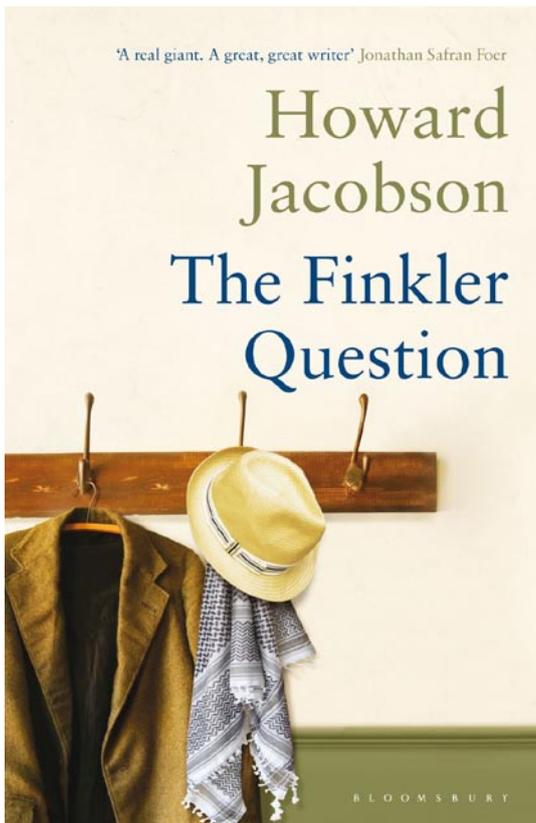




Reader's Guide



Other books by Howard Jacobson

Coming from Behind (1983)
Peeping Tom (1984)
Redback (1987)
In the Land of Oz (1987)
The Very Model of a Man (1992)
No More Mr. Nice Guy (1998)
The Mighty Walzer (1999)
Who's Sorry Now (2002)
The Making of Henry (2004)
Kalooki Nights (2006)
The Act of Love (2008)

The Finkler Question

Howard Jacobson

Bloomsbury
Price £18.99

www.themanbookerprize.com

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Man



About the author

An award-winning writer and broadcaster, Howard Jacobson was born in Manchester, brought up in Prestwich and was educated at Stand Grammar School in Whitefield, and Downing College, Cambridge, where he studied under F. R. Leavis. He lectured for three years at the University of Sydney before returning to teach at Selwyn College, Cambridge. His novels include *The Mighty Walzer* (winner of the Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize), *Kalooki Nights* (longlisted for the Man Booker Prize) and, most recently, the highly acclaimed *The Act of Love*. Howard Jacobson lives in London.

The Finkler Question

‘He should have seen it coming. His life had been one mishap after another. So he should have been prepared for this one...’

Julian Treslove, a professionally unspectacular former BBC radio producer, and Sam Finkler, a popular Jewish philosopher, writer and television personality, are old school friends. Despite a prickly relationship and very different lives, they’ve never quite lost touch with each other - or with their former teacher, Libor Sevcik, a Czech always more concerned with the wider world than with exam results. Now, both Libor and Sam are recently widowed, and with Treslove, his chequered and unsuccessful record with women rendering him an honorary third widower, they dine at Libor’s grand, central London apartment.

It’s a sweetly painful evening of reminiscence in which all three remove themselves to a time before they had loved and lost; a time before they had fathered children, before the devastation of separations, before they had prized anything greatly enough to fear the loss of it. Better, perhaps, to go through life without knowing happiness at all because that way you have less to mourn? Treslove finds he has tears enough for the unbearable sadness of both his friends’ losses.

And it’s that very evening, at exactly 11:30, as Treslove, walking home, hesitates a moment outside the window of the oldest violin dealer in the country, that he is attacked. And after this, his whole sense of who and what he is will slowly and ineluctably change.

The Finkler Question is a scorching story of friendship and loss, exclusion and belonging, and of the wisdom and humanity of maturity. Funny, furious, unflinching, this extraordinary novel shows one of our finest writers at his brilliant best.

Discussion points

Do you agree with the reviewer who said, “The opening chapters of this novel boast some of the wittiest, most poignant and sharply intelligent comic prose in the English language”? Tom Adair, *The Scotsman*

To what extent and in what ways do you feel that *The Finkler Question* explores the nature and obligations of being Jewish?

In a recent article in the *Jewish Chronicle* Howard Jacobson wrote “I began writing the *The Finkler Question* in 2008 but it came to the boil for me in the early months of 2009 at the time of Operation Cast Lead, as a consequence of which, or as a consequence of the reporting of which - for it, too, like everything else to do with Israel outside Israel, was figmentary - England turned into an uncustomarily frightening place for Jews”. Can you see how the mood of these months found its way into the novel?

In what ways and why does Treslove envy his friends Finkler and Sevcik?

When reading *The Finkler Question* do you get the sense that ‘time is running out’?

Themed reading

Richard Ford *Women with Men*
Jonathan Safran Foer *Everything is Illuminated*
Philip Roth *Everyman*

Useful links

www.themanbookerprize.com
www.bloomsbury.co.uk
<http://engageonline.wordpress.com/2010/07/28/howard-jacobson-on-his-new-novel-the-finkler-question/>