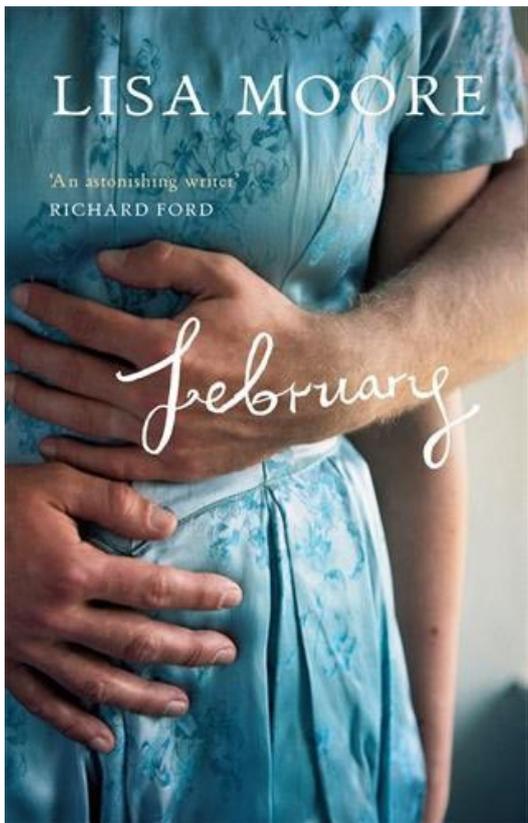




Reader's Guide



Other books by Lisa Moore

Alligator (2005)

February Lisa Moore

Chatto & Windus
Price £12.99

www.themanbookerprize.com



About the author

Lisa Moore is the acclaimed author of *Alligator*, winner of the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Canada and the Caribbean, a finalist for the Giller Prize and longlisted for the Orange Prize for Fiction. Her story collection *Open* was also a finalist for the Giller. Both books were bestsellers in Canada. Lisa Moore lives with her husband and two children in St John's, Newfoundland

February

In 1982, the oil rig *Ocean Ranger* sank off the coast of Newfoundland during a Valentine's night storm. In the early hours of the next morning, all 84 men aboard died. Helen O'Mara is one of those left behind when her husband, Cal, drowns. Her story starts years after the *Ranger* disaster, but she is compelled to travel back to the 'February' that persists in her mind, and to that moment in 1982 when, expecting a fourth child, she received the call informing her that Cal was lost at sea.

A quarter of a century on, late one winter's night, Helen is woken by another phone call. It is her wayward son John, in another time zone, on his way home. He has made a girl pregnant and he wants Helen to decide what he should do. As John grapples with what it might mean to be a father, Helen realises that she must shake off her decades of mourning in order to help.

With grace and precision, and a shocking ability to render the precise details of her characters' physical and emotional worlds, Lisa Moore reveals the whole story to us. And just as, finally, we watch the oil rig go down, we see Helen emerging from her grief to greet a new life.

Discussion points

Do you think that *February* successfully weaves back and forth in time between the book's earliest date when Cal dies and the latest when she hears from her son 25 years later?

Grief and loneliness are both central to the novel, does Lisa Moore handle these themes adeptly?

Do you feel that Lisa Moore has created an empathetic character in Helen?

Would you agree that the second-tier characters, like Helen's daughters, are only lightly sketched compared to characters such as John and Barry?

At one stage John reflects that "the present was always devolving into the past", how does the writing reflect this?

Real life disasters in fiction: *February* is based on a true story and a real life disaster, how does the knowledge of that tragedy affect your reading of the novel?

How do Lisa Moore's descriptions of landscape and weather impact upon the emotional power of the story, and your understanding of Helen's grief and loss?

How does Lisa Moore depict the different kinds of love that Helen feels for different people - Cal, Barry, John, her daughters, her grandchildren?

Themed reading

Carol Shields *Republic of Love*
Graham Greene *The End of the Affair*
Ian McEwan *A Child in Time*
John MacGregor *Even the Dogs*

Useful links

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