

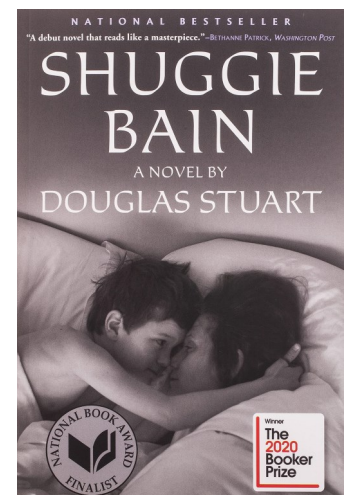
# BOOK CLUB in a bag



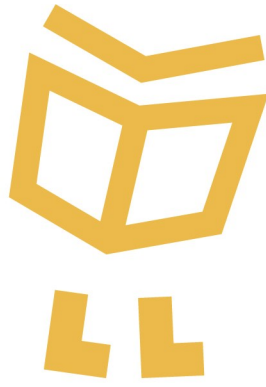
## Shuggie Bain Douglas Stuart

### Discussion Questions

1. If there is a villain in the story, who is it and why?
2. Before moving to Pithead, Shug, Agnes, and her three children are “all crammed together in her mammy’s flat, [giving Agnes] a feeling of failure.” Instead, Agnes dreams of having her own front door, a garden, of “flitting” to a fresh start with Shug despite the overwhelming challenges his cheating and her alcoholism present. When Shug finally moves them, instead of it being a new beginning for them, he unexpectedly dumps the family in a council flat where tough, down-on-their luck women—their husbands emasculated by unemployment—run the community. How does this environment change the way you viewed Lizzie, her card-playing friends, and Agnes’s life in Sighthill?
3. The author uses Scottish dialect throughout the novel. What does this add to the narrative, and how did you find reading it if you weren’t familiar with some of the words?
4. Shuggie has two older siblings who eventually escape their dysfunctional mother – how do you feel about them leaving Shuggie behind? Was it their responsibility to protect him or were they right to try to save themselves?
5. Shuggie is considered to be a soft boy by the other characters in the book. They judge him by 1980s Glaswegian standards of masculinity. How would you describe Shuggie?
6. What did you think about the support that was available for Agnes’ alcohol dependency? Do you think there would be better help for her now?
7. Do you blame Catherine for leaving her family, marrying young and emigrating to South Africa?
8. Agnes is obsessed with keeping up appearances, even when her handbag is full of cans of Special Brew. How does this façade of respectability work to alienate her from her friends and neighbours?
9. What aspects of *Shuggie Bain* did you find the most shocking to read?
10. What do you think will happen to Shuggie?



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## About the Author

Douglas Stuart is a Scottish - American author and fashion designer. His debut novel, *Shuggie Bain*, won the 2020 Booker Prize and was a finalist for the National Book Award. It won both the Debut of the Year, and the overall, Book of the Year, at the British Book Awards. *Shuggie Bain* is to be translated into thirty-eight languages. In April 2022, he published his second novel, *Young Mungo*. He is currently at work on new writing. His short stories, *Found Wanting*, and *The Englishman*, were published in *The New Yorker* magazine. His essay, *Poverty, Anxiety, and Gender in Scottish Working-Class Literature* was published by Lit Hub.

Born in Glasgow, Scotland, he has an MA from the Royal College of Art in London and an Honorary Doctorate from Heriot Watt University in Edinburgh. Since 2000, he has lived and worked in New York City, although he spends as much time in Glasgow as he can.

Via the author's website (<https://www.douglasdstuart.com/about>)

Sources: <https://www.sallyflint.com/blog/douglas-stuarts-shuggie-bain>; <https://readingagency.org.uk/resources/4653/>; <https://bookclubs.com/discussion-guides/shuggie-bain-a-novel>

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