



Meath County Council Library Service Book Club Kit

DRIVE YOUR PLOW OVER THE BONES OF THE DEAD

OLGA TOKARCZUK

Fitzcarraldo Editions



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meath county council



www.meath.ie/council/council-services/libraries/book-club-kits

Notes To Readers



This kit was created for book clubs to use in their discussions of *Drive Your Plow Over The Bones of the Dead* and contains spoilers.

Content Warnings

Please be aware that *Drive Your Plow Over The Bones of the Dead* contains the theme of revenge as it relates to the protagonist's ecofeminist revolt against what she considers to be a male-dominated society, which disregards human and animal life in its pursuit of power and profit.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00806765.2021.1994002#:~:text=In%20this%20reading%20of%20Oiga,pursuit%20of%20power%20and%20profit.>



Discussion Questions

What feelings did the main character of Janina Duszejko engender in you? Why? At what point (if any) did you see her as an unreliable narrator?

Emotions like Anger are centrally located in the narrative. Is the theory of anger convincing? Why/why not? What's the role of capital letter naming?

How do you interpret a role of William Blake's poetry in the narrative?

How are we to come to terms with centrality of pseudoscience (astrology) and a whole array of superstitions in the main character's life; especially if we consider Duszejko an alter ego of Tokarczuk?

Olga Tokarczuk considers her book to be a moral thriller. Is it? Does she succeed in this genre? Did it thrill or intrigue you or not? Why/why not? How about the "moral" aspect of the narrative?

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A readers' guide to fiction authors



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www.meath.ie/council/council-services/libraries/what-to-read-next

About Olga Tokarczuk



Olga Tokarczuk is one of Poland's most celebrated and beloved authors, a winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature and the Man Booker International Prize, as well as her country's highest literary honor, the Nike. She is the author of eight novels and two short story collections, and has been translated into more than thirty languages.

Interview with Olga Tokarczuk

Your parents were both teachers. How did that influence you?

Olga Tokarczuk: It was really a very good beginning for a writer. The books were very present in our house. I saw from the beginning how my parents are discussing books, reading books, buying books and I could spend a lot of time with my father in the library which I remember very good. What I remember very good, and like here we have a shelf and the most interesting books for me were always close to the ground. So, I explored those shelves very intensively and I think that was the way I really discovered books as a world, as an alternative world. Of course, I think in the beginning, were fairy tales many of them and I do still like fairy tales very much. Even recently I bought a new volume of Brothers Grimm's fairy tales and they still, I read them as a kind of poetry, but later I think that Jules Verne affected me very much. So, I started to think in this way – crossing borders, thinking about other countries and other cultures, travelling – so that was the very strong idea for me.

Did you enjoy school?

Olga Tokarczuk: I liked my school but rather from social reasons because of my friends and the time spending together. But I was a type of child who rather preferred self-education, so I had many hobbies, many fascinating subjects like astronomy for instance. So, I really spent a lot of time studying for my pleasure. I remember very well my teacher from secondary school. She was biologist and she taught us biology and she opened my eyes for this beautiful aspect of physical existence of every living being.

What did you want to be when you were younger?

Olga Tokarczuk: Of course, as a very young child, I would be an actress like every single girl I think, but later I expected that the progress of science will be quicker, I think and then I expected that it will be possible to be a physician, but a cosmic physician, so I was thinking about my future profession as taking part in cosmic, oh god, how to say, expedition. So, I remember myself dreaming about to be a part of a cosmic expedition and work in science checking how the human body is relating with cosmic space, it was a very fantastic idea. Of course, I think that I overestimated the time of development of science. Now I can realise that this is the same subject in my books – thank you for this question.

How has your training as a psychologist affected the way you tell stories?

Olga Tokarczuk: I think that it was a good choice to study psychology. Of course, I was tempted by my mother to study literature even if she knew from the beginning that I wanted to write, but psychology taught me very many important things. I think the one, the most important one that there is every single human being is the source of a novel, it's a source of many stories. So, we are living in a world that like, more or less, five billion of stories, novels, in potential state existing still around us. But the second reason, why studying psychology was a very good choice, is that this training as a psychotherapist taught me how to listen to people. It's a kind of ability you can really train and then you can be open much more for what people are saying to you.

