

**Anna Burns wins 50<sup>th</sup> Man Booker Prize (536 words)**World and Press • 1<sup>st</sup> January Issue 2019 • page 12

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Northern Irish novelist Anna Burns | Photo: picture alliance

**Pre-reading**

- 1. Get together with a partner and discuss: What do you know about the Man Booker Prize? If you know some of the books that have won the prize: have you read any of them?**
- 2. Can you match these Man Booker Prize winners with their novels? Fill in the table with the book titles from the box. You may do some research on the internet.**

1989	Kazuo Ishiguro	
1992	Michael Ondaatje	
1997	Arundhati Roy	
2002	Yann Martel	
2013	Eleanor Catton	

Life of Pi • The English Patient • The Remains of the Day •  
 The God of Small Things • The Luminaries

**3. Do some research on the internet and fill in the gaps.**

- a) Anna Burns is the first writer from \_\_\_\_\_ to win the Man Booker Prize.
- b) Her novel *Milkman* is set during the time of the \_\_\_\_\_.
- c) The characters in her novel do not have \_\_\_\_\_ and the whole narrative is written as a \_\_\_\_\_ in the protagonist's voice.
- d) The Man Booker Prize comes with prize money of £\_\_\_\_\_.
- e) It has been awarded since \_\_\_\_\_.

**4. Do you know what the “Troubles” are? Read up on this chapter in Irish history.**

**Reading comprehension**

**1. Answer the following questions.**

**a) What is the novel *Milkman* about?**

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**b) What is the “Booker boost”?**

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**c) What does the jury's chairman Kwame Anthony Appiah recommend to readers and why?**

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**d) What are publishers and authors angry about?**

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**2. Are the following statements true or false? Tick the correct box. Then correct the false statements below.**

Statement	True	False
a) There was a lot of debate among the jurors about who should win the Man Booker Prize 2018.		
b) The novel's protagonist lives during the time of the Northern Irish conflict.		
c) Anna Burns said that the prize money helps her pay off debts she got into due to her gambling habit.		
d) The novel's language is so close to natural speech that the jury's chairman is already looking forward to the audiobook version.		
e) The jury didn't want to pick an American author as the prize winner for the third year in a row.		

**Corrections**

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**Vocabulary**

**1. Word search**

Go through the text and write down words that have to do with the topics of literature and writing.

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**2. Find the opposites of the words or definitions below. They are all in the text, as indicated by the paragraph numbers given.**

- a) easy, uninspiring (para. 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- b) divided, at odds, in disagreement (para. 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- c) to abandon, to stop, to give up (para. 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- d) familiar, common (para. 3) \_\_\_\_\_
- e) defeat, failure, loss (para. 5) \_\_\_\_\_
- f) to increase, to grow (para. 5) \_\_\_\_\_
- g) to dread, to fear (para. 7) \_\_\_\_\_
- h) agreement, accord (para. 8) \_\_\_\_\_

**Grammar**

**1. Fill in the correct relative pronoun.**

- a) The Man Booker Prize, \_\_\_\_\_ is the most important literary prize in Great Britain, was awarded to Anna Burns.
- b) The author, \_\_\_\_\_ is from Northern Ireland, was lost for words when she gave her acceptance speech.
- c) The panel of judges, \_\_\_\_\_ chairman was the philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah, chose Burns in a unanimous decision.
- d) The difficulties \_\_\_\_\_ some readers might have with the novel's experimental language could be overcome by reading it out loud, Appiah said.

**Could any of the pronouns be left out?**

\_\_\_\_\_

## Post-reading

1. Have you ever wanted to write a novel? What would it be about? Draft a short introduction to your novel.
2. Imagine you have just been told that you've won a prestigious literary prize. Write a short diary entry about your thoughts and feelings on this occasion.

## Speaking practice

Get together with a partner. Imagine you are jurors on the Man Booker Prize jury. The novel you favoured, *Milkman* by Anna Burns, has won. During the award ceremony, you are expected to give a short laudatory speech. Write down some bullet points with keywords on what you would like to say, then take turns with your partner and give your speech.

## Mediation

Write a short report with the most important information about the Man Booker Prize and this year's winner. During your research, you've come across a short article that helps you summarise essential facts. Use the information provided in the following link to write up your report.

(<http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/literatur/man-booker-prize-2018-anna-burns-als-erste-irische-autorin-ausgezeichnet-a-1233650.html>)



**ANSWER KEY****Pre-reading**

2.

1989	Kazuo Ishiguro	<b>The Remains of the Day</b>
1992	Michael Ondaatje	<b>The English Patient</b>
1997	Arundhati Roy	<b>The God of Small Things</b>
2002	Yann Martel	<b>Life of Pi</b>
2013	Eleanor Catton	<b>The Luminaries</b>

3.

- a) Anna Burns is the first writer from **Northern Ireland** to win the Man Booker Prize.
- b) Her novel *Milkman* is set during the time of the **Troubles**.
- c) The characters in her novel do not have **names** and the whole narrative is written as a **stream of consciousness** in the protagonist's voice.
- d) The Man Booker Prize comes with prize money of **£50,000**.
- e) It has been awarded since **1969**.

4.

- The Troubles were a violent conflict that took place in Northern Ireland from 1968 to 1998.
- It was conflict over the constitutional status of Northern Ireland, over national identity and belonging.
- There were two sides to this issue: the unionist, largely Protestant majority wanted Northern Ireland to remain part of the United Kingdom, whereas the nationalist, republican and Catholic minority wanted to become part of the Republic of Ireland.
- Over 3,600 people were killed during the Troubles and 50,000 were injured.
- In 1968, tensions between the two communities in the Northern Ireland parliament escalated. The UK government eventually intervened by sending troops to Northern Ireland.
- The Irish Republican Army (IRA) was the main paramilitary organisation in Northern Ireland and fought for British withdrawal and Irish unification.
- Violence soared and wore out all sides.
- Democratic means of solving the conflict were tried.
- For decades, there had been no solution, but finally, in 1996, the Good Friday Agreement was signed, stating that only a popular majority vote in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland can change the constitutional status of Northern Ireland, and bringing back self-government to Northern Ireland.
- Politics eventually triumphed over violence, establishing a still-fragile peace process in Northern Ireland.

