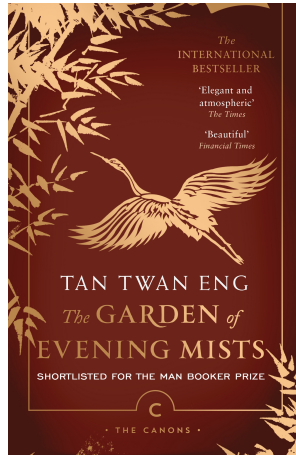


THE WALTER  
SCOTT PRIZE  
FOR HISTORICAL  
FICTION **10 YEARS**



## Readers' Guides



### 2013 Winner

## The Garden of Evening Mists

### Tan Twan Eng

Canongate

#### About the author

Tan Twan Eng was born in Penang, Malaysia. His debut novel *The Gift of Rain* was longlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2007 and has been widely translated. *The Garden of Evening Mists* won the Man Asian Literary Prize 2012 and the 2013 Walter Scott Prize for historical fiction and was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize 2012 and the 2014 International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award. The film has been adapted for film by HBO Asia. Twan divides his time between Kuala Lumpur and Cape Town.

#### About the book

Set during the Japanese occupation, *The Garden of Evening Mists* follows young law graduate, Yun Ling Teoh, as she seeks solace among the plantations of the Cameron Highlands. Here she discovers Yugiri, the only Japanese garden in Malaya, and its owner and creator, the secretive Aritomo. Aritomo agrees to accept Yun Ling as his apprentice 'until the monsoon' so that she can design a garden in memorial to her sister. But over time the jungle starts to reveal secrets of its own...

## Reviews

"It is impossible to resist the opening sentence of this sumptuously produced novel... It showcases Tan Twan Eng as a master of cultural complexities" *The Guardian*

"Tantalisingly evocative... Suffused with a satisfying richness of colour and character, it still abounds in hidden passageways and occult corners. Mysteries and secrets persist. Tan dwells often on the borderline states, the in-between areas, of Japanese art: the archer's hiatus before the arrow speeds from the bow; the patch of skin that a master of the horimono tattoo will leave bare; or the "beautiful and sorrowful" moment "just as the last leaf is about to drop"... An elegant and haunting novel of war, art and memory" *Independent*

## Discussion Questions

Memory is one of the main themes of *The Garden of Evening Mists*, how does Tan Twan Eng use the garden as a metaphor for memory?

Tan Twan Eng said *The Garden of Evening Mists* was a difficult novel to

write 'because Yun Ling very much wanted to keep her secrets to herself. Because of what she had gone through, and what she had become, no one was allowed into her head. And yet at the same time she wanted to - she had to - reveal those secrets. It was a constant battle for me to crack her open.' Do you get the sense that Yun Ling is a reluctant narrator?

Does Yun Ling's disposition towards Aritomo and towards the Japanese in general undergo a significant shift in the course of the novel, or does she rather maintain a constant though compartmentalised attitude throughout?

How and to what extent has Yun Ling's capacity for intimate love and affection in later life been affected by her experiences in the internment camp and or her shared time with Aritomo?

Although containing many violent scenes readers have commented that they found the story comforting, leaving a feeling of calm and tranquillity. What feelings are you left with having completed the novel?

*(Questions adapted from The Reading Agency)*