



Meath County Council Library Service  
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## Meath County Council Library Service Book Club Kit

CALLAN WINK

AUGUST



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# Notes To Readers

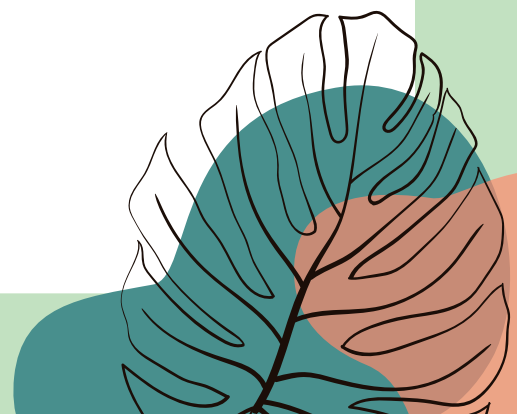


This kit was created for book clubs to use in their discussions of *August* and contains spoilers

## Content Warnings

Please be aware that *August* contains content that may trigger including depictions death, depression and anxiety

<https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/august-an-extraordinary-debut-novel-about-ordinary-life-1.4283226>





# Reading Group Discussion Questions

Looking at the cover, what do you predict this book might be about?

What detail on the cover supports that prediction?

What do you think will happen in the plot?

What ideas do you think will be present in this text?

Can you please describe what you think the illustration on the front cover is trying to tell us?

Why do you think the author used this title?

Why do you think the author used this type of font (style of letters) on the cover?


What do you already know from reading the title?

What connections can you make after reading the blurb?

How do you think this story will end?

What is a problem that you think could occur in this story?

What questions could you ask before reading this text?



# About Callan Wink



Callan Wink is the author of *Dog Run Moon: Stories* and the novel, *August* (Random House). He has been awarded fellowships by the National Endowment for the Arts and Stanford University, where he was a Wallace Stegner Fellow. His stories and essays appear widely, including in *The New Yorker*, *Granta*, *Playboy*, *Men's Journal* and *The Best American Short Stories Anthology*. In the warm months he lives in Livingston, Montana where he is a fly fishing guide on the Yellowstone River. In the winter he surfs in Santa Cruz, California.



# Interview with Callan Wink

**Jamie Kahn: Your novel, *August*, started off as a short story in *Dog Run Moon*. What made you want to take that story in particular and grow it into a novel? Did you have the idea that it might work as a novel from the beginning?**


Callan Wink: I definitely didn't have the idea when I wrote the story first that it would eventually be a novel. I didn't know how to go about writing a novel—and I still don't think I really do. I was a lot more comfortable writing short stories and I had written a few short stories with the same character. And as I was getting pressured by my publisher to finish the novel, I was like, “Well, there's a way I could probably turn this into a novel.” And that's kind of how it happened.


**It came out during the pandemic. How did that impact your experience of its release?**

Yeah, that was a weird time. And quite honestly, it was just sort of like: who cares about another literary novel written by a dude in Montana when everything's going on that was going on? I think it was met with a great yawn, understandably, by most folks. That's just how it goes. Timing is crucial. It is what it is. It was a novel I wrote and, pretty much immediately after publishing it, I was more interested in trying to write something different. So that's how I'm trying to approach it.

**You've said previously that your stories come from a place of reality, whether it's anecdotal things that you hear from other people or your own life. How do you see this as part of the evolution of your writing in terms of subject matter and style?**

I always admire these writers that can completely reinvent themselves with every book and just do things that are wildly different. I, unfortunately, don't think I have that level of creativity. I think part of it is the environment I've been in for the last 20 years. I have this familiarity with it. It's harder for me to, for instance, set a story in a place I've just visited once or twice, or that I've never been to. A lot of my characters are shaped by setting [and] I get stuck in these details of how things are and how things should look, even if it's not directly important to the story. Having intimate familiarity with the setting is pretty important for me.





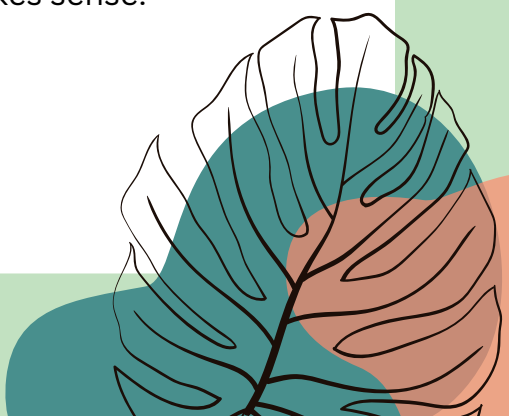
For better or for worse, I'm going to be stuck writing things that I'm familiar with, but the good thing is there's no shortage of material. If you're being observant, one of the great things about where I live—just a small town in the West—is there are a lot of really interesting personalities in my little town. I suppose that's true of every small town, but it seems more so to me than the Midwest town I grew up in. [I've noticed that in] the American West people's personalities sometimes grow to fit their environment. You know, the goldfish in a tank sort of thing. Most of the things I've written have gotten their start in different ways, I don't think there's necessarily always one place I start, but I have a lot of crazy people that I associate with on a daily basis and there's some good story material for sure. I just try to keep my eyes up.

