



Out Backward

By Ross Raisin
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Introduction

Sam Marsdyke is a lonely young man, dogged by an incident in his past and forced to work his family farm instead of attending school in his Yorkshire village. He methodically fills his life with daily routines and adheres to strict boundaries that keep him at a remove from the townspeople. But one day he spies Josephine, his new neighbor from London. From that moment on, Sam's carefully constructed protections begin to crumble—and what starts off as a harmless friendship between an isolated loner and a defiant teenage girl takes a most disturbing turn.

Questions for Discussion

1. *Out Backward* is a novel with a strikingly original voice which brings to life the Yorkshire patois of the young narrator, Sam. What effect did this unique voice have on your reading experience?
2. We learn that Sam has been shunned by his community for the alleged sexual assault of a classmate, which led to his subsequent expulsion from school. Is the community at all to blame for Sam's later actions? Could things have unfolded differently for Sam, or was his fate inevitable?
3. The Marsdykes are a farming family trying to get by the only way they know how in a town where land is quickly being bought up and developed. How, if at all, does this "progress" affect both Sam's family and Sam himself?
4. Is Joanna in any way responsible for what happens to her in the novel? Does she instigate the chain of events or lead Sam on in any way? Or, do you see her as purely a victim?
5. How reliable a narrator do you find Sam? At what point in the narrative did you reach that decision?
6. How important do you think the novel's setting—the Yorkshire Moors—is to the story itself?
7. Discuss the title—its significance to and role in the story. Can you think of a more fitting title? (The British edition is called *God's Own Country*.)
8. What do you think happens after the novel ends? How, if at all, has Sam changed as a result of everything he has been through?

About the Author

Ross Raisin holds an MFA from Goldsmiths College in London, where he resides. *Out Backward* is his first novel.