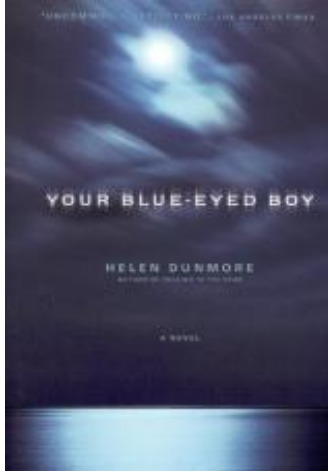


# Your Blue-Eyed Boy

by Helen Dunmore

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## About the Book

When a letter arrives from the other side of the ocean, Simone, a thirty-eight-year-old judge, suspects that a long-ago lover has targeted her for "the most intimate of crimes," blackmail. The prospect shatters an already tenuous peace: Simone is shouldering the burden of her husband's breakdown, her family's mounting debts, and the unexpected demands of a new job. Soon the ripple of terror that flows through Simone's world like the ghost of a former self threatens to propel her public and private lives onto a harrowing collision course.

## Discussion Guide

1. Do you agree with Simone's belief regarding children and television that "it is wrong to see so much and understand so little?" (p.11) If so, how could this be changed?
2. The novel is full of surprises, in terms of both character and event. Discuss how this is achieved and the effect it has on the reader.
3. Discuss the ways in which Donald, Simone, and their children cope with Donald's bankruptcy and Simone's financial support of the family. How do you imagine you would cope in similar circumstances?
4. How does history impact certain characters--Michael and Simone for example--and how does their response to it express their individual selves?
5. Confronting Simone's fears during the squall, Michael says that the worst thing that could happen is "We could drown." (p. 122) What is the worst that could happen to Simone if the truth of her past were to surface? Is she right to fear it?

6. Is Michael correct in saying, "You can't pretend the past didn't happen?" (p. 145) What truths do the pictures reveal to Simone, not only about the past but also about her present with Donald and the children?"
7. Michael questions Simone's abilities to be a judge of others. Do you agree with his assessment? To be a good judge, is it necessary to be impartial?
8. Can victims of blackmail ever be said to be at least partially to blame for what happens to them?
9. How else might Simone have reacted to Michael falling off the seawall, and what do you imagine the outcome would have been?
10. Discuss the ending. What do you think happened?

## Author Bio

Helen Dunmore is the author of 12 books, including *THE GREATCOAT*; *THE BETRAYAL*, a *New York Times* Editors' Choice; *THE SIEGE*, a bestseller and finalist for the Whitbread Novel of the Year Award; and *A SPELL OF WINTER*, winner of the Orange Prize.

## Critical Praise

*"Dunmore's blend of eerie suspense and musical language is reminiscent of such literary thrillers as Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing* and Rosellen Brown's *Before and After*."*

*?Valerie Miner, Chicago Tribune*

*"meditation on the past and loss and how we cope with who we become. . . . Dunmore writes gracefully and has an excellent sense of place."*

*?Mark Lindquist, New York Times Book Review*

*"Graceful and intelligent. . . . The atmosphere Dunmore creates is so rich that it makes *Your Blue-Eyed Boy* well worth reading."*

*?Laurie Muchnick, Newsday*

*"intriguing thriller. . . . It has a chilling sense of creepiness that will subtly entice and disarm you."*

*?Kathleen Jacobs, Redbook*

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