



HAMNET

By Maggie O'Farrell

QUESTIONS

- Why do you think O'Farrell never mentions William Shakespeare's name in this book?
- How would you describe William and Agnes's marriage? How does it change over the years?
- Early in the book, O'Farrell writes, "Every life has its kernel, its hub, its epicentre, from which everything flows out, to which everything returns. This moment is the absent mother's: the boy, the empty house, the deserted yard, the unheard cry ... It will lie at her very core, for the rest of her life." What other places in the story are there similar, fateful moments?
- What role does the natural world play in the events of the book?
- We know very little about the life of Anne/Agnes Hathaway. Why do you think O'Farrell made her an herbalist? How do her abilities change the course of events in the story?
- How does William Shakespeare's relationship with his family affect his career trajectory?



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- The author wrote this book because she felt that Hamnet was “overlooked” in history. Do you think this novel appropriately gives life to Hamnet Shakespeare? Why or why not?
- How well do you think the author captures life in Elizabethan England?

READ-ALIKES

- Fools and Mortals by Bernard Cornwell
- The Secret Lie of William Shakespeare by Jude Morgan
- Mistress Shakespeare by Karen Harper
- Wolf Hall by Hilary Mantel
- March by Geraldine Brooks

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Elizabethan England](#)
- [Shakespeare Birthplace Trust](#)
- [Poetry Foundation](#)