Which experience has most influenced your work?

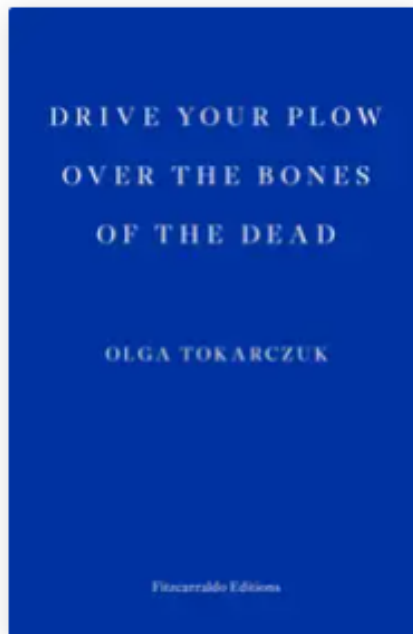
Olga Tokarczuk: The most influential experience which really is strong related to my work is, I think, this moment I decided to move to the countryside and then ... because I grew up as a child in the countryside, then after big cities and this kind of chaotic life, I came back to the nature. And then I discovered a kind of different state of mind which was very good for my writing and gave me a kind of concentration, silence, inner silence.

What do you enjoy most about the process of writing?

Olga Tokarczuk: I think that most funny and mysterious thing is creating characters. It looks, in the beginning, that I'm really inventing because I need a character, a personality to the story, to my story. But in fact, it looks rather like those characters are coming from outside to my story, so, they are already existing somewhere and there are the first step is that they look rather shapely, only cloudy, not in a physical way, but there is another step of this process when I can hear what they are talking between each other or when they are talking to me. So, this is the best moment in my writing. It must be special, very deep and special connection, relationship between me as a narrator, me as an author and my characters and for sure they are taking from me many things, but I'm also, I've learned from them. Sometimes they surprise me because of somethings I didn't know about them, so, it's really very mysterious. I'm going to write about it. And of course, there are many dimensions of writing because first of all you need to make a research or even to invent an entire story, to support yourself by another books, other ideas, to talk with people, to make some notes. And then there is a beginning of writing and sculpturing the entire story. So, it's so many dimensions that it's never boring really, and they like it. This is my only one profession, I cannot do anything else, so.



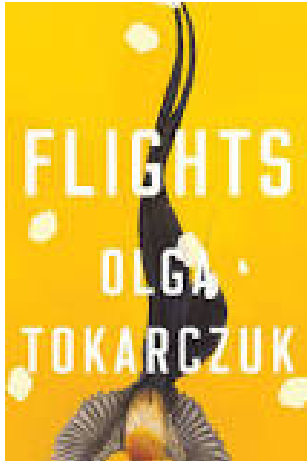
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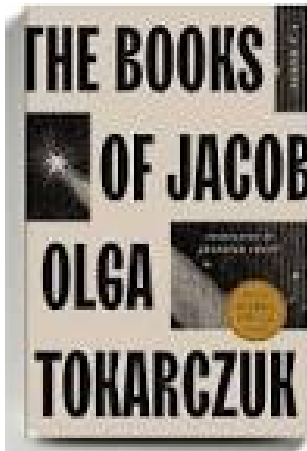
More from Olga Tokarczuk



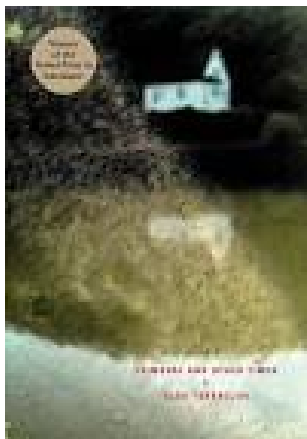
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