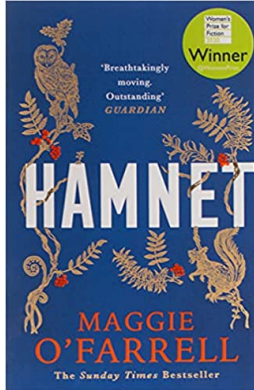


Hamnet

By Maggie O'Farrell



TWO EXTRAORDINARY PEOPLE. A LOVE THAT DRAWS THEM TOGETHER. A LOSS THAT THREATENS TO TEAR THEM APART.

On a summer's day in 1596, a young girl in Stratford-upon-Avon takes to her bed with a sudden fever. Her twin brother, Hamnet, searches everywhere for help. Why is nobody at home? Their mother, Agnes, is over a mile away, in the garden where she grows medicinal herbs. Their father is working in London. Neither parent knows that Hamnet will not survive the week. *Hamnet* is a novel inspired by the son of a famous playwright: a boy whose life has been all but forgotten, but whose name was given to one of the most celebrated plays ever written.

Discussion Questions

1. According to a book review by Sally Flint, O'Farrell's '*interpretation of events and culture, within a broadly accurate historical context*' considers what may have been. What aspects of Shakespeare's life are you familiar with? Does this seem to fit with the events in the novel?
2. Do you feel you needed to have prior knowledge of Shakespeare's life to appreciate the novel? Explain your thoughts.
3. Hamnet and Judith were twins and they had a special connection. What are your thoughts about the considered powerful bond between twins?

4. Why do you think Maggie O'Farrell does not mention William Shakespeare's name?
5. To what extent is the relationship between William and Agnes (Anne Hathaway) simply a reflection of Tudor England?
6. During the Elizabethan era, people were extremely superstitious and many of Shakespeare's plays were influenced by witchcraft and the supernatural. What mysterious ideas or elements are included in this novel?
7. Why does Maggie O'Farrell conclude her book with 'Remember me'.? Do you like the ending? Explain your thoughts.

Thank you to our volunteer Helen for choosing this title and creating the resource.