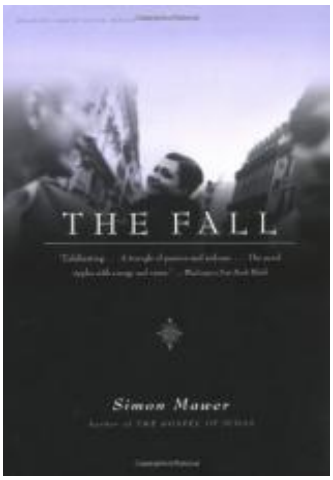
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The Fall: A Novel

by Simon Mawer



About the Book

Falling in love. Falling from a mountaintop. Falling out of favor. Falling from grace. This mesmerizing novel captures the exhilaration of emotional freefall in its myriad guises.

Against a shifting backdrop of Alpine peaks, a small Welsh village, and the bombed-out London of World War II, a man and two women come together. Years later, the tangle of their relationships is imprinted on the lives of two fatherless young men, friends since childhood, who find themselves similarly ensnared in a series of love triangles. Plumbing the extremes of emotion that attend first love and death-defying adventure, Simon Mawer unfolds a tale of passion and risk, enchantment and betrayal that confirms his reputation as one of the most ambitious and accomplished novelists writing today.

Discussion Guide

1. Climbing is at the center of this novel, but human relationships present much larger obstacles for the central characters than do mountains. Can climbing be considered a simple metaphor in **The Fall**, or does its importance transcend its allusions to the difficulties of life?

2. The novel never really resolves the deaths of Guy and Jamie. Do you think either of them intended to die?

3. Did you expect that Guy would eventually be reunited with Diana? Would it have been possible for them to meet and not become involved again?

4. Did Caroline know about Diana and Guy's reunion? Do you think her seduction of Rob was a form of revenge?

5. Rob and Jamie grow into adulthood in a more peaceful time, at least at home, than their parents did. How might their

pursuit of climbing be considered a search for the meaning and urgency that their parents experienced during the war?

6. Discuss the similarities between Caroline and Ruth. How does each of them handle her desires in the face of commitment and aging?

7. In this novel the past seems to be both irrevocable and, in the light of constant revelations, ever-changing. Do you consider the past to be entirely fixed and concrete, or do you think it reflects the shared perceptions of those who experienced it?

8. Eve, Ruth, and James are all biblical names and the names of those Rob loves. What do you think Mawer is trying to reveal about Rob's character by choosing these names?

9. At the end of the novel, we learn that both Rob and Jamie were trying to connect with men who weren't actually their fathers. Do you think their pursuits were misguided, and would they have lived differently had they known about their paternity all along?

10. Did Jamie ever truly love Ruth? What role did Ruth play in allowing Jamie to deny his love for Rob? Would Rob and Jamie have been able to love each other had they had the chance?

11. What led Diana to break off her correspondence with Guy? Is it necessary for Guy ever to learn about her abortion?

12. Why was Rob able to settle down in a way that Jamie never could? Do you think he was ultimately happy with his decision?

13. Legend and myth play a central part in **The Fall**. Discuss how the characters' consciousness of the Arthurian legends and the Norse gods play a part in shaping their experiences.

14. Discuss the way in which the characters' ideas about duty and morals change during the London blitz in World War II. How are Diana's decision to get an abortion and Guy's decision to join the army affected by the realities of life during wartime?

Author Bio

Simon Mawer was born in 1948 in England. His first novel, CHIMERA, won the McKitterick Prize for first novels in 1989. MENDEL'S DWARF (1997), his first book to be published in the U.S., was long-listed for the Man Booker Prize and was a *New York Times* Book to Remember for 1998. THE GOSPEL OF JUDAS, THE FALL (winner of the 2003 Boardman Tasker Prize for Mountain Literature) and SWIMMING TO ITHACA followed, as well as THE GLASS ROOM, his 10th book and eighth novel, which was short-listed for the Booker Prize. TRAPEZE was published in 2012 and its follow-up, TIGHTROPE, in 2015.

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Publication Date: February 9, 2004
Paperback: 400 pages
Publisher: Back Bay Books
ISBN-10: 0316735590
ISBN-13: 9780316735599