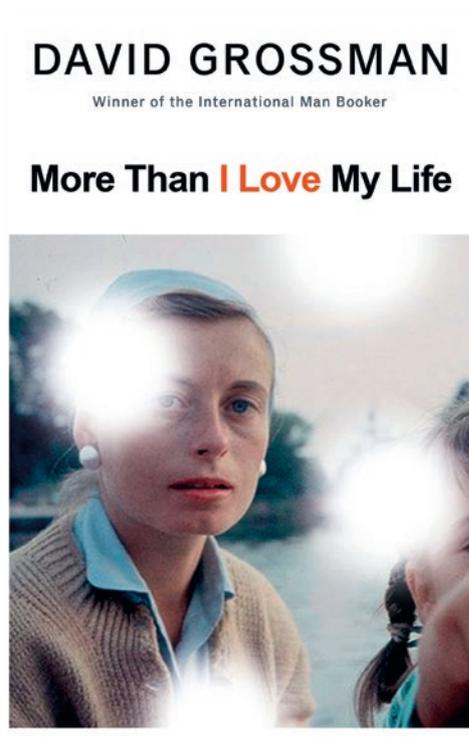




# Reading Guide



## More Than I Love My Life

**David Grossman**

Translated by Jessica Cohen

Jonathan Cape

[thebookerprizes.com](http://thebookerprizes.com)

## What the judges said

'David Grossman's *More Than I Love My Life* is a tender and immersive multigenerational family novel about the rewards, punishments and dysfunctions of love; about remembering, healing and belonging. In Jessica Cohen's translation, the singular voice of its narrator is conjured with admirable restraint and emotion.'

## About the book

On a kibbutz in Israel in 2008, Gili is celebrating the ninetieth birthday of her grandmother Vera, the adored matriarch of a sprawling and tight-knit family. But festivities are interrupted by the arrival of Nina: the iron-willed daughter who rejected Vera's care; and the absent mother who abandoned Gili when she was still a baby.

Nina's return to the family after years of silence precipitates an epic journey from Israel to the desolate island of Goli Otok, formerly part of Yugoslavia. It was here, five decades earlier, that Vera was held and tortured as a political prisoner. And it is here that the three women will finally come to terms with the terrible moral dilemma that Vera faced, and that permanently altered the course of their lives.

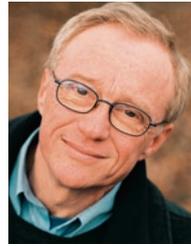
*More Than I Love My Life* is a sweeping story about loving with courage. A novel driven by faith in humanity even in our darkest moments, it asks us to confront our deepest-held beliefs about a woman's duty to herself and to her children.

## About the author

David Grossman was born in Jerusalem in 1954. He is the bestselling author of numerous works, which have been translated into thirty-six languages. His most recent novel, *A Horse Walks into a Bar*, was awarded the International Man Booker Prize 2017, and shortlisted for the TLS-Risa Domb/Porjes Prize 2019. Grossman is also the recipient of the French Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres and the 2010 Frankfurt Peace Prize.

## About the translator

Jessica Cohen is a freelance translator born in England (1975), raised in Israel, and living in Denver. She translates contemporary Israeli prose, poetry, and other creative work. Her translations include David Grossman's critically acclaimed *To The End of the Land*, and works by major Israeli writers including Etgar Keret, Rutu Modan, Dorit Rabinyan, Ronit Matalon, Amir Gutfreund, and Tom Segev, as well as Golden Globe-winning director Ari Folman. She is a past board member of the American Literary Translators Association and has served as a judge for the National Translation Award.



## The author says...

In order to write this book, I spent some days in the little village called Svalbard in the far north of the globe. In the mountains surrounding the village roam thousands of polar bears.

In some places one has to go with an armed escort, or with a gun. At midnight, when I started my way back from the local pub to my hotel I walked alone and without a gun. The feeling of claws tearing the skin of my back was so tangible and real that suddenly I knew for sure that I would write the book.



## The translator says...

The central character, Vera, speaks in her own vernacular – a cobbled-together, strangely-accented Hebrew, full of literal translations of idioms from her many native languages and some impenetrable expressions that she seems to have invented. Her language both reflects her personality and, in some ways, creates it. At a gathering of translators with David Grossman, we were treated to his loving but hilarious imitations of Eva PanićNahir, the real-life inspiration for Vera, and I could hear her cadence and accent (as conveyed by David) in my mind while I was translating the book. I enjoyed recreating her in English, but also found it very difficult to replicate her idiosyncrasies and grammatical errors without making her sound unintelligent.

## Further reading

David Grossman *A Horse Walks into a Bar*  
David Grossman *Be My Knife*  
W.G. Sebald *The Emigrants*  
W. G. Sebald *Austerlitz*  
Ya'akov Shabtai *Past Continuous*

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