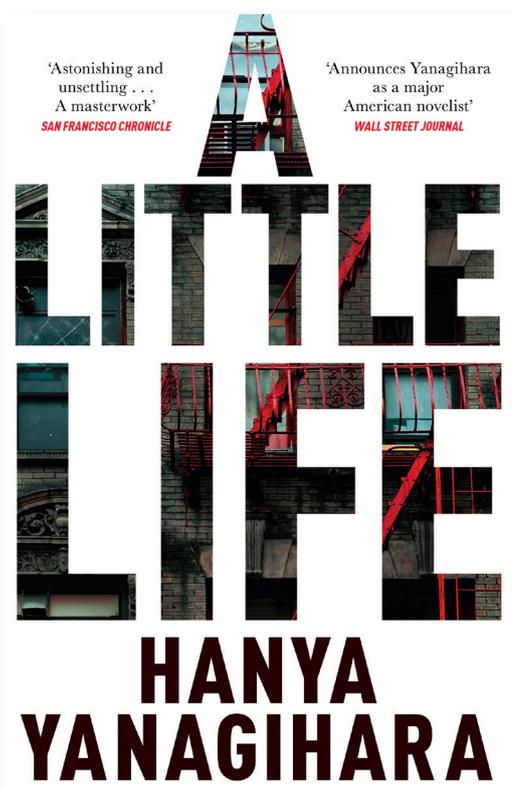


Reader's Guide



Other novels by Hanya Yanagihara
The People in the Trees (2013)

A Little Life Hanya Yanagihara

Picador

www.themanbookerprize.com

#FinestFiction



About the author

Hanya Yanagihara was born in LA, USA, in 1975.

Yanagihara is the author of *The People in the Trees*, shortlisted for the PEN/Robert W. Bingham Prize for Debut Fiction.

She is an editor-at-large at *Condé Nast Traveller* and lives in New York.

A Little Life

A Little Life is a depiction of heartbreak, and a dark examination of the tyranny of memory and the limits of human endurance.

When four graduates from a small Massachusetts college move to New York to make their way, they're broke, adrift, and buoyed only by their friendship and ambition. There is kind, handsome Willem, an aspiring actor; JB, a quick-witted, sometimes cruel Brooklyn-born painter seeking entry to the art world; Malcolm, a frustrated architect at a prominent firm; and withdrawn, brilliant, enigmatic Jude, who serves as their centre of gravity. Over the decades, their relationships deepen and darken, tinged by addiction, success, and pride. Yet their greatest challenge, each comes to realise, is Jude himself, by midlife a terrifyingly talented litigator yet an increasingly broken man, his mind and body scarred by an unspeakable childhood, and haunted by what he fears is a degree of trauma that he'll not only be unable to overcome - but that will define his life forever.

Discussion points

Hanya Yanagihara wanted the reader to 'begin thinking it a fairly standard post-college New York City book and then, as the story progressed, would sense it was becoming something else, something unexpected'. Did she succeed?

In a recent interview, Hanya Yanagihara said of *A Little Life*: 'I wanted there to be something too much about the violence in the book, but I also wanted there to be an exaggeration of everything, an exaggeration of love, of empathy, of pity, of horror. I wanted everything turned up a little too high. I wanted it to feel a little bit vulgar in places'. Is this how the novel felt to you?

Throughout the novel, a present-moment scene is often interrupted by elaborate flashbacks, showing the way which Jude's past erupts into his present. What effect does this nonlinear structure have on the reader?

To what extent do you think *A Little Life* is a portrait of loneliness?

'It leaves you feeling pretty traumatised yourself, aware just how affected you have been by merely reading it'. (David Sexton, *The London Evening Standard*). How did *A Little Life* leave you feeling?

Themed reading

Mary McCarthy *The Group*
Merritt Tierce *Love Me Back*
Edmund White *A Boy's Own Story*

Useful links

www.themanbookerprize.com
<http://www.vulture.com/2015/04/how-hanya-yanagihara-wrote-a-little-life.html>
<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/jul/26/hanya-yanagihara-i-wanted-everything-turned-up-a-little-too-high-interview-a-little-life>