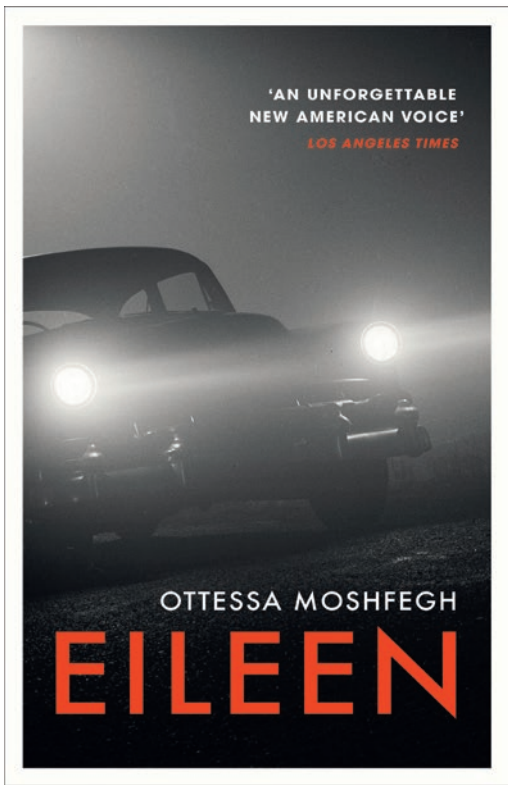


Reader's Guide



Eileen
is Ottessa Moshfegh's first novel

Eileen Ottessa Moshfegh

Jonathan Cape

www.themanbookerprize.com

#FinestFiction



About the author

Otessa Moshfegh is a fiction writer from Boston. She was awarded the Plimpton Prize for her stories in *The Paris Review* and the Fence Modern Prize in Prose and granted a creative writing fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. She is currently a Wallace Stegner Fellow at Stanford. Her short stories, *Homesick for Another World*, are forthcoming from Jonathan Cape.

About the book

The Christmas season offers little cheer for Eileen Dunlop, an unassuming yet disturbed young woman trapped between her role as her alcoholic father's carer in his squalid home and her day job as a secretary at the boys' prison, filled with its own quotidian horrors. Consumed by resentment and self-loathing, Eileen tempers her dreary days with perverse fantasies and dreams of escaping to the big city. In the meantime, she fills her nights and weekends with shoplifting, stalking a handsome prison guard named Randy, and cleaning up her increasingly deranged father's messes. When the beautiful, charismatic Rebecca Saint John arrives on the scene as the new counsellor at the prison, Eileen is enchanted and unable to resist what appears to be a miraculously budding friendship. In a Hitchcockian twist, her affection for Rebecca pulls her into complicity in a crime that surpasses her wildest imaginings.

Discussion points

Eileen has been praised for the vivid, and often dark, exploration of its protagonist's interior life. How did it feel to be inside a character's head like that?

The book is narrated by Eileen as a much older woman, how does the space between narrative and narrator affect the development of the story?

Eileen works at a youth correctional facility. What role does entrapment play in the novel?

The novel has a Hitchcockian feel to it. In what ways is *Eileen* similar to classic noir, and in what ways is it different?

Eileen is set in the 1960s, but far from the glamour we often associate with that period. In what ways is the period setting reflected in the book?

Themed reading

Sylvia Plath *The Bell Jar*

Raymond Carver *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?*

Nathaniel Hawthorne *The Birth-Mark*

Useful links

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/aug/20/eileen-by-otessa-moshfegh-review-bell-jar>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/16/books/review/eileen-by-otessa-moshfegh.html>

<http://www.latimes.com/books/jacketcopy/la-ca-jc-otessa-moshfegh-20150816-story.html>

<http://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/eileen-by-otessa-moshfegh-review-little-shock-and-no-awe-1.2560329>