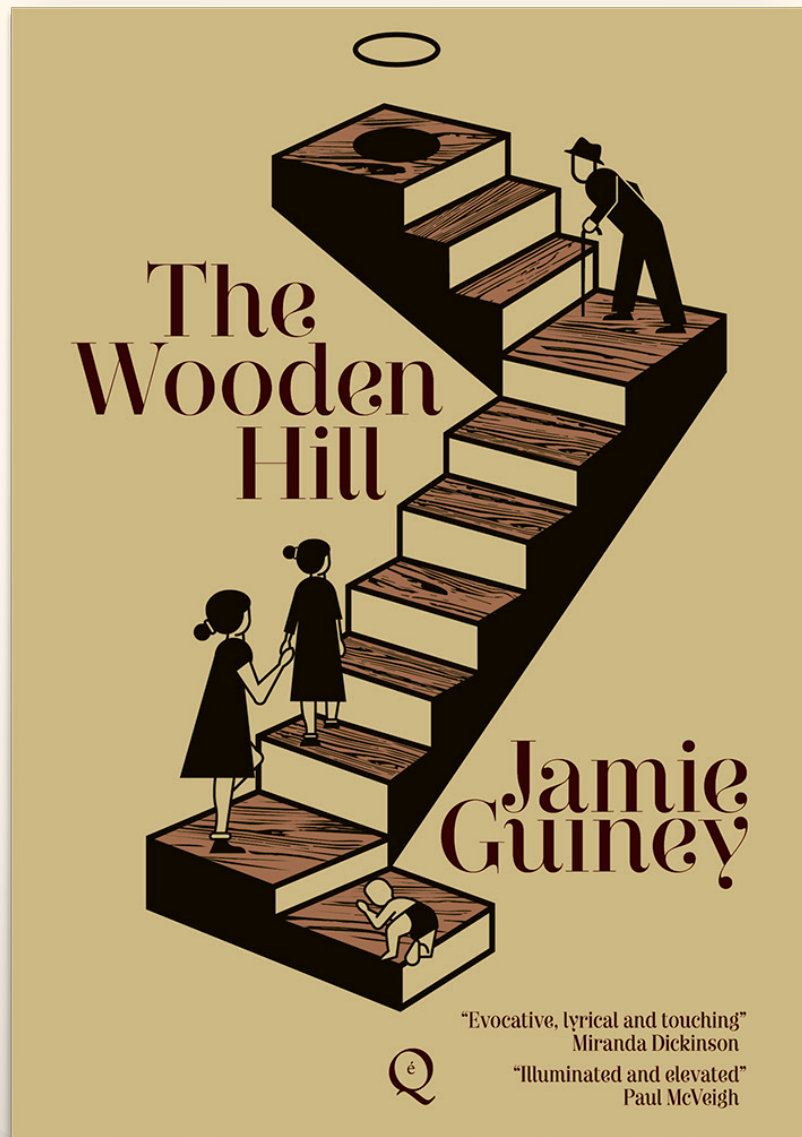


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## BOOK CLUB AUTHOR Q&A THE WOODEN HILL BY JAMIE GUINEY



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?

Theme was important for me. I had a strong impulse to write a collection about life's journey from birth to death, but also wanted to reflect Northern Irish ways, culture and humour, without the black cloud of *the troubles*; so, I guess *The Wooden Hill* is more about everyday troubles.

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

*The Wooden Hill* is an old slang term for a staircase, commonly used as *up the wooden hill to bed*. I'd hear it used colloquially in Northern Ireland, particularly among older generations. For me, it was the perfect symbolism for life's journey.

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

It is my job as a writer to explore the nuances of life, not only fleeting moments, but overwhelming situations too, that are often difficult to put into words. I hope that by representing life's complex and wonderful facets on the page, that my stories will help people translate some of their own experiences and be able to articulate the things that happened to them.

## 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?

I write literary fiction, which has been labelled in many different ways over the years, but for me, I like to define it as *poetic fiction*, where the words are to be enjoyed as much as the story itself.

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

The book is split into three parts - Childhood, Adulthood, Elderhood – to reflect life's stages. I like how this enables readers to reflect on the contrasts between those stages.

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From a technical standpoint, there are three stories written in second person narrative, which act as anchors for the book, placed at the beginning, middle and end. I feel that the second person POV speaks directly to the reader.

## **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?**

I've always said that there's an element of truth in my stories and that some pieces contain more truth than others. For this collection, every story means something to me, but I'd single out those more grounded in truth – *We Knew You Before You Were Born* is a story about my daughter, Scout, coming into the world, but written in such a way, that it's reflective not just of her birth, but every birth. *The Wooden Hill* is a story about my granny leaving the world, a very personal and emotional piece, which is written to be reflective of death as a reality that applies to us all.

*A Quarter Yellow Sun* is based on a true tale from my hometown and is a story I initially didn't want to write. It put me through the wringer emotionally, exploring it on the page.

The collection also has a couple of Christmas stories and I enjoy the contrast between the two – one experienced by a young boy, the other by an old man.

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

There's a story in the book about the Camino de Santiago, a pilgrim trail across Spain which my wife and I walked in 2013. It was a wonderfully spiritual experience and I'd go back there in a heartbeat.

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

In all my work, I aim to evoke *any* emotion in the reader. I love to make people laugh or cry, but any stirring of the soul is magical to me and it still shocks this writer, just how much a book, mere words on a page, can affect someone, and sometimes deeply.

## **9. 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?**

Boon is a real rascal and I think he'd be the best craic to enjoy a pint or two of Guinness with!

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Additional questions your book club may wish to consider:

- Which story resonated with you the most and why?
- Did reading *The Wooden Hill* encourage you to reflect on your own life?
- What did you think of the author's writing style?
- Would you read another book by this author?
- Would you recommend this book to someone?
- If you could talk to the author, what question would you like to ask them?



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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



'The Wooden Hill' was shortlisted under *Best Short Story Collection*, in the 2019 Saboteur Awards. Jamie's short stories have been published internationally, broadcast on BBC Radio 4, and he has been nominated twice for the 'The Pushcart Prize.'

As a graduate of the Faber & Faber Writing Academy, he has twice been a judge for short story competition 'The New Rose Prize.' His work has been backed by the Northern Ireland Arts Council and he has also been chosen by Lagan Online as one of their New Original Writers.

Jamie favours the short story genre, believing it to be the closest written prose to the traditional art of storytelling. Jamie is represented by literary agent Kim Witherspoon, founding partner of Inkwell Management, NYC.