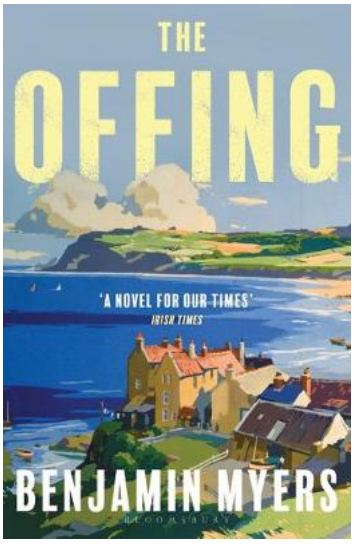
Prison Reading Groups

The Offing

By Benjamin Myers



One summer following the Second World War, Robert Appleyard sets out on foot from his Durham village. Sixteen and the son of a coal miner, he makes his way across the northern countryside until he reaches the former smuggling village of Robin Hood's Bay.

There he meets Dulcie, an eccentric, worldly, older woman who lives in a ramshackle cottage facing out to sea. Staying with Dulcie, Robert's life opens into one of rich food, sea-swimming, sunburn and poetry. The two come from different worlds, yet as the summer months pass, they form an unlikely friendship that will profoundly alter their futures.

The Offing recounts a tender story of love and friendship between a teenage miner and an eccentric older woman. Evoking the striking landscapes of the Durham Coast, Myer's novel is an enthralling depiction of the journey from adolescence into adulthood.

Discussion Questions

1. What does The Offing mean and why do you think it was chosen as the title?

2. Does the character Dulcie remind you of any other characters from books or films?

3. Did you enjoy reading about the wonderful meals Dulcie prepares for Robert and herself?

4. How do these detailed descriptions of their shared enjoyment of food enhance the reading experience for you?

5. *'Dulcie showed young Robert how to find sustenance and strength through reading novels and poems.'* To what extent do you agree with this statement?

6. Have you read any other titles by the same author? How do they compare?