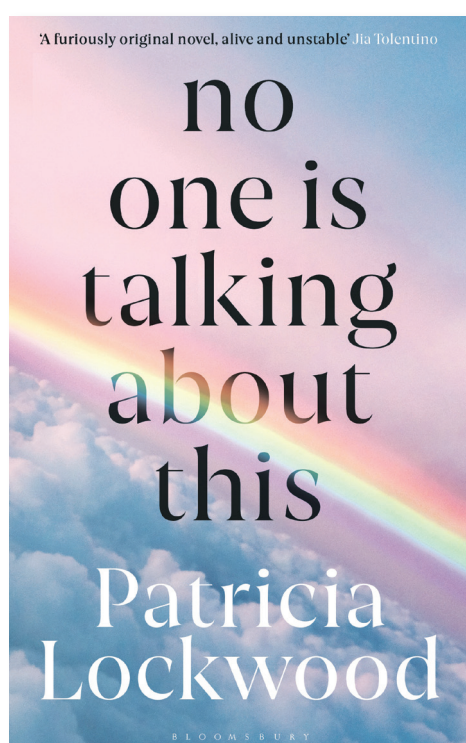




From Judging Room to Living Room **A Discussion Guide for Readers**

Featuring discussion prompts from this year's judging panel



No One Is Talking About This

Patricia Lockwood

Bloomsbury Circus

thebookerprizes.com



What the judges decided

'This is a first novel from a writer already outstanding as a poet and memoirist, and her gifts in both roles are much in evidence in this extremely funny, poignant and challenging book. Patricia Lockwood manages to tell her story in the glancing, mayfly-attention-span idiom of contemporary social media, but she uses this apparently depth-free dialect with precision and even beauty. The drastic shift of gear in the middle of the story, the introduction of real suffering, love and loss, doesn't break the seamless flow of wit; but the book's triumph is in evoking so full a range of emotional discovery and maturing within the unpromising medium of online prattle. We're left wondering about the processes by which language expands to cope with the expansiveness of changing human relations and perceptions at the edge of extremity.'

- Rowan Williams

What the judges discussed: ideas to explore

- Can you describe the world the author depicts in the first part of the book, and how she manufactures a new kind of fragmentary language with which to evoke it?
- What effect did this have on you?
- The author's observations about modern life can be piercing and funny – which of them spoke to you the most?
- Describe how the author uses silence.
- When the call comes from the narrator's sister, she has spent so long in the 'portal' that she has no language with which to confront difficulty in the real world. Discuss this moment of rupture.
- How did you feel when you read the second part of the book?

About the book

Patricia Lockwood's sincere and delightfully profane love letter to the infinite scroll, *No One Is Talking About This* is a meditation on love, language and human connection.

A social media guru travels the world, her entire existence overwhelmed by the internet or what she terms 'the portal'. 'Are we in hell?' The people of the portal ask themselves. 'Are we all just going to keep doing this until we die?' Two urgent texts from her mother pierce the guru's bubble. As real life collides with the absurdity of the portal, she confronts a world that seems to suggest there is goodness, empathy and justice in the universe – and a deluge of evidence to the contrary.

About the author

Patricia Lockwood is an American poet, novelist and essayist who was born in a trailer in Indiana and raised 'in all the worst cities of the Midwest'.

She is the only debut novelist on the 2021 Booker Prize shortlist with *No One Is Talking About This*, which was also shortlisted for the Women's Prize for Fiction. Lockwood has previously written two poetry collections, *Balloon Pop Outlaw Black* and *Motherland Fatherland Homelandsexuals*, and the memoir *Priestdaddy*, chosen by 15 publications as their book of the year. She is a contributing editor for the London Review of Books and is currently working on a collection of short fiction and a new novel.

The author says...

'The internet – in the form of social media, at least – is much more like fiction than it is anything else. You'd think it would be like a diary, but it isn't. There are protagonists, there are villains, there are sudden shifts in point of view. There are plot twists that real life would reject. The day is its unit, rather than the chapter, but it is in fact a novel itself.'

Further Reading

- Patricia Lockwood, *Priestdaddy (a memoir)*
- Patricia Lockwood, *Motherland Fatherland Homelandsexuals (poems)*
- Lauren Oyler, *Fake Accounts*
- Richard Powers, *Bewilderment*
- Bernardine Evaristo, *Girl, Woman, Other*
- Anna Burns, *Milkman*