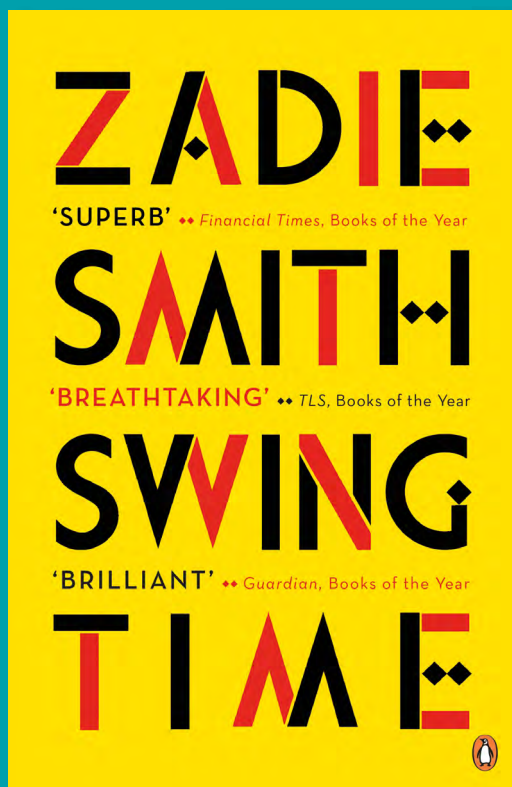




Reader's Guide



Other novels by Zadie Smith
White Teeth (2000)
The Autograph Man (2002)
On Beauty (2005)
NW (2012)

Swing Time Zadie Smith

Hamish Hamilton

www.themanbookerprize.com
#FinestFiction #ManBooker2017

THE
READING
AGENCY

M
Man

The
Booker
Prize
Foundation

About the author

Zadie Smith is the author of the novels *White Teeth*, *The Autograph Man*, *On Beauty* and *NW*, as well as *The Embassy of Cambodia* and a collection of essays, *Changing My Mind*. She is a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and has twice been listed as one of Granta's 20 Best Young British Novelists. She has won the Orange Prize for Fiction, the Whitbread First Novel Award and the Guardian First Book Award among many others, and has been shortlisted for the 2005 Man Booker Prize and the Baileys Women's Prize for Fiction. She was born in North West London in 1975 and now lives in London and New York with her husband and two children. *Swing Time* is her fifth novel.

About the book

Dazzlingly energetic and deeply human, *Swing Time* is a story about friendship and music and true identity, how they shape us and how we can survive them. Moving from north-west London to West Africa, it is an exuberant dance to the music of time.

Two brown girls dream of being dancers – but only one, Tracey, has talent. The other has ideas: about rhythm and time, about black bodies and black music, what constitutes a tribe, or makes a person truly free. It's a close but complicated childhood friendship that ends abruptly in their early 20s, never to be revisited, but never quite forgotten, either...

What the judges thought

'A mature and thoughtful book', the judges said, which offers 'a fascinating study of someone who lives her life through others'. *Swing Time*, they concluded, 'takes serious subject matter – the history of identity and culture – and addresses it with unabashed intelligence'.

Discussion points

Why do you think the narrator is never named? Did this affect your connection with her?

The two girls form a strong friendship in childhood, but to what extent is this because they felt different from the other children in their dance class?

The story moves between London and West Africa – which sections did you prefer? Why do you think that is?

What do you think Aimee's motivation was in visiting West Africa to build a school? How well does the narrator understand her own motivation for being there?

Have you read Smith's other novels? How does this compare?

Useful links

www.theguardian.com/books/2016/nov/13/swing-time-zadie-smith-review

www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/swing-time-zadie-smith-review-white-teeth-a7393951

www.npr.org/2017/01/20/510600755/novelist-zadie-smith-on-historical-nostalgia-and-the-nature-of-talent