



[Beautiful world, where are you]

By Sally Rooney

First published in 2021

Genre and Subject

Friendship -- Fiction

Novelists -- Fiction

Man-woman relationships -- Fiction

Road fiction

Synopsis

Alice, a novelist, meets Felix, who works in a distribution warehouse, and asks him if he'd like to travel to Rome with her. In Dublin, her best friend Eileen is getting over a break-up, and slips back into flirting with Simon, a man she has known since childhood. Alice, Felix, Eileen and Simon are still young - but life is catching up with them. They desire each other, they delude each other, they get together, they break apart. They have sex, they worry about sex, they worry about their friendships and the world they live in. Are they standing in the last lighted room before the darkness, bearing witness to something? Will they find a way to believe in a beautiful world?

Author Biography

Sally Rooney (born 20 February 1991) is an Irish author and screenwriter. She has published three novels: *Conversations with Friends* (2017), *Normal People* (2018), and *Beautiful World, Where Are You* (2021). *Normal People* was adapted into a 2020 television series by Hulu, RTÉ, Screen Ireland and the BBC. Rooney's work has garnered critical acclaim and commercial success, and she is regarded as one of the foremost millennial writers.

Discussion Starters

1. This is largely a book about relationships—between Alice and Eileen, Alice and Felix, Eileen and Simon, but there are many significant connections throughout the book. Discuss these relationships, how they're formed, and how they evolve over the course of the book.
2. Which of the four central characters did you identify with the most? Were there any you didn't care for?
3. What did you think of the structure of the novel? Much of the content is conveyed in letters—why do you think that Rooney chose to do this? What did you think about the decision to compare and contrast what characters are doing at certain times?
4. What did you think about the pacing of this book? Did the letters slow it down for you?
5. How do these characters differ from each other? Felix makes a point to tell Alice that they aren't like Simon and Eileen—why do you think he does this, and what do you think he means by it?
6. Discuss the notion of intimacy. The characters in this book have sex with each other, but that's not the only form of intimacy in the book. Which characters do you think are truly intimate with each other? Are they the same characters who are sleeping with each other?
7. A lot of the characters have feelings and opinions on religion, politics, and art—what did you think of those discussions? Who did you find yourself agreeing with the most? Who did you find yourself disagreeing with the most?
8. How do the characters of the book use their opinions and personal tastes to create their own personalities and identities? Is this something that is done in a healthy manner?
9. Did you find Alice and Eileen to be realistic or pessimistic about the state of the world? Do you share any of their thoughts or concerns? Do you find yourself focusing on immediate matters and experiences to avoid looking at the overall state of the world?
10. Some readers have implied that Alice is a thinly veiled version of the author. Do you agree or disagree with this opinion? Why do you think Rooney chose to write about a novelist and the themes she did in this book?
11. What did you think about Alice's reflections of fame and success? Did they make you reconsider any of your preconceived notions or perceptions of public figures?
12. Sally Rooney's previous two novels were very Irish-centric while this novel looks farther afield for its settings. What do you think is the significance of that? Did you enjoy the novel's settings?
13. What were your thoughts on the ending of the book? Did you find it satisfying, or dissatisfying? Did you find it realistic?

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