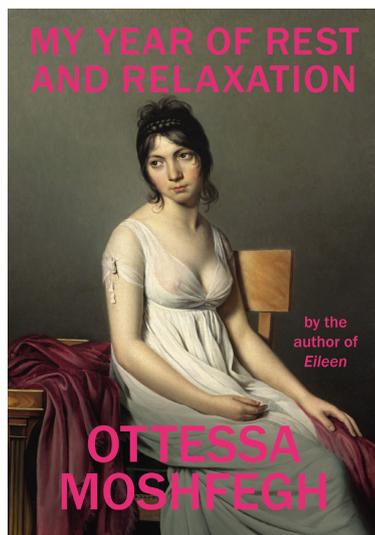


Wellcome Book Prize 2019

Reading Group Guide

Now celebrating its 10th anniversary, the Wellcome Book Prize rewards exceptional works of literature that illuminate the many ways that health, medicine and illness touch our lives.



My Year of Rest and Relaxation

by Ottessa Moshfegh

Jonathan Cape

About the author

Ottessa Moshfegh is a fiction writer from Boston. She was awarded the Plimpton Prize for her stories in the Paris Review and was granted a creative writing fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. Her first book, the novella *McGlue*, was recently published by Vintage. Her novel *Eileen* was awarded the 2016 PEN/Hemingway Award and was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize. Her collection of stories, *Homesick for Another World*, was published in 2017.

About the book

Our narrator has many of the advantages of life, on the surface. Young, thin, pretty, a recent Columbia graduate, with everything paid for by her inheritance. But there is a vacuum at the heart of things, and it isn't just the loss of her parents in college, or the way her Wall Street boyfriend treats her, or her sadomasochistic relationship with her alleged best friend. This story of a year spent under the influence of a truly mad combination of drugs, designed to heal us from our alienation from this world, shows us how reasonable, even necessary, that alienation sometimes is. Blackly funny, both merciless and compassionate – dangling its legs over the ledge of 9/11 – this novel is a showcase for the gifts of one of America's major young writers working at the height of her powers.

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Questions and discussion points

1. Some people have been surprised about Moshfegh's depiction of women. Do you find the main character's actions and thoughts surprising?
2. Do you think there is a particular significance in setting the novel around 9/11?
3. There is a growing interest in wellbeing and self-care, for example by downloading meditation apps to smartphones. The narrator's actions can be seen as a form of self-care – what do you think about her chosen path, compared to the multitude of options now available?
4. Her wealth gives a particular freedom to live her life in this way with little consequence. How do you think the story would play out if she did not have this privilege?

Suggested reading

Eileen by Ottessa Moshfegh

The Vegetarian by Han Kang

Girl, Interrupted by Susanna Kaysen

The Pisces by Melissa Broder

Useful links

[*My Year of Rest and Relaxation* by Ottessa Moshfegh – caustic and acute](#)

[Ottessa Moshfegh's Painful, Funny Novel of a Young Woman's Chemical Hibernation](#)

[Looking Back With Ottessa Moshfegh at *My Year of Rest and Relaxation* and Her Year of Pain and Disorientation](#)

[*My Year of Rest and Relaxation* by Ottessa Moshfegh – review: 'It's like an extended episode of *Girls*'](#)