Reader’s Guide

History of the Rain
Niall Williams

Bloomsbury

www.themanbookerprize.com

Other novels by Niall Williams
Four Letters of Love (1997)
As It Is In Heaven (1999)
The Fall of Light (2001)
Only Say the Word (2004)
The Unrequited (2006)
Boy in the World (2007)
Boy and Man (2008)
John (2009)
About the author

Niall Williams was born in Dublin in 1958. He is the author of eight novels including John and Four Letters of Love for which he has recently completed the screenplay for Element Pictures. He lives in Kiltumper in County Clare, with his wife, Christine.

History of the Rain

Ruth Swain, the bedridden daughter of a dead poet, home from school after a collapse, is trying to find her father through stories - and through generations of family history in County Clare. In order to do this Ruthie turns to the three thousand, nine hundred and fifty eight books piled high that her father left behind. His entire, vast library moved to her bedroom which she pledges to work her way through while she’s still living.

Discussion points

Ruth switches back and forth between the generations in her narrative and has many diversions, why did Niall Williams chose to tell the story in this way, and does this make a difference to the way you read and understand the novel?

In a recent interview Niall Williams said ‘At one level, this novel is about stories and storytelling. And in that tradition, the voice of the storyteller is crucial. So I hope readers will settle in to listen to Ruth Swain. She has a unique voice and I, at least, found that voice compelling’. What is your response to Ruth’s storytelling voice?

The novel’s ‘big secret’ is obvious early on, and, therefore, is the reveal ‘more of a relief than a surprise’?

In what ways does History of the Rain capture the gossiping, provincial attitude of a rural Irish community but also its generosity, kindness and acceptance of the unusual?

The Swain family believes in the ‘impossible standard philosophy’ — essentially the idea that you can always do better. Does this make it impossible for them to be happy?

Themed reading

Charles Dickens Great Expectations

Useful links

www.themanbookerprize.com
www.niallwilliams.com
www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b040h5nz
www.washingtonindependentreviewofbooks.com/features/an-interview-with-niall-williams
4 reader’s guide to contemporary literary theory, the latter precedes the former. This is because Russian Formalism, albeit mainly produced in the second two. In any event, while the Reader’s Guide does not pretend to give a comprehensive picture of its eld, and cannot be anything other than select-ive and partial (in both senses), what it does offer is a succinct overview of the most challenging and prominent trends within the theoretical debates of the last forty years. Reader’s Guide. Introduction. This report uses statistics to examine current conditions and changes over time in education activities and outcomes for different racial/ethnic groups in the United States. In order to caution the reader when interpreting findings in the indicators, estimates from sample surveys are flagged with a when the standard error is between 30 and 50 percent of the estimate, and suppressed with a when the standard error is 50 percent of the estimate or greater. Data Analysis and Interpretation. Reader’s Guide. Tank Closure Alternative 2: Implement the Tank Waste Remediation System EIS Record of Decision with Modifications. Tank Closure Alternative 2 would continue to implement the decisions made in the Record of Decision for the TWRS EIS and considered in three supplement analyses completed through 2001. Reader’s Guide. Disposal: LAW immobilized both via the WTP and external to the WTP would be disposed of on site in an IDF.