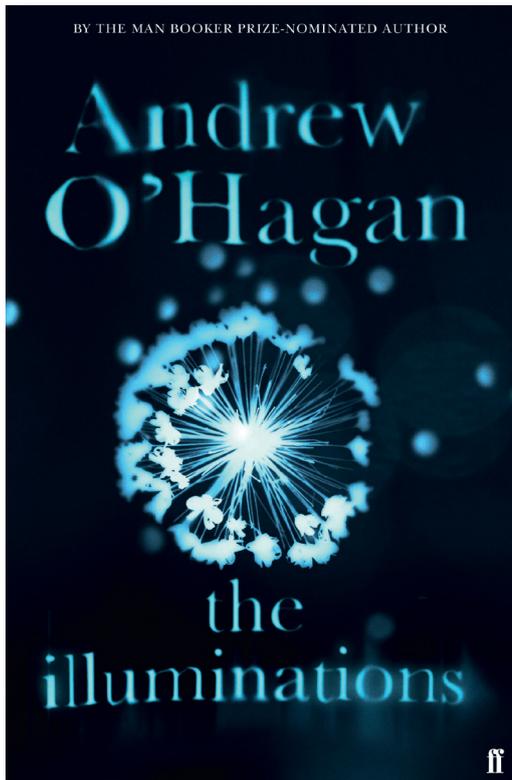


Reader's Guide



Other novels by Andrew O'Hagan

Our Fathers (1999)

Personality (2003)

Be Near Me (2006)

*The Life and Opinions of Maf the Dog,
and of His Friend Marilyn Monroe* (2010)

The Illuminations Andrew O'Hagan

Faber & Faber

www.themanbookerprize.com

#FinestFiction



About the author

Andrew O'Hagan is one of his generation's most regarded chroniclers of contemporary Britain and the part it plays in the world. He has twice been nominated for the Man Booker Prize and was voted one of *Granta's* Best of Young British Novelists in 2003. He has won the *Los Angeles Times* Book Award and the E. M. Forster Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He is editor-at-large of the *London Review of Books* and lives in London.

The Illuminations

Anne Quirk's life is built on stories - the lies she was told by the man she loved and the fictions she told herself to survive. Nobody remembers Anne now, but in her youth she was an artistic pioneer, a creator of ground-breaking documentary photographs. Her beloved grandson Luke, a captain with the Royal Western Fusiliers in the British army, has inherited her habit of transforming reality. When his mission in Afghanistan goes horribly wrong, he returns to Scotland where the secrets that have shaped his family begin to emerge. He and Anne set out to confront a mystery from her past among the Blackpool Illuminations - the dazzling lights that brighten the seaside town as the season turns to winter.

Discussion points

The Illuminations of the title refers to Anne's desire to travel back to Blackpool. What other images of light help to link the novel?

How is the camaraderie of army life echoed in Anne's 'assisted living community'?

In what ways does Scullion embody the West's own loss of confidence in the power of its military to make any real difference in the world?

Do you agree with the reviewer who thinks that O'Hagan 'inhabits his characters with ease and is one of those rare male authors who does women as well as men'. (Elizabeth Day, *The Observer*)?

In what ways do Anne's secrets become a part of Luke's salvation when he returns from Afghanistan?

Themed reading

Jonathan Franzen *The Corrections*
Norman Mailer *The Naked and the Dead*

Useful links

www.themanbookerprize.com
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/11366217/Andrew-OHagan-Afghanistan-is-our-Vietnam.html>
<http://bookanista.com/andrew-ohagan/>
<http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2015/feb/01/andrew-o-hagan-the-illuminationsandrew-ohagan-his-fifth-novel-illuminations>