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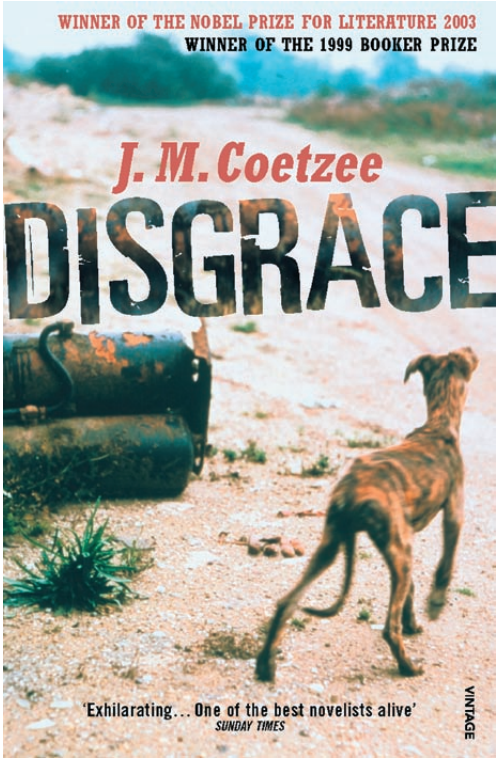

The Best of the Booker

Readers' Guides

Disgrace by J.M. Coetzee

Publisher by Vintage
Paperback RRP £7.99

Winning year 1999

Other shortlisted titles in 1999
Anita Desai – *Fasting, Feasting*
Michael Frayn – *Headlong*
Andrew O'Hagan – *Our Fathers*
Ahdaf Soueif – *The Map of Love*
Colm Toibin – *The Blackwater Lightship*

1999 Judges
Gerald Kaufman (Chair),
Sheena McKay, John Sutherland,
Boyd Tonkin, Natasha Walter

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About the author

JM Coetzee was born in South Africa in 1940. He won the 1983 Booker Prize with *Life & Times of Michael K* and then again with *Disgrace* in 1999. His novels include *Waiting for the Barbarians* (awarded the James Tait Black Memorial Prize in 1980) and *The Master of Petersburg* (awarded the Irish Times International Fiction Prize in 1995). In 2003 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. JM Coetzee lives in Australia.

Disgrace

Refusing to apologise after an impulsive affair with a student, David Lurie, a 52 year old professor in Cape Town, seeks refuge on his daughter's farm where a savage and disturbing attack brings into relief the faults in their relationship. Pitching the moral code of political correctness against the values of Romantic poetry, Disgrace examines dichotomies both in personal relationships and in the unaccountability of one culture towards another.

Discussion points

- The novel is written in the third person but we see things from David Lurie's viewpoint. Do you think he is the hero of the story?
- Does David become a better human being as a result of his experiences?
- David Lurie is disgraced in the story because he has preyed on a vulnerable student. Do you think the story is about other forms of disgrace?
- How would you describe David's relationship with his daughter Lucy? Does it get stronger or more fraught in the course of the novel?
- We are more aware of David's feelings about Lucy than we are of hers about him. How do you think Lucy would describe David?
- If this novel is telling us about the current reality of South Africa, what is it saying? Is it a very bleak vision?

Other books by JM Coetzee

Life & Times of Michael K; Dusklands;
In the Heart of the Country;
Waiting for the Barbarians; Foe;
Age of Iron; The Master of Petersburg;
Boyhood; Slow Man; Diary of a Bad Year

Further Reading

Sabbath's Theatre – Philip Roth
The House of Mr Biswas – VS Naipaul
The Trial – Franz Kafka
The House Gun – Nadine Gordimer
Dog Heart – Breyten Breytenbach

Useful links

http://www.encompassculture.com/readinggroups/readersnotes/disgracebyj.m.coetzee/http://www.randomhouse.co.uk/offthepage
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