

Haven
(2022)

McClelland Library Book Discussion Group

By

October 28, 2023
10:30 AM – 12:30 PM

Emma Donoghue

Discussion Guide:

Note: Emma Donoghue was born in 1969 in Dublin. She now lives in Canada. Her novel, Room, was a NY Times Best Book of 2010, and a finalist for the Booker, Commonwealth, and Orange Prizes. It was popular around the globe, with copies sold in 40 languages and adapted into a successful film in 2015.

What other works by this author have you read? What similarities/differences do you detect?

Explore the title (Haven). What suggestions does it give about the purpose of the novel or the plot?

One reviewer called the novel, “a religious fable.” Does there seem to be justification for this description?

Does the following statement from a Donoghue interview give you any ideas about her novel? Suggest some of the larger themes you see in it.

“For each book, I seem to enjoy the stimulus of going to an entirely new place. And I soon realized that this was a kind of a colonial story, only, you know, the natives, as it were, are the birds in this case. And the monks approached those birds in just the same way, as people have been, you know, hounded out of their territories. And, of course, you know, I couldn't be unaware of the sort of environmental resonances of this story nowadays. While I was writing it, I remember there were headlines about, oh, maybe we'll settle on Mars. That would be a solution to our problems.” (Interview on NPR in 2022 with Ari Shapiro.)

Characterize the three people in the novel? Why are there three? What role or purpose does each seem to serve?

In keeping with one of our “lens” for this year, would you say that Donoghue's book is moving away from typically “Irish” themes to more universal ones? What evidence would you cite—from this novel or others that you have read?

Are you surprised at the ending of the novel?