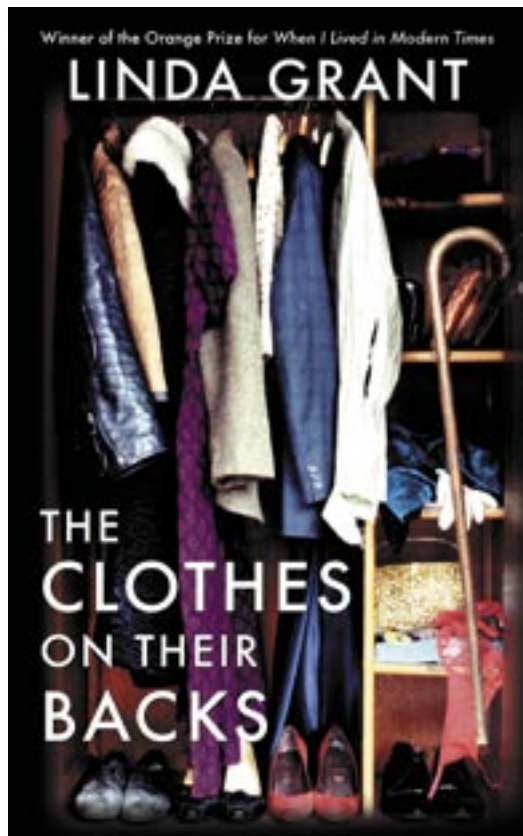




Reader's Guide



Other books by Linda Grant
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The People on the Street
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Sexing the Millennium
Still Here
When I Lived in Modern Times

The Clothes on Their Backs by Linda Grant

Published by Virago
Paperback RRP £11.99

www.themanbookerprize.com

About the author Linda Grant was born in Liverpool in 1951. She was educated at Belvedere School GPDST, read English at the University of York, did an MA at McMaster University, Ontario, Canada and further graduate studies at Simon Fraser University, B.C. She is a patron of the National Academy of Writing, a member of the management committee of the Society of Authors and a member of the Advisory panel of the MA in Creative Writing at Middlesex University.

The Clothes on Their Backs In a red brick mansion block off the Marylebone Road, Vivien, a sensitive, bookish girl grows up sealed off from both past and present by her timid refugee parents. Through Vivien we discover the colourful characters at Benson Court, who play a part in the development of this at first, timid and unworldly young woman. Then, one morning, a glamorous older man appears, dressed in a mohair suit, with a diamond watch on his wrist and a girl in a leopard-skin hat on his arm. He is her Uncle Sándor but why, is he so violently unwelcome in her parents' home?

The Clothes on Their Backs is a story about concealed pasts, dark subjects, dark places and stark choices and how the clothes we wear define us all.

Discussion points Do you agree with one reviewer who said “‘Until I was 10 I was completely unaware that I had a relative’ This is not the opening line of Linda Grant’s *The Clothes on Their Backs* – it doesn’t appear until the start of the third chapter – but it is where the novel truly begins”.

The Clothes on Their Backs starts with the transforming power of a dress and ends with a jacket, a skirt and a pair of shoes. Do you feel that Linda Grant has successfully woven the ‘clothing’ metaphor into her novel?

To what extent do you feel that Sandor’s wartime experiences explain his post-war excesses?

There are a number of narrative threads that are not fully explored, such as Vivien’s second marriage and abortion. As a reader does this frustrate or intrigue you?

The book’s title refers to the experience of refugees, in this case coming to London, with nothing. How do clothes illuminate the characters’ pasts, and why are they so important?

Themed reading *The Next Big Thing* Anita Brookner
White Teeth Zadie Smith
Holding My Breath Sidura Ludwig

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