



Reading Group Toolkit

Introduction

The Man Booker Prize is guaranteed to inspire your reading group; whether it's the books that the judges have included on the shortlist or those that they have left out there is always something for readers to discuss.

This Toolkit provides a range of ideas that will help your reading group get the most out of the opportunities created by the prize and will help members of your group to feel part of one of the world's most important and prestigious literary prizes.

Feedback from reading groups that have been involved with previous Man Booker Prizes tells us that not only did their members really enjoy the experience but it also helped them to develop as a group and be more experimental with their reading choices.

“Without a doubt. It has increased the members and they feel the group has a purpose and drive now. It has also made all members closer, the discussion needs less prompting from me”.

“Contributing to the web forum made us feel part of the bigger picture - almost like being members of a national Reading Group. Everyone really enjoyed trying to predict the winner and reading about other groups (and individual's) choices and the reasons behind them”.

“It has been a great stimulus to us - a real shot in the arm. We feel invigorated and revitalised. It has helped to cement the group together and brought some new members rapidly into the centre of the group”.

How to get involved

Here are a selection of ways in which your reading groups, or individual members of your group, can get involved with The Man Booker Prize.

1. Shadowing The Man Booker Prize

Shadowing is a tried and tested way to involve reading groups with literary prizes. Shadowing involves readers from your group following the same process as the judges.

Ideally your group should read all 6 shortlisted titles between the announcement of the shortlist (Tuesday 9 September) and the winner (Tuesday 14 October). The group comes together during and/or at the end of the process to discuss their winner. It is unlikely that there will be a consensus of opinion amongst your group, however for an authentic shadowing experience we recommend that the group selects only one winner – the judges usually have different views about which title they think is best but the process demands that they debate and discuss until a single winner is agreed.

You may want to consider making your final Man Booker Prize a special event, perhaps by holding it on the same day the judges make their announcement (Tuesday 14 October), offering refreshments and inviting the local press along to cover the event.

Many members of reading groups that shadow the prize enjoy contributing to the online debate section of the Man Booker Prize website. This enables them to share their views and reading experiences with readers and reading groups from across the world. Anyone can contribute to the debate you simply need to register on the Man Booker Prize website www.manbookerprize.com

To support and stimulate your groups' discussions, Reading Guides for each of the shortlisted titles will be available to download from 9 September onwards. Each guide provides an introduction to the authors, their books, starting points for discussion and ideas for extended reading.

2. Reading lists

If your group feels that the committing to read all six titles in a relatively short period of time is too onerous, perhaps you could consider using the Man Booker Prize shortlist or longlist as your group's reading list for the year.

The books chosen for the longlist and shortlist have been selected from over 150 new titles submitted by over 30 publishers. Each publisher is only allowed to submit a limited number of titles and therefore they have to decide which out of all the books they are publishing that year are potentially award winning literary novels. The Man Booker Prize judges read all the submitted titles, from this the longlist (13 titles) is chosen, this is then whittled down further to create the shortlist (6 titles). The final winner is then selected from the shortlist.

The submission, selection and judging process is rigorous and readers can be assured that if a book makes the longlist or shortlist it is for good reason. If your group enjoys reading the best new contemporary fiction, from both first time authors and established novelists, the Man Booker Prize longlist or shortlist is an ideal starting point.

3. Your Best of the Booker

This year saw the 40th Anniversary of the Man Booker Prize and to celebrate there was a one-off award, The Best of the Booker, which honoured the best overall novel to have won the prize.

A panel of judges selected a shortlist of six novels from the 41 previous winners:

J G Farrell - *The Siege of Krishnapur*
Nadine Gordimer - *The Conservationist*
Salman Rushdie - *Midnight's Children*
Peter Carey - *Oscar and Lucinda*
Pat Barker - *The Ghost Road*
J M Coetzee - *Disgrace*

The winner *Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie was chosen by public vote.

Your group may want to consider holding a special Best of the Booker event. The 41 previous winners are all now debatably must-read classics and readers undoubtedly will have a view on many of the judges' choices.

During Your Best of the Booker reading group event you could consider discussing the shortlisted books that you feel were overlooked – the ones that should have been winners; recommend winners to other members of the group; and chose one or two of the most highly debated titles for your group to read over the forthcoming months.

The downloadable Man Booker Prize Who's Who details the 41 previous winners, shortlists and judges that you can circulate to your group prior to the meeting.

We are always interested to hear from groups that get involved with the prize, and would like to find out more about your experiences.

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