



The Luminaries by Eleanor Catton

About the author:

Eleanor Catton was born in 1985 in Canada and raised in Christchurch, New Zealand.

Her debut novel, *The Rehearsal*, won the Betty Trask Prize, the Amazon.ca First Novel Award, the NZSA Hubert Church Best First Book Award for Fiction and was shortlisted for the Guardian First Book Award, the Prix Femina literature award, the abroad category of the Prix Médicis, the University of Wales Dylan Thomas Prize 2010 and Stonewall's Writer of the Year Award 2011, and longlisted for the Orange Prize 2010.

Her second novel, *The Luminaries*, was awarded the Canadian Governor General's Literary Award for fiction and the 2013 Man Booker Prize.

Eleanor Catton holds an MFA from the Iowa Writers' Workshop, where she also held an adjunct professorship, and an MA in fiction from the International Institute of Modern Letters at Victoria University of Wellington. Currently she teaches creative writing at the Manukau Institute of Technology.

She lives in Auckland.

Source: Man Booker Prize (<http://www.themanbookerprize.com>)

About this book:

'There was this large world of rolling time and shifting spaces, and that small, stilled world of horror and unease – they fit inside each other, a sphere within a sphere.'



It is 1866, and Walter Moody has come to make his fortune upon the West Coast goldfields.

On the night of his arrival, he stumbles across a tense gathering of twelve local men, who have met in secret to discuss a series of unsolved crimes. A wealthy man has vanished, a whore has tried to end her life, and an enormous sum of money has been discovered in the home of a luckless drunk. Moody is soon drawn into the mystery: a network of fates and fortunes that is as complex and exquisitely patterned as the night sky.

Source: *Man Booker Prize* (<http://www.themanbookerprize.com>)

Discussion Questions:

1. At the start of the book Walter Moody stumbles across a tense meeting between twelve local men and is entrusted with their secrets. What do you make of these men? Do they tell Walter the whole truth, or are their stories distorted by external loyalties, self-interest and their individual character traits?
2. *The Luminaries* is set in New Zealand during the nineteenth century. How does Catton give you a sense of the story taking place in a different era? And how does the novel compare to other historical fiction you have read?
3. Astrology is a prominent theme in the book. At the start of each chapter, a chart depicting the twelve men's star signs and an epitaph forewarns the reader of ensuing events. To what extent are the characters determined by their star signs and the complementary planetary movements?



4. Following the court scene, do you feel that each character has received their just desserts? Were any characters let off lightly or unjustly punished, and if so why?
5. Was the novel's ending a shock or inevitable? And how does the outcome change your opinion of free will and determinism?

Source: Man Booker Prize (<http://www.themanbookerprize.com>)

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