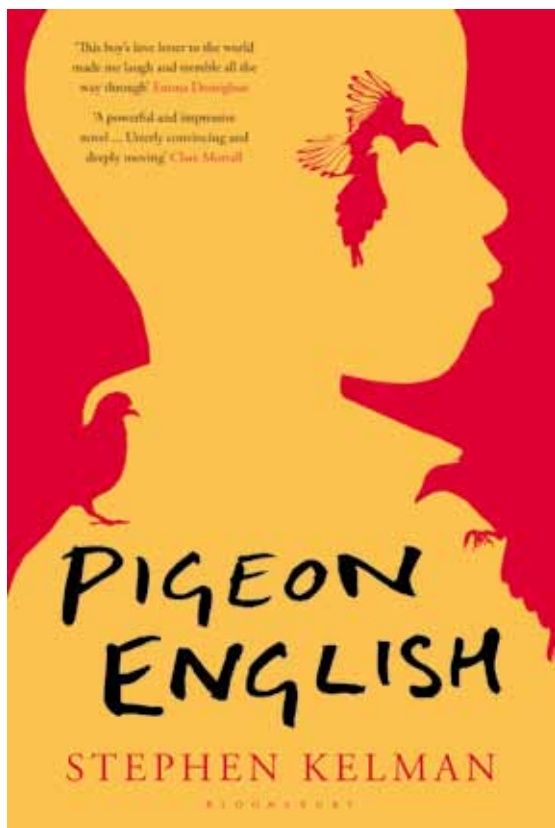




Reader's Guide



Pigeon English is
Stephen Kelman's first novel

Pigeon English Stephen Kelman

Bloomsbury
Price £12.99

www.themanbookerprize.com

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About the author

Stephen Kelman was born in Luton in 1976. After finishing his degree he worked variously as a warehouse operative, a careworker, and in marketing and local government administration. He decided to pursue his writing seriously in 2005, and has completed several feature screenplays since then. *Pigeon English* is his first novel.

Pigeon English

Newly arrived from Ghana with his mother and older sister, eleven-year-old Harrison Opoku lives on the ninth floor of a block of flats on an inner-city housing estate. The second best runner in the whole of Year 7, Harri races through his new life in his personalised trainers – the Adidas stripes drawn on with marker pen – blissfully unaware of the very real threat all around him. With equal fascination for the local gang – the Dell Farm Crew – and the pigeon who visits his balcony, Harri absorbs the many strange elements of his new life in England: watching, listening, and learning the tricks of inner-city survival. But when a boy is knifed to death on the high street and a police appeal for witnesses draws only silence, Harri decides to start a murder investigation of his own. In doing so, he unwittingly endangers the fragile web his mother has spun around her family to try and keep them safe. A story of innocence and experience, hope and harsh reality, *Pigeon English* is a spellbinding portrayal of a boy balancing on the edge of manhood and of the forces around him that try to shape the way he falls.

Discussion points

Pigeon English is written from an eleven-year-old boy's point of view, is the voice authentic?

What is the significance of the pigeon?

Stephen Kelman was inspired by true events in writing this novel. Does this make a difference to the way you read it?

Harri makes lists and diagrams to explain what he has learnt about his new life in the UK. What effect do his explanations have on you as a reader?

Harri's father and sister Agnes still live in Ghana, and we hear their story through a phone line. Why do you think Stephen Kelman chooses to separate the family in this way?

Themed reading

Junot Diaz *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*
Emma Donoghue *Room*
Roddy Doyle *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha*

Useful links

Publisher's website

<http://www.bloomsbury.com/Stephen-Kelman/authors/13703>

BBC interview with Stephen Kelman

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YAJcQJOz_kM