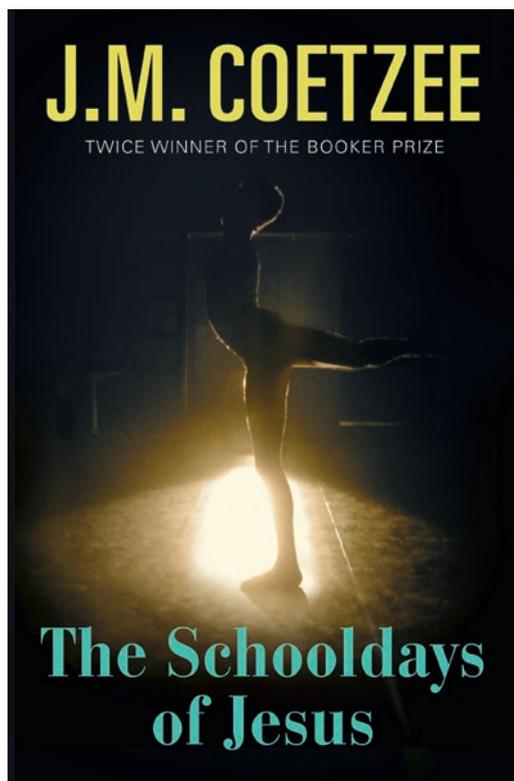


# Reader's Guide



Other books by J.M. Coetzee  
*Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980)  
*Life & Times of Michael K* (1983)  
*Disgrace* (1999)  
*Elizabeth Costello* (2003)

## The Schooldays of Jesus J.M. Coetzee

Harvill Secker

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

#FinestFiction



### About the author

J.M. 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. J.M. Coetzee lives in Australia.

### About the book

David is the small boy who is always asking questions. Simón and Inés take care of him in their new town, Estrella. He is learning the language; he has begun to make friends. He has the big dog Bolívar to watch over him. But he'll be seven soon and he should be at school. And so, with the guidance of the three sisters who own the farm where Simón and Inés work, David is enrolled in the Academy of Dance. It's here, in his new golden dancing slippers, that he learns how to call down the numbers from the sky. But it's here, too, that he will make troubling discoveries about what grown-ups are capable of. In this mesmerizing allegorical tale, Coetzee deftly grapples with the big questions of growing up, of what it means to be a 'parent,' the constant battle between intellect and emotion, and how we choose to live our lives.

### Discussion points

The names of the three schools at which David can be educated are the Academy of Singing, the Academy of Dance and the Atom School. How do you interpret the focus of each school in relation to one another?

Storytelling is a recurring act in the novel; stories are told by Dmitri and Alyosha throughout to the students at the Academy of Dance. Why do you think this is and how is it important to the wider novel?

There is an unconventional family structure which exists between David, Simón, Inés and Bolívar in *The Schooldays of Jesus* – what do you think their relationship represents?

In the novel the sisters give David a set of marionettes – what do you think the significance of this gift is?

### Themed reading

J.M. Coetzee *Disgrace*

J.M. Coetzee *Life & Times of Michael K*

### Useful links

<http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/29959887-the-schooldays-of-jesus>