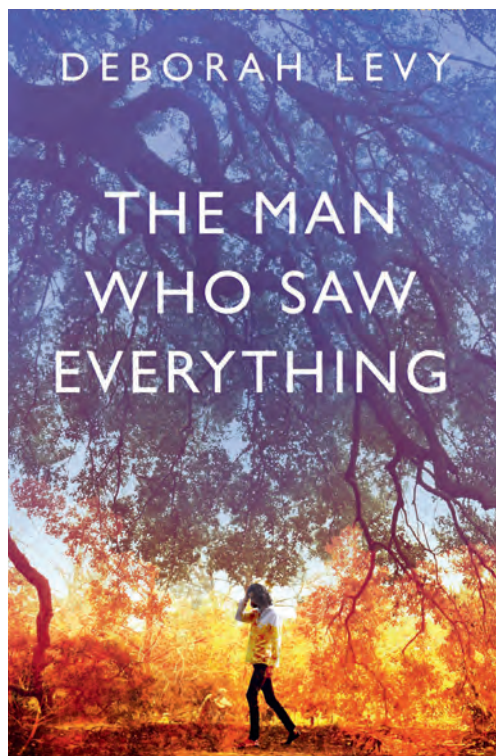




Readers' Guide



The Man Who Saw Everything Deborah Levy

Hamish Hamilton

Other novels by Deborah Levy

Hot Milk (2016)

Pillow Talk in Europe and Other Places (2004)

The Unloved (1994)

Ophelia and the Great Idea (1989)

thebookerprizes.com

About the author

Deborah Levy was born in Johannesburg, South Africa in 1959. She is a British playwright, novelist and poet. She is the author of two Man Booker shortlisted novels: *Hot Milk* (2016) and *Swimming Home* (2011). She has also written five further novels, an acclaimed collection of short stories, *Black Vodka* (2013), and two 'living autobiographies', *Things I Don't Want To Know* and *The Cost of Living*. She has written for the Royal Shakespeare Company and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. She lives in London.

About the book

In 1988 Saul Adler (a narcissistic, young historian) is hit by a car on the Abbey Road. He is apparently fine; he gets up and goes to see his art student girlfriend, Jennifer Moreau. They have sex then break up, but not before she has photographed Saul crossing the same Abbey Road.

Saul leaves to study in communist East Berlin, two months before the Wall comes down. There he will encounter - significantly - both his assigned translator and his translator's sister, who swears she has seen a jaguar prowling the city. He will fall in love and brood upon his difficult, authoritarian father. And he will befriend a hippy, Rainer, who may or may not be a Stasi agent, but will certainly return to haunt him in middle age.

Slipping slyly between time zones and leaving a spiralling trail, *The Man Who Saw Everything* examines what we see and what we fail to see, the grave crime of carelessness, the weight of history and our ruinous attempts to shrug it off.

What the judges thought

'A masterfully controlled novel about old and new Europe and how people move through political landscapes, personal histories and memories. In a playful and complex structure, the characters breathe an atmosphere of pop culture and post-Marxist ideology. Levy offers a mesmerising and often surreal slice of reality, and her commentary on history is subtle, humorous, and deeply reflective.'

Discussion points

How much did you know about life in East Germany before reading this novel?

What role do specific items, such as the photograph, flowers and tinned pineapple, play?

How do the two parts of his life interlink? Did you find this confusing to read, or did it gradually make sense?

A 'spectre' looms over much of the novel in different forms. What is this term used to describe and what do you think it represents?

How important are censorship and surveillance in the novel, both from the state and from other people?

Themed reading

Anna Funder *Stasiland*
Max Hertzberg *Stealing the Future*
Robert Harris *Fatherland*
Ian McEwan *The Innocent*
Peter Millar *1989 The Berlin Wall*

Useful links

<https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/the-man-who-knew-everything-deborah-levy-book-review-novel-the-beatles-a9057261.html>

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/aug/25/the-man-who-saw-everything-deborah-levy-review>

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/aug/21/the-man-who-saw-everything-by-deborah-levy-review>

<https://www.standard.co.uk/lifestyle/books/the-man-who-saw-everything-by-deborah-levy-review-a4213936.html>

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/books/what-to-read/man-saw-everything-deborah-levy-review-mesmerising-fever-dream/>