supplied by Bookends of Carlisle, and event tickets can be redeemed against the purchase cost of a book as follows: £5 off any single hardback and £1 off any paperback.

John is described as “the master of mystery noir”, and as well as discussing and reading from *The Wrath of Angels*, he will also be talking about classic crime. He has yet another new book coming out in August, *Books to Die For*, co-edited with Declan Burke, which presents the musings of mystery writers from around the world as they share their passions and enthuse about their most-loved novel in what is a fascinating anthology. Those of you who have been to his previous events will know that he is a hugely entertaining and engaging speaker. Definitely not to be missed.

National Poetry Day falls on 4th October, and a lunchtime poetry event in Carlisle Library has just been confirmed for that day. Full details are still being finalised, but poet **John Lindley** will be reading. John was born in Stockport and now lives in Congleton, Cheshire, working freelance as a poet and creative writing tutor and facilitator. A previous Cheshire Poet Laureate and ‘Manchester Cathedral Poet of the Year’, his poems have been widely published in magazines and anthologies and he has been a prize winner of a number of national competitions. Seven collections of his poetry have been published. An experienced performer, his work has also been broadcast on radio. John Lindley is passionate about many things, not least movies. As he says, he would have liked either Cary Grant or Humphrey Bogart to have portrayed him on screen one day, “had they both not so inconveniently died.” To find out more about John, visit his website: <http://johnflindley.wordpress.com/>





The online list of reading group sets

Clare, Janet and I have now completed the revision work on our complete list of reading group sets, which you can find on the reading group section of the library service website.

Go to www.cumbriacc.gov.uk/libraries/readinggroups/default.asp and you will see it in the top right hand corner of the page

As we have so many sets in the collection, amending the list is an enormous undertaking, but, we aim to provide you with a cover image and a summary for every title we have in our collection.

We have made two changes to the online list this year – firstly, because the list is now so huge, we have broken it down into sections of the alphabet, so there are now 6 separate lists for readers to view or print off. We haven't done this to make everyone's life more difficult – rather, it's because the document has become so big that the file size is now too large to keep as one entire list. Without it being broken up into more manageable sections, it would take an age for anyone to open and read online: anyone without a broadband connection would be sat there for days waiting for it to open!

Secondly, we have introduced grey shading over the summary of every one of our non-fiction and poetry titles. This means that those reading groups who prefer to focus on these genres, as opposed to fiction, can easily spot the titles as they scan down the lists.

News from other reading groups

It is always good to hear what reading groups around the county are getting up to, and don't forget to contact Helen Towers if you have anything you would like to share with other groups.

The Ulverston reading group has been in touch to share their thoughts on a books which they have been reading recently. Thank you to Sarah from the group for sending this:

"Our bookgroup universally hated this book. Mostly it was way too intellectual for us. I've taken Master's Classes that were less work! I chose it because of two reviews on Amazon saying how engaging, lively, and readable it is. I'm forwarding our Amazon review, for your reference." And here it is:

Historical analysis of coffee drinkers in the 1600s:

Our bookgroup chose this book on the basis of reviews pronouncing it entertaining, lively and engaging. Although it is very written and seems well researched, those casual readers thinking of picking up The Coffee House for a bit of light reading please be warned. The tone is that of an intellectual text for historical study, rather than the riveting adventure in popular culture/sociology. The font is small. Even with such dense text, the author takes more than 200 pages to begin to address coffee drinking in the 1800-1900s! Most modern coffee houses are not mentioned until the last chapter. Yes, there are interesting facts sprinkled throughout the book, but it takes a lot of dry reading to unearth them. Needless to say, none of the bookgroup finished it, although with three weeks of painstaking effort I read nearly 80%. We gave it 3/10 as a popular fiction book, so I'll be generous and round that up to two stars.

Contact us

Helen Towers

Contact Helen if you have any comments about this newsletter; if you wish to submit any news, book reviews or articles for future editions; if you have any suggestions for new titles to add to the Reading Group Loan Collection.

Helen Towers - Reader Development and Stock Manager
Carlisle Library, 11 Globe Lane, Carlisle CA3 8NX
Tel: 01228 227287 - Email: helen.towers@cumbria.gov.uk

Janet Bousie

Contact Janet if you want to register to use the Reading Group Loan Service; if you want to request sets for your group to use; if you have any questions relating to the service.

Janet Bousie - County Reading Group Loan Service Officer
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