

June 2020



This month's book was [Outline](#) by Rachel [Cusk](#), the first in a trilogy. Rachel Cusk, was born in Canada and now lives and works in England. She has, in her career to date, won both the Whitbread First Novel and Somerset Maugham Awards.

*Outline* is narrated by Faye. A recently divorced writer who is travelling to Greece to teach a writing class. That simplistic premise belies the complexity of this novel. A claim that will no doubt be refuted by those who thought it a boring progression of self-absorbed individuals unburdening themselves in one-sided conversations where the narrator's role seems to be that of passive conduit, rather than participant. She becomes an outline only, if you like.

This reader found it quite unnerving. Inhuman almost. It is also what made this novel such a compelling read.

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The first conversation is that with her neighbour on the plane. A much married character who reappears, unlike most of the other conversants, at regular intervals throughout the book. He brings to mind the stereotypical Greek tycoon (cue Aristotle Onassis) even though he is no longer a rich man. It is this conversation that sets the book's tone. A series monologues about relationships: parents, children and especially partners and wives.

Apart from the "tycoon", through Faye we meet, in classrooms, restaurants and bars, a progression of characters who are, for the most part, involved in the industry of writing. Students, publishers, novelists and poets. Throughout these encounters, Cusk manages to imbue her description of both person and place with an eye for detail and some beautifully restrained prose. She is a deceptively masterful writer.

Although we did not all agree on the merits of this book, as a whole we did find it quite a unique read. The New Yorker labels it as a "gut-renovation" of the novel.

**Ratings:** Claudia and Kim 4; Margie, Di, Gail, Janet, Viv, Nicola, Jenny and Pauline 3; Sandy 3.5 and Lynda 2.5.

Our next meeting will be at Preece House on 13/07/20 at 6:30PM to discuss [The Weekend](#) by [Charlotte Wood](#).

Hope to see you all there and happy reading!

# Other Books We Read

## June 2020

Getting On, Griffith Review #68, 3.5

The Bookshop by Penelope Fitzgerald, 2.5

Ordinary People by Diana Evans, 3

Bring Up the Bodies by Hilary Mantel, 4.5

Elizabeth Costello by J M Coetzee, 4.5

Waterland by Graham Swift, 4

To the Promised Land, David Goldberg, 4

Underland by Robert Macfarlane, 4.5

Overstory by Richard Powers, 4

Here we are by Graham Swift, 4 and 3

In the quiet by Eliza Henry Jones, 3.5

See what you made me do by Jess Hill, 4 4

The whole picture: the colonial story of the Art in our museums... by Alice Procter, 4.5

The children's Bach by Helen Garner, 4

The mirror and the light by Hilary Mantel, 4 and 4.5

We are the Weather by Jonathan Safran Foer, 4

In the Quiet by Eliza Henry Jones, 3