

Reader's Guide

Alison Moore

The Lighthouse

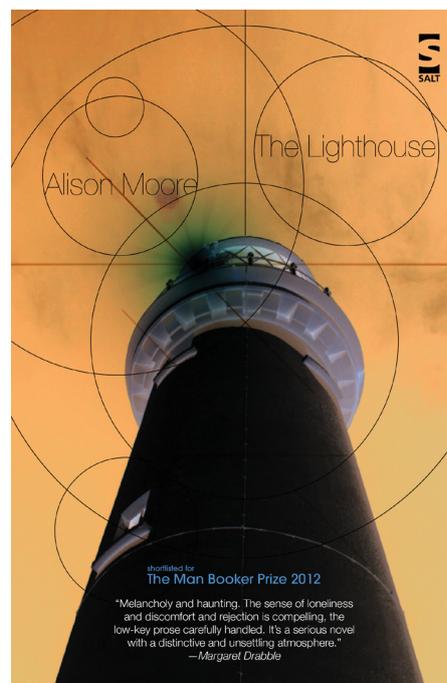
Alison Moore was born in Manchester in 1971. Her stories have been published in various magazines and anthologies including **Best British Short Stories 2011**. She has been shortlisted for the Bridport Prize and the Manchester Fiction Prize, and won first prize in the novella category of The New Writer Prose and Poetry Prizes. Her first novel, **The Lighthouse**, was shortlisted for The Man Booker Prize 2012 and shortlisted for New Writer of the Year in the Specsavers National Book Awards 2012. She lives near Nottingham with her husband Dan and son Arthur.

On the outer deck of a North Sea ferry stands Futh, a middle-aged and newly separated man, on his way to Germany for a restorative walking holiday. After an inexplicably hostile encounter with a hotel landlord, Futh sets out along the Rhine. As he contemplates an earlier trip to Germany and the things he has done in his life, he does not foresee the potentially devastating consequences of things not done.

The Lighthouse, Alison Moore's first novel, tells the tense, gripping story of a man trying to find himself, but becoming lost.

Discussion questions

- 1 The author set the novel in Germany having been there on a walking holiday. What do you think the setting brings to the story?
- 2 Would you describe Futh and Ester as 'sympathetic characters'? Is it important that a novel have sympathetic characters, or do they just need to be believable?
- 3 Do you think that the author's use of alternating chapters is a successful element of the novel? Did you engage more with one narrative than the other?
- 4 Do you feel that the chapter titles enhanced the story?
- 5 To what extent do you think Futh's obsession with his absent mother affects the choices he makes in his life?
- 6 Do you see Futh as being responsible for what happens to him? Is there a sense of fatalism in the novel?
- 7 To what extent do you think that the story's conclusion is left open to interpretation? How did any lack of closure affect your reading experience?
- 8 In *The Independent*, Boyd Tonkin wrote: 'From a technical point-of-view, the peculiar achievement of *The Lighthouse* lies in the nervelessly skilful fusion of its emotions and its actions: the "literary" dimension of Futh's nostalgia and obsession, and the "genre" machine that, notch by notch, cranks up foreboding and suspense . . . A novel that opens with an epigraph by Muriel Spark may close by reminding you not just of Roald Dahl, but Stephen King.' Do you agree that the novel successfully straddles literary and genre fiction?
- 9 *The Lighthouse* has been described as 'heartbreaking farce' (Adam Roberts) and 'painful comedy' (Anthony Cummins, *The Observer*). Did you see the novel as having a farcical/comedic side, and if so do you think it works?
- 10 In *The Financial Times*, Isabel Berwick wrote of *The Lighthouse*: 'It deserves to be read, and reread'. Would you read this novel more than once? If you have read it more than once, was the rereading a rewarding experience?



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