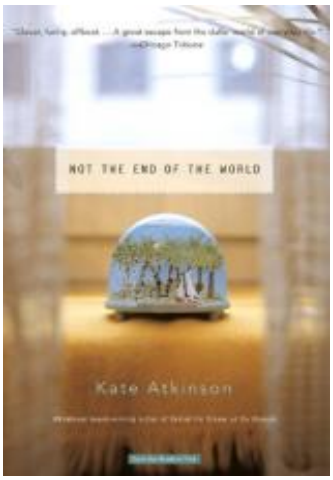
Not the End of the World

by Kate Atkinson



About the Book

The enchanted world of Kate Atkinson's short fiction is home to an entire constellation of unforgettable characters-a dead woman who remains involved in the life of her surviving family, a man vexed by a doppelganger who lives better than he does, and a nanny who (literally) takes flight. In scenes where comedy, tragedy, and myth collide to dazzling effect, as characters come and go (and, to the reader's delight, come back!), **Not the End of the World** offers an endlessly entertaining display of Atkinson's ferocious intelligence and startlingly fertile imagination.

Discussion Guide

1. Charlene and Trudi respond to the apocalyptic chaos around them in a peculiar way. Is their conversation surprising, given the circumstances? How might you and your best friend react differently? Are Charlene and Trudi's actions at all natural? In what way?

2. How do you think Eddie's relationship with his mother affects his attitude? Do you think June is a good role model for him?

3. The Zane sisters are extraordinary women, each in her own way. Do you know any women like them? How are their love affairs and relationships informed by one another? How would Meredith fare among your circle of friends?

4. Do you have any sympathy for Simon? Why? What aspects of his personality do you see in yourself? How is his rapport with Rebecca typical of sibling relationships? How is it different?

5. Missy and Arthur have an unusual relationship for a boy and his governess. How is Missy a good nanny? How is she not? Would you have enjoyed having Missy as a caretaker?

6. Fielding's doppelganger has a lot more fun than Fielding ever does. What do you think that says about Fielding's choices? If your doppelganger were free to do whatever he or she wanted, what would he or she be doing?

7. How have things changed for Charlene and Trudi in the end? How is their story linked to the other stories in the collection?

8. What does Not the End of the World suggest about the role of storytelling in our lives? Is storytelling simply a form of entertainment, or does it serve another function? How do the stories in this book help Charlene and Trudi endure?

9. How is pop culture important in Not the End of the World? How might the stories be different without the pop culture references?

10. Discuss the ways in which people at the edges of your life - the people you sometimes see at parties, who date your distant relatives, who pass you on the way to work - are living their own stories as well as influencing yours. Where, how often, and in what ways does your life overlap with theirs?

Author Bio

Kate Atkinson won the Whitbread (now Costa) Book of the Year prize with her first novel, BEHND THE SCENES AT THE MUSEUM. Her 2013 novel set around the Second World War, LIFE AFTER LIFE, was shortlisted for the Women?s Prize for Fiction and voted Book of the Year by independent booksellers? associations on both sides of the Atlantic. It also won the Costa Novel Award, as did her subsequent companion novel, A GOD IN RUINS (2015), and was adapted into a critically acclaimed television series in 2022. Her bestselling novels featuring former detective Jackson Brodie became the BBC television series ?Case Histories,? starring Jason Isaacs. She lives in Edinburgh, Scotland.

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