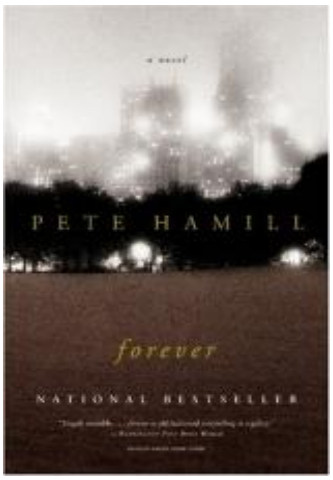
ReadingGroupGuides
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Forever

by Pete Hamill



About the Book

This widely praised bestseller is the magical, epic tale of an extraordinary man who arrives in New York in 1740 and remains...forever. Through the eyes of young Cormac O'Connor?granted immortality as long as he never leaves the island of Manhattan?we watch New York grow from a tiny settlement on the tip of an untamed wilderness to the thriving metropolis of today. And through Cormac's remarkable adventures in both love and war, we come to know all the city's buried secrets?the way it has been shaped by greed, race, and waves of immigration, by the unleashing of enormous human energies, and, above all, by hope.

Discussion Guide

1. Cormac O'Connor is given the opportunity of a lifetime-to life forever. Before he's actually granted immortality, Kongo insists that Cormac "must truly live," not "simply exist." Does Cormac fulfill that mandate? Given Cormac's experience, would *you* choose to live forever?

2. With Cormac's arrival in Manhattan, we see that ethnic diversity is a predominant feature in eighteenth-century New York. The city is a cultural meeting place for British colonists, African slaves, and Irish immigrants, to name a few groups. In what ways do these groups come into conflict with one another? In what ways do they live side by side harmoniously?

3. Cormac participates in some of the key events in the founding of the American republic. Yet after centuries in Manhattan, Cormarc still does "not exactly think of himself as an America, but he was definitely a New Yorker" (page 404). What does he mean by that?

4. New York City is as much a character in the novel as any of the people Cormac meets, and he has the opportunity to see the city change through the centries. How does New York grow alongside Cormac? What are your impressions of

New York City after reading the book?

5. The relationship between Cormac O'Connor and Mary Morrigan begins in the summers when Cormac is learning the Celtic traditions. Describe this unique relationship. How does it color Cormac's future interactions with women?

6. When Cormac's mother is killed, Cormac's father begins to forge a sword. After his father's death, Cormac vows to seek revenge according to the Celtic code. What do you think of the acts of violence Cormac commits in the name of this vow? How do you account for the choice he makes when he meets the last of the Warren heirs? Is it possible to maintain honor while seeking vengeance?

7. Cormac and Kongo meet under horrific circumstances and initially have no common language. Yet they forge an unusually strong bond. What is the basis of their mutual understanding? What role does each play in the life of the other?

8. Over the years, many women pass through Cormac's life, yet he becomes emotionally involved with only a few. Who are the women Cormac loves? What impact does his relationship with each of them have on him?

9. Cormac comes into contact with people from many different religious backgrounds-from pagans and mystics to Jews, Catholics and Protestants-throughout his epic journey. Describe the ways in which adherents of various faiths affect Cormac's life. How does religious belief in general influence his actions? Does his view of religion change over the course of the book?

10. After three centuries, Cormac finally faces the choice of entering the otherworld and being reunited with his family or staying with Delfina and his unborn child. Do you think Cormac makes the right decision? Why? What decision would you have made in his place?

Author Bio

Pete Hamill is a novelist, journalist, editor and screenwriter. He is the author of more than 20 books, including the bestselling novels TABLOID CITY, FOREVER and SNOW IN AUGUST, and the bestselling memoir A DRINKING LIFE. He writes a column for the *New York Daily News* and lives in New York City.

Critical Praise

"Hamill's long history as a New York journalist, his knowledgeable love for the city and his writerly exuberance explode here into a New York fantasy: big, extravagant, untrammeled and as hugely readable as it must have been hugely entertaining to write."

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