



## *Sweetland* by Michael Crummey

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### **About the author:**

Michael Crummey was born in Buchans, a mining town in the interior of Newfoundland ("as far from the salt water as you can get and still be in Newfoundland"), second of four boys; he grew up there and in Wabush, another mining town near the Quebec border of Labrador. He began to write poetry while studying at Memorial University in St. John's, where he received a B.A. in English. He completed a M.A. at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, then dropped out of the Ph.D. program to pursue his writing career. Crummey returned to St. John's in 2001. His first writing success was in poetry, winning the first Bronwen Wallace Memorial Award for unpublished poets in 1994. He is the author of three books of poetry. In 1998, he published his first collection of short stories, *Flesh and Blood* and was nominated for the Journey Prize. His first novel, *River Thieves*, was a Canadian bestseller and was nominated for the Giller Prize, the Commonwealth Writer's Prize and the Books in Canada first novel award. His second novel, *The Wreckage*, was long-listed for the 2007 IMPAC Award and his third novel, *Galore*, was shortlisted for the 2011 IMPAC Award. *Sweetland* was a finalist for the 2014 Governor General's Award for Fiction.

Source: Penguin Random House Canada (<http://penguinrandomhouse.ca/>)

### **About this book:**

For twelve generations, when the fish were plentiful and when they all-but disappeared, the inhabitants of this remote island in Newfoundland have lived and died together. Now, in the second decade of the 21st century, they are facing resettlement, and each has been offered a generous compensation package to leave. But the money is offered with a proviso: everyone has to go; the government won't be responsible for one crazy coot who chooses to stay alone on an island.

That coot is Moses Sweetland. Motivated in part by a sense of history and belonging,

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haunted by memories of the short and lonely time he spent away from his home as a younger man, and concerned that his somewhat eccentric great-nephew will wilt on the mainland, Moses refuses to leave. But in the face of determined, sometimes violent, opposition from his family and his friends, Sweetland is eventually swayed to sign on to the government's plan. Then a tragic accident prompts him to fake his own death and stay on the deserted island. As he manages a desperately diminishing food supply, and battles against the ravages of weather, Sweetland finds himself in the company of the vibrant ghosts of the former islanders, whose porch lights still seem to turn on at night.

Source: Penguin Random House Canada (<http://penguinrandomhouse.ca/>)

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. As well as a fiction writer, Michael Crummey is also a poet. Identify some of the poetic elements found in *Sweetland*.
2. This novel is split into two sections. Which do you think is the most successful and why?
3. Michael Crummey has said that this novel is about mortality. In what ways do you agree or disagree with him?
4. The novel is filled with quirky characters. What role does the isolation of the island play in forming those characters?

Source: Amnesty International Book Club (<http://www.amnestybookclub.ca/>)

### **Other formats available at Halifax Public Libraries:**

- Audiobook (Digital download)
- eBook
- Polish

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