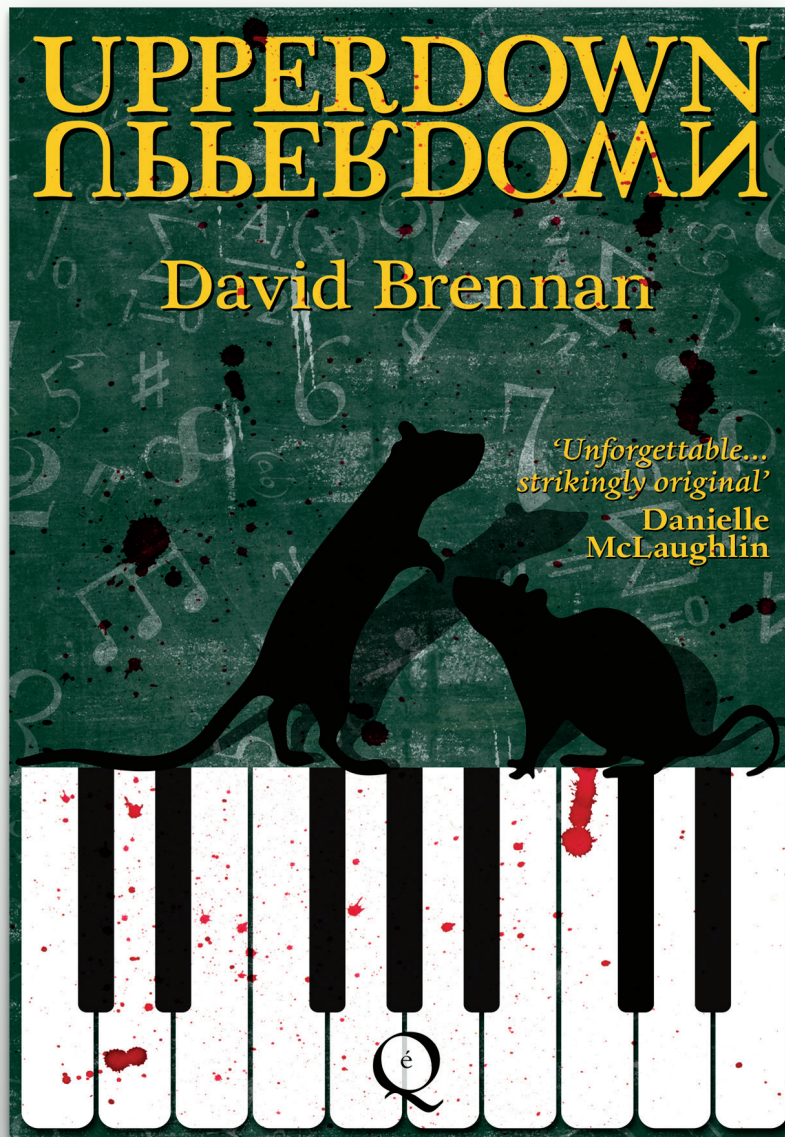


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BOOK CLUB AUTHOR Q&A  
UPPERDOWN BY DAVID BRENNAN



Our authors would be delighted to participate in any book club discussions you have arranged, either in person or via a video link. Should you choose one of our titles for your book club we are also happy to provide copies directly at a 40% discount. Please contact us at [info@epoquepress.com](mailto:info@epoquepress.com) for all enquiries.

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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?

A glimpse into a disintegrating mind, a peek into a subconscious world riddled with loneliness, overwhelming fears, alienation, but also the realisation of and pursuit of supreme beauty (in this case through mathematics). There were no specific motivations to write it, it exploded like a well shaken two litre coke bottle suddenly opened. It's loosely based on the Pied Piper of Hamelin, a story I loved as a child.

## 2. What is the significance of the title?

I was born in a little village called Upperchurch. In addition, I believe the work explores the dualities inherent in our world, hence the UP and DOWN.

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

As mentioned in the last question one of the main themes is the exploration of the dualities and contradiction inherent in our universe. Other themes explored: Loneliness, alienation, commonly accepted moral viewpoints; the loss of spirituality and the dangers of giving too much credence to the rational and scientific part of the brain; the implications of not keeping your part of the deal; and I would hope the beauty of language to help inspire and overcome dark side of our life.

## 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?

The book is written with the very unique voice of the professor. This voice was so powerful and clear and so compelling that my hands had difficulty keeping up with my brain while writing it. A long time ago I had a Japanese student who was a math professor. He kept a diary and wrote in broken English, in a unique style that I found fascinating. This I put in the back of my mind. Other contributions to the voice come from the way English is spoken in my hometown of Upperchurch.

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

The book is very musical and follows the structure of Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique* which like the book is in five parts. The key changes and different movements of the symphony correspond to the five parts of the book. The main character, The Professor, has perfect pitch so he describes wind changes and other physical sounds in terms of keys. I myself have far from perfect pitch but I had an ex-girlfriend who had and so could gain some insight into this.

**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?**

This is a difficult question to answer and one I would like to leave to the reader. But for me the first meeting of the Professor and the Piano Man sets the tone for the rest of the novel. When I do a reading, I really like I to read the scene towards the end of the novel where the bull is sacrificed. it.

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

On purpose, I did not set the novel in any specific time period, though it is clearly not in this modern time of mobile phones and other gadgets, not that I have anything against these devices or this time. Also, the precise location is not specified. We know there is a place called Upperdown and this is where the story takes place.

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

Jacob's coffee shop. Because I'd like to bump into some of the interesting characters that visit there, such as C-flat Rebecca and Jacob himself. And I spend a lot of time in coffee shops. I could fit in there easily. A close second would be The Butcher Morley's shop, because he and Grunt are two of my fav characters.

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

To be honest I never thought about this. I'd just like them to be interested enough to keep reading.

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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?

In some ways all the characters are part of me. And in other ways I have encountered many of these characters in real life, whether its sitting in a coffee shop writing or whether they were there in my childhood from a very young age. I have already met them.

**Additional questions your book club may wish to consider:**

- How did you feel about the narrative voice and how it sets the tone for some of the themes explored in the novel?
- What did you make of the relationship between The Professor and his brother Ned?
- How does this book compare to the other retellings of fairy tales you may have read? Does the knowledge of this being based on another story alter your reading experience of it?



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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



David currently resides between Ireland and Asia. He has been nominated for the Hennessy New Irish Writer Award 2019.

He was one of the winners of the Irish Novel Fair 2018. In 2016 he won the Frank O'Connor Mentorship Bursary Award and has been shortlisted for the Bristol Short Story award (2017), the Fish Memoire award (2018) and the Doolin Short Story award (2016).

He was longlisted for the Colm Tobin Award (2017).