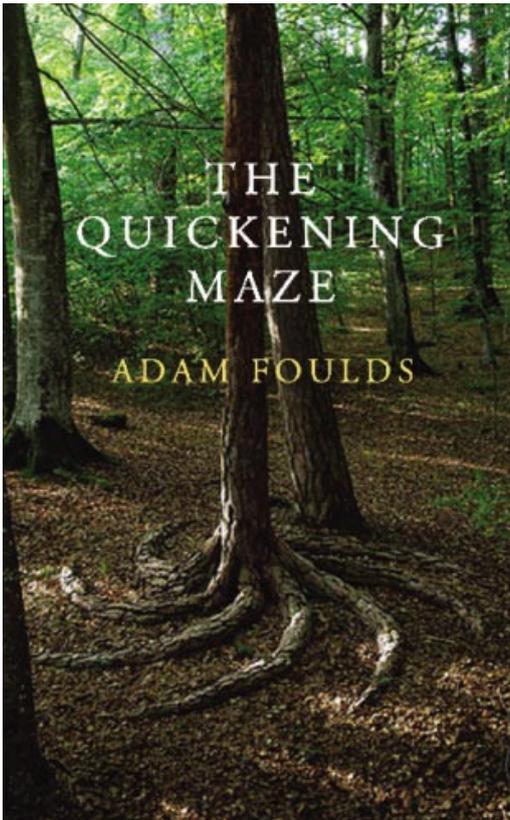


## Reader's Guide



### Other books by Adam Foulds

*The Truth About These  
Strange Times (2007)*

*The Broken Word (2008)*

# The Quickening Maze

## Adam Foulds

Published by Jonathan Cape  
Price £12.99

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## About the author

Adam Foulds was born in 1974, took a Creative Writing MA at the University of East Anglia and now lives in South London. His first novel, *The Truth About These Strange Times*, was published in 2007 and his book-length narrative poem, *The Broken Word*, the following year. He was named the *Sunday Times* Young Writer of the Year in 2008.

## *The Quickening Maze*

*The Quickening Maze* is based on real events and is set in and around the High Beach Asylum in 1840. The asylum, built within Epping Forest, is a place of disorder and unpredictable dramas. Foulds' compelling tale centres on the life of the great nature poet John Clare. After years struggling with alcohol, critical neglect and depression, Clare finds himself in High Beach Asylum. At the same time another poet, the young Alfred Tennyson, moves nearby and becomes entangled in the life and catastrophic schemes of the asylum's owner, the peculiar, charismatic Dr Matthew Allen.

Historically accurate, but brilliantly imagined, the closed world of High Beach and its various inmates – the doctor, his lonely daughter in love with Tennyson, the brutish staff and John Clare himself – are brought vividly to life. Foulds also exquisitely depicts life outside the walls; nature and Clare's paradise – the birds and animals, the gypsies living in the forest; his dream of home, of redemption, of escape.

## Discussion points

Adam Foulds is both a poet and novelist and many reviewers have praised *The Quickening Maze* for its poetic style and in particular Foulds' ability to convey vivid images in only a few words. Did this writing style assist the narrative flow or hinder it?

Adam Foulds has combined known historical facts with his own 'imaginings', as a reader did you feel that there was a seamless blend of fact with fiction?

*The Quickening Maze* has been described as a novel about identity, for you which characters and narrative strands most fully explored this concept?

Would you agree with John Clare who described High Beach Private Asylum as his 'Bastille' or Reverend Allen who claimed to run the asylum on liberal and progressive principles?

Foulds admits to '*compressing events that occurred over several years into the space of seven seasons*' for you what effect did the backdrop of the changing seasons have on the novel?

## Themed reading

*Edge of the Orison* Iain Sinclair  
*According to Queenie* Beryl Bainbridge  
*Selected Poems* John Clare  
*Selected Poems* Alfred Tennyson

## Useful links

[www.themanbookerprize.com](http://www.themanbookerprize.com)  
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[www.telegraph.co.uk/.../The-Quickening-Maze-by-Adam-Foulds-review.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/.../The-Quickening-Maze-by-Adam-Foulds-review.html)