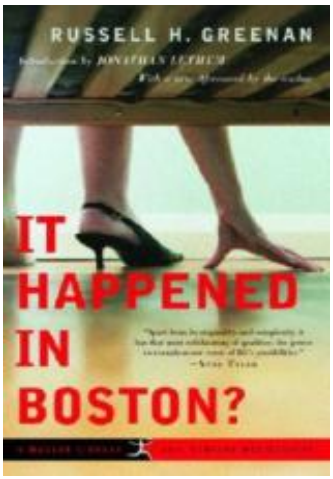
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It Happened in Boston?

by Russell H. Greenan



About the Book

First published by Random House in 1968, Russell H. Greenan's **It Happened in Boston?** is the story of a brilliantly talented, unbalanced artist who strives to meet God face-to-face in order to destroy Him. It is "a magic spell of a book?phantasmagoric, lushly written, full of unforgettable characters and brilliant twists of plot," writes Jonathan Lethem in his Introduction. With a vivid depiction of the art world and a breathtaking narrative that incorporates forgery, time travel, and murder, Greenan's hilarious and disturbing debut novel?now an underground cult classic?is ripe for rediscovery.

Discussion Guide

1. In his Introduction to **It Happened in Boston?**, Jonathan Lethem mentions the novel's "unreliable narration." What does he mean by this? How did the author's technique affect you as a reader?

2. Russell H. Greenan's original title for this novel was "Alfred Omega." Why do you think he chose it? Consider its connection to the Greek alphabet.

3. How do you explain the protagonist's reveries to ancient times and places? Is there any special significance about the places he travels to, and the lives he temporarily assumes?

4. What purpose does the child, Randolph, serve in the story? How does he differ from the other characters who frequent the Public Garden, such as April Dandelion and Mr. Beels?

5. **It Happened in Boston?** presents a vivid portrayal of the art world, conveying in remarkable detail the specific techniques and crea-tions of the narrator, Littleboy, and Faber. How would you compare the styles and artistic values of the three painters? How does Greenan portray the patrons and dealers in the artistic community?

6. What drives the narrator to?as Lethem puts it?"[shift] his efforts from the glorious white magic of the making of beautiful objects . . . to the paltry, venal black magic of arcane spells and ancient curses"?

7. How would you describe the narrator's religious convictions? What evidence does he find to support his spiritual beliefs? Do his values change over the course of the novel?

8. Anne Tyler has described **It Happened in Boston?** as "wickedly intelligent," noting that "the book is so ingenious that summing it up is next to impossible." How would you describe the story to someone who hasn't read it yet?

Author Bio

Russell H. Greenan, on his way to becoming a novelist, grew up in the Bronx, served in the navy, sold industrial engines, and ran several curio shops in the Boston area. His thirteen novels include **The Secret Life of Algernon Pendleton** and **The Bric-a-Brac Man**.

Critical Praise

"Apart from its originality and complexity, it has that most exhilarating of qualities: the power to reawaken our sense of life's possibilities."

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