



Haweswater

By Sarah Hall
ISBN: 9780060817251

Introduction

Cradled in a remote dale in England's hauntingly lovely Lake District lies the village of Mardale. The rhythm of life in the deeply religious, sheltered community has not changed for centuries. But in 1936, when Waterworks representative Jack Liggett arrives from industrial Manchester with plans to build a vast new reservoir, he brings the much feared threat of impending change and development to this bucolic hamlet. And when he begins an intense and troubled affair with Janet Lightburn, a devout local woman of rare passion and strength of spirit, it can only lead to scandal, tragedy, and remarkable, desperate acts.

Questions for Discussion

1. How do the circumstances surrounding the birth of Janet Lightburn seem to foretell a difficult life, and what responsibility does her mother, Ella, bear in that regard?
2. How does Samuel Lightburn's relationship with his daughter, Janet, foster her independent streak?
3. How does the narrative style of *Haweswater*, with its constant forays into the interior consciousness of different characters, affect your appreciation of the novel?
4. Why do Janet Lightburn and Jack Liggett become romantically involved, and how does their intimate relationship change each of them?
5. How do the villagers of Mardale react to the news of the *Haweswater* dam, and how does its construction alter their community over time?
6. How is the theme of progress—in the form of the *Haweswater* dam—explored in this novel? How would you characterize the human cost of social progress?
7. In what ways do the characters in *Haweswater* confirm or refute the notion that geography determines one's destiny?
8. How does Jack Liggett's death set in motion Janet Lightburn's suicide, and what is the significance of his failed efforts to return the poached golden eagle to her nest?
9. How do the strange circumstances surrounding Janet Lightburn's death contribute to the legend of Janet Tree, and why does the anonymous navvy who finds her body behave as he does?
10. How does Isaac's suicide at the *Haweswater* Dam relate to his sister's death and his mother's prophetic visions, and to what extent does his death offer a kind of closure to the novel?

About the Author

Sarah Hall divides her time between the north of England and North Carolina. She is also the author of *The Electric Michelangelo*, which was a finalist for the Man Booker Prize.