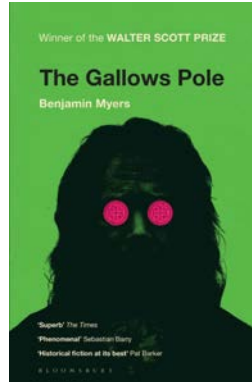


THE WALTER
SCOTT PRIZE
FOR HISTORICAL
FICTION **10YEARS**



Readers' Guides



2018 Winner

The Gallows Pole Benjamin Myers

Bloomsbury

About the author

Benjamin Myers was born in Durham, UK, in 1976. He is an author and journalist, translated into several languages. His novels include *Under The Rock* (2018), *These Darkening Days* (2017), *Turning Blue* (2016), *Beastings* (2014), *Pig Iron* (2012) and *Richard* (2010). His latest, *The Offing*, was published in August 2019.

Published in May 2017 and now in its 9th print run, *The Gallows Pole* won the Walter Scott Prize - the world's biggest award for historical fiction - was recipient of a Roger Deakin Award and longlisted for the Republic of Consciousness Prize. It has been optioned for film/TV by Element Pictures.

As a journalist he has written about music, the arts and nature for many publications. His short stories and poetry have appeared in dozens of print and small press anthologies, chapbooks and underground obscurities.

Myers has received support from the K Blundell Trust, the Royal Society Of Literature's Brookleaze Grant and Arts Council England. In 2017 he was selected as writer for the International Literature Showcase. He currently lives in the Upper Calder Valley, West Yorkshire.

About the book

An England divided. From his remote moorland home, David Hartley assembles a gang of weavers and land-workers to embark upon a criminal enterprise that will capsize the economy and become the biggest fraud in British history.

They are the Cragg Vale Coiners and their business is 'clipping' - the forging of coins, a treasonous offence punishable by death.

A charismatic leader, Hartley cares for the poor and uses violence and intimidation against his opponents. He is also prone to self-delusion and strange visions of mythical creatures.

When excise officer William Deighton vows to bring down the Coiners and one of their own becomes turncoat, Hartley's empire begins to crumble. With the industrial age set to change the face of England forever, the fate of his empire is under threat.

Forensically assembled from historical accounts and legal documents, *The Gallows Pole* is a true story of resistance that combines poetry, landscape, crime and historical fiction, whose themes continue to resonate. Here is a rarely-told alternative history of the North.

Reviews:

"Benjamin Myers is a poet and his evocation of Hartley's moorland home is superb...this is a brutal tale told with an original, muscular voice." *The Times*, summer reads pick 2018

"From the half-forgotten history of northern working men on the brink of the Industrial Revolution, Myers has unearthed a powerful story which he tells with great vigour." *The Sunday Times*

"Powerful, visceral writing, historical fiction at its best. Benjamin Myers is one to watch." *Pat Barker*

"A phenomenal and highly energised novel." *Sebastian Barry*

Discussion Questions

How reliable a narrator is David Hartley?

Given their dire economic circumstances and lack of support from central government, do you think that the Cragg Vale Coiners forgery operation was justified?

Extensive historical research for the novel unearthed very few references to women - a point some critics mentioned. Do you think women played a greater role in the rise of the Cragg Vale Coiners and have been written out of history, or in fact this was a very male-centric enterprise, as criminal gangs so often are?

Do the depictions of casual violence appear gratuitous?

Are there any true heroes or heroines in *The Gallows Pole*?

Do you have any sympathy for James Broadbent?

What do you think Robert Parker's motivations are for bringing down the gang?

The Gallows Pole has very little punctuation. Did this help or hinder your reading of the novel?

Do you think that Lord Rockingham and his gang of aristocrats - the entitled few who own most of the land and wealth in the north of England - are any better than the Coiners?

Did David Hartley deserve to be executed and does the novel change your opinion on the morality of capital punishment?

The Gallows Pole is an allegorical tale about the growing class division between the wealthy minority and the demonised poor in Britain today. Discuss.

As in life, Grace Hartley emerges from the novel with enough saved money to buy a house in cash. Would you like to read more about her life following the execution of her husband?

Who would play King David Hartley in a film or TV series?

As landscape novel that features a lot of walking, does the book make you want to visit Cragg Vale and Calderdale today?

(Questions supplied by author)