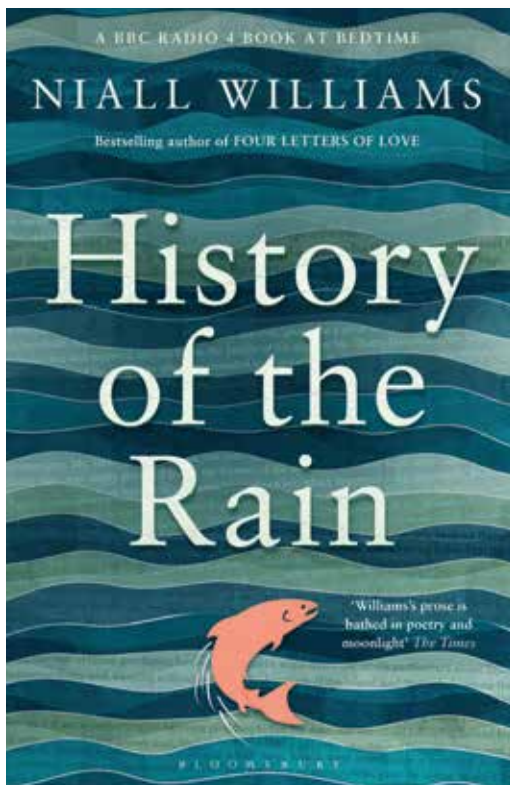


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2014

## Reader's Guide



### Other novels by Niall Williams

*Four Letters of Love* (1997)

*As It Is In Heaven* (1999)

*The Fall of Light* (2001)

*Only Say the Word* (2004)

*The Unrequited* (2006)

*Boy in the World* (2007)

*Boy and Man* (2008)

*John* (2009)

# History of the Rain

## Niall Williams

Bloomsbury

[www.themanbookerprize.com](http://www.themanbookerprize.com)

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### About the author

Niall Williams was born in Dublin in 1958. He is the author of eight novels including *John* and *Four Letters of Love* for which he has recently completed the screenplay for Element Pictures. He lives in Kiltumper in County Clare, with his wife, Christine.

### *History of the Rain*

Ruth Swain, the bedridden daughter of a dead poet, home from school after a collapse, is trying to find her father through stories - and through generations of family history in County Clare. In order to do this Ruthie turns to the three thousand, nine hundred and fifty eight books piled high that her father left behind. His entire, vast library moved to her bedroom which she pledges to work her way through while she's still living.

### Discussion points

Ruth switches back and forth between the generations in her narrative and has many diversions, why did Niall Williams chose to tell the story in this way, and does this make a difference to the way you read and understand the novel?

In a recent interview Niall Williams said 'At one level, this novel is about stories and storytelling. And in that tradition, the voice of the storyteller is crucial. So I hope readers will settle in to listen to Ruth Swain. She has a unique voice and I, at least, found that voice compelling'. What is your response to Ruth's storytelling voice?

The novel's 'big secret' is obvious early on, and, therefore, is the reveal 'more of a relief than a surprise'?

In what ways does *History of the Rain* capture the gossiping, provincial attitude of a rural Irish community but also its generosity, kindness and acceptance of the unusual?

The Swain family believes in the 'impossible standard philosophy' — essentially the idea that you can always do better. Does this make it impossible for them to be happy?

### Themed reading

Charles Dickens *Great Expectations*

### Useful links

[www.themanbookerprize.com](http://www.themanbookerprize.com)

[www.niallwilliams.com](http://www.niallwilliams.com)

[www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b040h5nz](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b040h5nz)

[www.washingtonindependentreviewofbooks.com/features/an-interview-with-niall-williams](http://www.washingtonindependentreviewofbooks.com/features/an-interview-with-niall-williams)