**Reading comprehension**

- a) The novel shows a protagonist who lives during the time of the Troubles, i.e. in the 1970s, and is faced with sexual harassment. *Milkman* portrays a divided society.
- b) The term “Booker boost” implies that novels on the shortlist for this literary prize are usually sold in large numbers.
- c) Appiah recommends reading Burns’s novel out loud, because some people may find the book rather difficult and by reading it out loud, they slow down and can then really enjoy the language.
- d) The decision to change the criteria and to include American writers in the selection process for the prize angered them.

**2.**

Statement	True	False
a) There was a lot of debate among the jurors about who should win the Man Booker Prize 2018.		x
b) The novel’s protagonist lives during the time of the Northern Irish conflict.	x	
c) Anna Burns said that the prize money will help her pay off debts she got into due to her gambling habit.		x
d) The novel’s language is so close to natural speech that the jury’s chairman is already looking forward to the audiobook version.	x	
e) The jury didn’t want to pick an American author as the prize winner for the third year in a row.		x

**Corrections**

- a) *Anna Burns’s novel was the unanimous choice of the Man Booker Prize jurors. (para. 1)*
- e) *The panel of jurors dodged controversy, but they didn’t consider nationality in their choice of prize winner. (paras. 8 and 9)*
- c) *Anna Burns got into debt not as a gambler, but as a penniless author relying on “house sits” for survival.*

**Vocabulary**

- 1. book award, novel, protagonist, (not) a light read, writer, character, shortlist/longlist, crime writer, graphic novelist, audiobook version, novelist, publisher, author
- 2.
  - a) challenging
  - b) unanimous
  - c) to persist
  - d) unfamiliar
  - e) victory

- f) to fade
- g) to look forward to
- h) controversy

## Grammar

1.

- a) The Man Booker Prize, which is the most important literary prize in Great Britain, was awarded to Anna Burns.
- b) The author, who is from Northern Ireland, was lost for words when she gave her acceptance speech.
- c) The panel of judges, whose chairman was the philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah, chose Burns in a unanimous decision.
- d) The difficulties that/which some readers might have with the novel's experimental language could be overcome by reading it out loud, Appiah said.

only the pronoun in d) can be left out

## Post-reading

### 1. Individual student answer

### 2. Sample answer

Dear diary,

*I can't believe it! I'm still feeling a bit overwhelmed and it's hard for me to write it down, but I have actually won the Man Booker Prize! It still seems incredible to see it in writing, black and white on the page, just as in my novels.*

*These last few weeks have been quite draining: first being chosen for the longlist, then not knowing whether my novel would make it onto the shortlist and all the media attention on top of it. I still can't quite grasp what it all means. I suppose my work is appreciated in a new way.*

*Probably more people will now read about what it was like to grow up amid all the violence and constant fear. I always hope my stories will get people thinking and if such a prize makes more of them pick up my books, then I'm glad.*

*And then there's also the prize money. I'll finally be able to pay off my debts and live more comfortably. Of course that's a relief after all these years. But I need to get my head around all of this first and sleep on it!*

Love,

...



## Speaking practice

- *first winner from Northern Ireland*
- *innovative use of language*
- *challenging and experimental, but rewarding*
- *deals with a certain era in history, but still timeless*
- *relevant in times of Brexit and #MeToo*
- *thought-provoking*

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

*We are proud to award the Man Booker Prize 2018 to Anna Burns, who baffled us all with her novel Milkman. She is the first writer from Northern Ireland to win the prize and she is a pioneer in other respects too: her experimental use of language and the highly original tone of her protagonist's voice left us with no doubt about who the winner of this year's prize should be. Milkman is a challenging novel indeed, but aren't the most challenging things in life often the most rewarding? It is not a light read, yet it is definitely worth your time. It is also timeless – it may be set in Northern Ireland during the Troubles, but it contains universal truths about divided societies, about oppression and the abuse of power. Drawing on her own experience, Anna Burns can teach us all a thing or two about our own troubled times. By choosing to renounce character names and including a recognizable setting that nonetheless transcends space and time, this book holds universal appeal. Its topics are all the more relevant in times of Brexit and #MeToo and provide plenty of food for thought. We hope that you will enjoy this thought-provoking read as much as we did. Ladies and gentlemen, Anna Burns!*

## Mediation

### Sample answer

*This year's Man Booker Prize was awarded to Anna Burns, the first Northern Irish author to win the prestigious literary prize. The 56-year-old author was honoured for her novel Milkman, a book about a young girl who grows up during the Troubles and experiences sexual harassment, religious conflict and social restraints. The jury praised the voice of Burns's first-person narrator which they found funny and convincing. The author was very surprised about winning the Man Booker Prize and gave only a short acceptance speech.*

*The Man Booker Prize is the most important British literary prize and comes with £50,000 prize money. It goes to authors who write in English and whose books are published in Great Britain. Previous winners include Margaret Atwood, Salman Rushdie and George Saunders.*

## World and Press Sammelbezug für Ihren Kurs oder die Schulbibliothek?

Sie sparen sich lästige Vorbereitungen, und Ihre Schüler / innen stehen nicht mit leeren Händen da, wenn Sie mit dem Übungsmaterial arbeiten wollen!

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