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BOOK CLUB AUTHOR Q&A THE GROUNDSMEN BY LYNN BUCKLE



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Please see detailed below some questions and answers provided by the author in relation to their book.

1. How would you summarise the book and your motivations for writing it?

The Groundsmen is an intense Irish family drama, drawing on Greek mythology, and the slow revelation of generational secrets.

It was a challenge and a steep learning curve to write a first novel. The technical aspects were all new to me and I learnt as I wrote. It was inevitable I would incorporate my love of Greek mythology to lend weight and meaning to the themes and plot.

2. What is the significance of the title?

Characters Louis and Toby have a backstory of being abused as children by a groundsman (singular). Being abused does not turn someone into an abuser but it is significant in their case because instead of healing from it they became perpetrators themselves, becoming the titular groundsmen (now plural).

3. What are the main themes of the book? What do these themes mean to you as the author?

Domestic abuse and a salvation of sorts. Supporting victims is close to my heart so I was keen to cover this social issue in a novel and to use the platform of a published author to start conversations around it and promote services.

4. Did you decide on a specific style of writing for this book, and if so, why? What are you trying to convey through your style?

Because I alternate between five different narrators' first-person points-of-view, it was important that readers could easily identify which character we were in. To differentiate them, the 'voice' had to be clearly theirs and this meant altering my writing style accordingly.

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5. Was the structure and layout of the book an important consideration? If so, why?

To aid with these changes in character narration, it helped to divide them by chapter breaks. It was especially important to give the reader some relief from the more intense characters so there are regular doses of Cassie chapters! Sometimes the same scene is re-enacted in a subsequent chapter, giving the reader balance and deepening their understanding – something the characters themselves lack.

6. What would you highlight as some of the pivotal scenes of the book, what is their importance to the narrative and to you on a personal level?

Cally's discovery of what has happened to Andi is the absolute catalyst for both her and the plot. Events have been leading up to this and what happens afterwards can only be determined by her reaction to these revelations. This is so typical of the pattern of domestic abuse; the years of endurance; coercive control; the dynamics which prevent victims from seeking help; and the dynamics needed to break free. Seeing themselves represented like this in literature, women can see their journey and see an escape.

7. How important was the time period or the setting to the story? What were you looking to evoke through this?

It is contemporary enough, but a couple of things might date it to the time it was written such as mention of the financial collapse of the Celtic Tiger and the use of text messages by teenagers. However, I use characters' memory to provide backstory, thus evoking a bygone Dublin era. However, to reinforce the themes of the book, time becomes eternal through Greek mythology.

The plot is deliberately constrained by both the timeframe of one year and the suffocating location of the family home, adding to the intensity of the drama.

From a calendar perspective, I also wanted events to coincide with planetary positions in keeping with my references to Greek mythology. For example, the calendrical positioning of the constellation Andromeda has parallels to the story of Andi. She is named after the mythological character and her fate shares parallels, so astronomical timing was important.

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8. Which location in the book would you most like to visit and why?

The Aegean island of Ogygia, mentioned in Homer's *Odyssey*. Cally imagines herself there to escape reality. Transported into Greek mythology as her namesake Calypso, she has agency and power over Odysseus, although his captivity is consensual. Ogygia, where 'the sea is clear at the bottom of mountains of olives,' sometimes I yearn to be relieved from the draining rain of Ireland.

9. What emotions are you hoping to evoke in the reader?

Revulsion and anger as they are catalysts for change. I intensified this through the use of various first-person narrators, putting the reader into each character's mind. Thus, there is no escape for the reader either.

10. As an author you are very close to your characters. Reflecting back on the book, which of your characters would you like to meet in real life and why?

I certainly felt an 'ick' after having some of those characters in my head while writing their chapters and really do not want to meet them. Luckily, I had the joy of writing little Cassie for some light relief from all the darkness. Her innocence is something we cling too. But it is Andi whom I would love to meet in real life, for that sheer teenage feistiness.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Lynn was born in the UK and after much travel has spent the last thirty years in Ireland. She is a successful Kildare based artist, tutor and writer.

She spent years stealing feelings and painting them onto canvas, but her stories needed words and she changed to writing verse.

She is the UNESCO City of Literature Virtual Writer in Residence, National Centre for Writing 2021.