**Reading your work I noticed themes reflecting on masculinity, masculine labor and action in particular. Are you trying to engage with that intentionally or subvert it? Or is it something that you're not thinking about, that just comes naturally?**

You know, when it comes down to it, that's just the men I grew up around. Most of [them] don't necessarily read on a daily basis, but I think, no matter what you do, you're trying to impress the people that are important to you in your life and for me, a lot of those people are men. That's maybe a simplistic way to look at it, but I'm trying to think of my ideal reader—someone I would want to appreciate something I've written. I want to write a story that my friends would appreciate.

**That's interesting, especially because your audience reaches beyond those types of men. Do you feel like there's a clash with the fact that a lot of your work has also been lovingly scooped up and adopted by New York City literary types?**

That is fine, and it also gets, you know, criticized heavily by New York literary folks as well. So I think it goes both ways. A lot of the folks who are a part of the literary scene such as it is, live in quite a bit different environment than the one I live in. There's a sort of wanting to fetishize, somewhat, the American West, and while there's some of that, people are also fascinated by what's different. I like reading about people in places that are different from where I live, too. So, to me it makes sense.





**A Refugee Crisis, which was published in the New Yorker between books, really stands out to me. It has a different texture from the rest of your work. What was the origin or the process of creating that story?**

In particular, I had read a novel by Rachel Cusk, *Outline*, that just struck me. Sometimes when you're writing a story and you're reading something, either at the same time or right after, you kind of absorb that other writer's style, whether you want to or not. Honestly, that had a lot to do with it. It's not a form that I generally have done or do much, but that self-referential narrator sort of thing that Rachel Cusk does, for whatever reason, was in my head when I wrote that story.


**You don't really talk about writing these days. Is there a reason why?**

I don't really have many friends who are writers at this point, so [writing is] kind of a seasonal job for me that I do by myself. It's something I do and don't talk about regularly, which is okay. I was teaching for a little while, so I had to do some of that, but I haven't taught or been a part of any sort of writing community in quite a while now. Half my year I don't write at all because I'm fishing. I'm just coming off of that season.

**So, can I ask what you are working on at the moment?**

The short answer is I'm hardly working on anything. I do some commercial writing for some small outdoor films, for the money basically. I just finished fishing guiding a week or so ago. What I have right now is essentially three novellas that I'm kind of finishing editing, and we're going to see if we can sell them. It's the sort of thing publishers don't really like because it's not a novel, but it's also not a short story collection. So I've got to work on that this month and then start something new after that.

I've found that I like writing novellas; it's not quite as much of a commitment as a novel, but you don't need quite as many story ideas as you'd need for a collection. I think the longer you write, the harder it is to just continually come up with good short story ideas. When you have a good idea, developing it into a longer thing is actually easier than continuing to burn up your beginnings and endings. The novella was kind of like a nice sweet spot in between both of those forms, but no one really likes the novella other than probably other writers. It's one of those weird forms. I think they're pretty good. Whether or not anyone will take a chance on or not, we'll see. Fingers crossed.





# Who Else Writes Like...?

A readers' guide to fiction authors



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# More from Callan Wink



More titles by Callan Wink, including the titles below, are available to reserve on our [Online Catalogue](#)



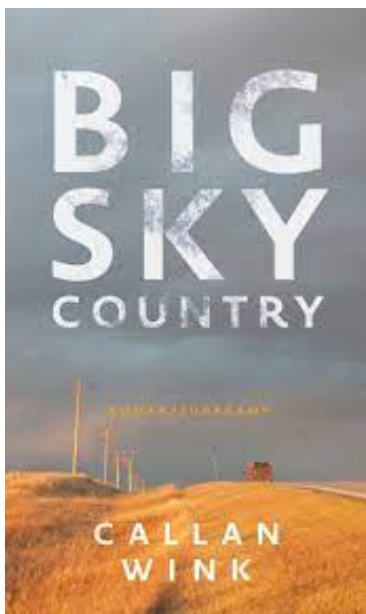
DOG RUN MOON



CALLAN WINK



A construction worker on the run from the shady local businessman whose dog he has stolen; a Custer's Last Stand reenactor engaged in a long-running affair with the Native American woman who slays him on the battlefield every year; a middle-aged high school janitor caught in a scary dispute over land and cattle with her former stepson: Callan Wink's characters are often confronted with predicaments few of us can imagine. But thanks to the humor and remarkable empathy of this supremely gifted writer, the nine stories gathered in Dog Run Moon are universally transporting and resonant.



August is an average twelve-year-old. He likes dogs and fishing and doesn't mind early-morning chores on his family's Michigan dairy farm. But following a messy divorce, his mother decides that she and August need to start over in a new town. There, he tries to be an average teen--football and homework--but when his role in a shocking act of violence throws him off-course once more, he flees to a ranch in rural Montana, where he learns that even the smallest of communities have dark secrets.

Covering August's adolescence, from age twelve to nineteen, this gorgeously written novel bears witness to the joys and traumas that irrevocably shape us all. Filled with unforgettable characters and stunning natural landscapes, this book is a moving and provocative look at growing up in the American heartland.