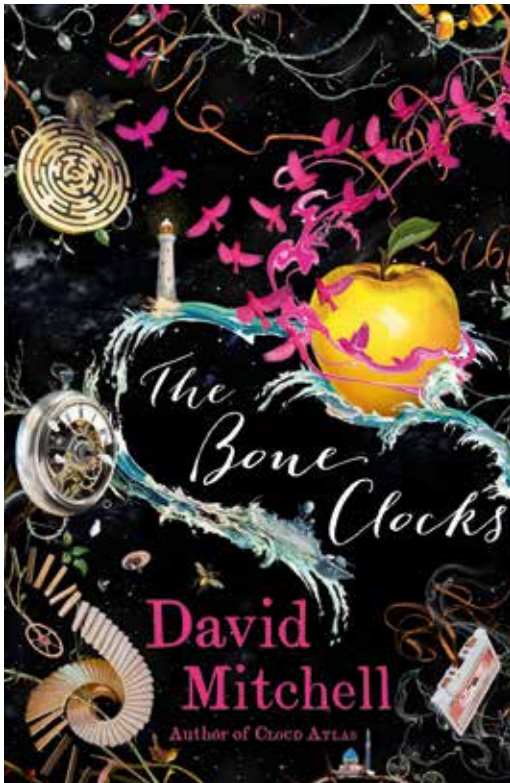


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## Reader's Guide



Other novels by David Mitchell

*Ghostwritten* (1999)

*number9dream* (2001)

*Cloud Atlas* (2004)

*Black Swan Green* (2006)

*The Thousand Autumns*

*of Jacob de Zoet* (2010)

# The Bone Clocks

## David Mitchell

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## About the author

David Mitchell was born in Southport in January, 1969.

His first novel, *Ghostwritten* (1999), won the Mail on Sunday/John Llewellyn Rhys Prize for the best book by a writer under 35 and was also shortlisted for the Guardian First Book Award.

His second novel, *number9dream*, was shortlisted for the 2001 Booker Prize as well as the James Tait Black Memorial Prize. In 2003 he was named one of Granta's Best of Young British Novelists.

His third novel, *Cloud Atlas*, was shortlisted for the 2004 Man Booker Prize. He has since published *Black Swan Green* (longlisted for the 2006 Man Booker Prize and shortlisted for the Costa Novel of the Year Award) and *The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet* (longlisted for the 2010 Man Booker Prize).

David Mitchell now lives in Ireland with his wife and their two children.

## The Bone Clocks

One drowsy summer's day in 1984, teenage runaway Holly Sykes encounters a strange woman who offers a small kindness in exchange for 'asylum'. Decades will pass before Holly understands exactly what sort of asylum the woman was seeking...

*The Bone Clocks* follows the twists and turns of Holly's life, from a scarred adolescence in Gravesend to old age on Ireland's Atlantic coast as Europe's oil supply dries up – a life not so far out of the ordinary, yet punctuated by flashes of precognition, visits from people who emerge from thin air and brief lapses in the laws of reality. For Holly Sykes – daughter, sister, mother, guardian – is also an unwitting player in a murderous feud played out in the shadows and margins of our world, and may prove to be its decisive weapon.

## Discussion points

*The Bone Clocks'* themes range from how we live with the knowledge of our own mortality to the awareness that some of our planet's resources could soon be finite too. Discuss how David Mitchell explores weighty ideas without sacrificing the traditional storytelling virtues of plot, character and suspense.

The novel begins in 1984 and ends in 2043, with each section set in a new decade. Do you think David Mitchell successfully captures the flavour of the 1980s, '90s and 2000s, and is his vision of the future plausible?

Some characters in the novel inhabit many different bodies – both male and female – over time, though their essence remains unchanged. Discuss David Mitchell's portrayal of gender and its relevance to identity. Do you think it is ever possible for gender roles to be transcended fully?

The novel has a wide variety of settings including Gravesend in Kent, Iceland and Rottnest Island in Australia. How important do you think these settings are to the central story, and which did you find the most vividly evoked?

Crispin Hershey's attitude towards Holly changes a great deal over time, but does his essential nature change as well? How far does Holly influence the behaviour of the people she becomes close to?

## Themed reading

Mikhail Bulgakov *The Master And Margarita*  
Frank Miller *The Watchmen*  
Umberto Eco *Foucault's Pendulum*  
Sylvia Townsend Warner *Lolly Willowes*

## Useful links

[www.themanbookerprize.com](http://www.themanbookerprize.com)  
[www.theboneclocks.com](http://www.theboneclocks.com)  
[www.theguardian.com/books/interactive/2014/apr/22/david-mitchell-novel-bone-clocks-cloud-atlas-interactive](http://www.theguardian.com/books/interactive/2014/apr/22/david-mitchell-novel-bone-clocks-cloud-atlas-interactive)