



The Best of the Booker

Readers' Guides

The Ghost Road by Pat Barker

Publisher Penguin
Paperback RRP £7.99

Winning year 1995

Other shortlisted titles in 1995

Justin Cartwright – *In Every Face I Meet*

Salman Rushdie – *The Moor's Last Sigh*

Barry Unsworth – *The Morality Play*

Tim Winton – *The Riders*

1995 Judges

George Walden MP (Chair), Kate Kellaway,
Peter Kemp, Adam Mars-Jones, Ruth Rendell



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About the author

Pat Barker was born in Yorkshire in May 1943. Her first book, *Union Street* (1982) won the Fawcett Society Book Prize, while her second, *Blow Your House Down* (1984), was adapted for the stage by Sarah Daniels in 1994. Her trilogy of novels about the First World War, which began with *Regeneration* in 1991, was partly inspired by her grandfather's experiences fighting in the trenches in France. *Regeneration* was made into a film in 1997 starring Jonathan Pryce and James Wilby. *The Eye in the Door* (1993), the second novel in the trilogy, won the Guardian Fiction Prize, and *The Ghost Road* (1995), the final novel in the series, won the Booker Prize for Fiction. Pat Barker was awarded a CBE in 2000. Pat Barker lives in Durham.

The Ghost Road

1918, and Billy Prior is in France once again. A real test case for the 'shell-shock' therapies practised at Craiglockhart War Hospital where, with Wilfred Owen, he was a patient. Prior experiences a late-summer idyll, some days of perfect beauty, before the final battles in a war that has destroyed most of his generation. In London, Prior's psychologist, William Rivers, tends to his new patients, more young men whose lives and minds have been shattered. And remembers the primitive society on Eddystone Island where he studied as an anthropologist before the war.

Discussion points

- Other than the fact that he does not know what else to do with his life, why does Billy Prior return to the Front for the fourth time?
- 'Struggle' is one of the key themes of *The Ghost Road*, consider how the novel portrays the internal and external struggles of Billy Prior, Dr Rivers, Njiru and the villagers and the patients in Dr Rivers' care.
- World War I France and Melanesia are compared throughout the novel, what parallels can be drawn between the war in France and the 'war' on Eddystone?
- Dr Rivers is an enigma; more time is spent exploring his character through flashbacks of his work on Eddystone than his present life. Does Dr Rivers know what he wants from life, did he prefer his life on Eddystone or at home in Britain?
- What is the impact on the reader of flipping the narration back and forth between the first and the third person?

Other books by Pat Barker

Union Street; *Blow Your House*; *The Century's Daughter*; *The Man Who Wasn't There*; *Regeneration*; *The Eye in the Door*; *The Ghost Road*; *Another World*; *Border Crossing*; *Double Vision*; *Life Class*

Further Reading

Penguin Book of First World War Prose – John Glover and Jon Silkin
Birdsong – Sebastian Faulks
Three Day Road – Joseph Boyden
All Quiet on the Western Front – Erich Maria Remarque

Useful links

http://books.guardian.co.uk/departments/generalfiction/story/0,,459394,00.html#article_continue
<http://www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/?p=auth15>
<http://readers.penguin.co.uk/nf/Search/QuickSearchProc/1,,the%20ghost%20road,00.html?id=the%20ghost%20road>
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