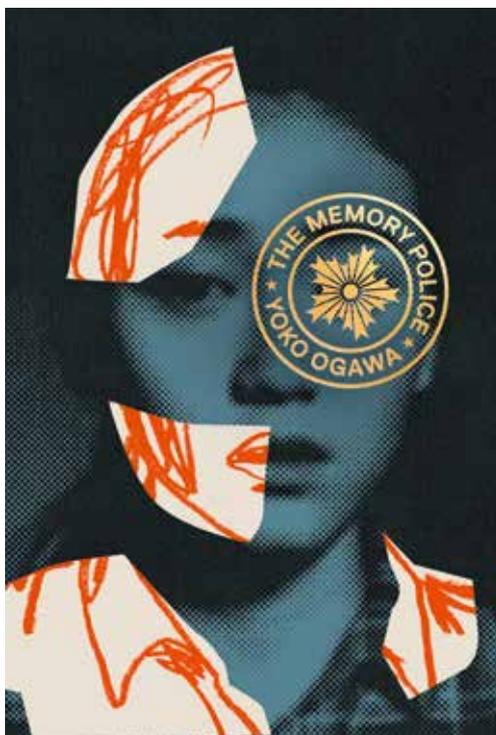


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# Readers' Guide



## The Memory Police

### Yoko Ogawa

Translated by Stephen Snyder

Harvill Secker

Other novels by Yoko Ogawa

*The Diving Pool* (2009)

*The Housekeeper and the Professor* (2010)

*Hotel Iris* (2011)

*Revenge* (2014)

[thebookerprizes.com](http://thebookerprizes.com)

## About the author

Yoko Ogawa was born in Okayama, Japan, in March 1962. She has won every major Japanese literary award. Her fiction has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *A Public Space* and *Zoetrope*. Her works include *The Diving Pool*, a collection of three novellas, *The Housekeeper and the Professor*, *Hotel Iris* and *Revenge*. She lives in Japan.

## About the translator

Stephen Snyder is a Japanese translator and professor of Japanese Studies at Middlebury College, Vermont. He has translated works by Yoko Ogawa, Kenzaburo Oe, Ryu Murakami, and Miri Yu, among others. His translation of Natsuo Kirino's *Out* was a finalist for the Edgar Award for best mystery novel in 2004, and his translation of Yoko Ogawa's *Hotel Iris* was short-listed for the Man Asian Literary Prize in 2011.

## About the book

Hat, ribbon, bird, rose. To the people on the island, a disappeared thing no longer has any meaning. It can be burned in the garden, thrown in the river or handed over to the Memory Police. Soon enough, the island forgets it ever existed. When a young novelist discovers that her editor is in danger of being taken away by the Memory Police, she desperately wants to save him. For some reason, he doesn't forget, and it becomes increasingly difficult for him to hide his memories. Who knows what will vanish next?

*The Memory Police* is a beautiful, haunting and provocative fable about the power of memory and the trauma of loss, from one of Japan's greatest writers.

## What the judges thought

'Originally published in the 1990s, this novel speaks directly to the amnesiac present: a world in which things disappear, then the memory of things themselves, in affectless prose that mirrors this erasure.'

## Discussion points

*The Memory Police* was first published in Japan in 1994. How do you think it would have been received compared to when it was published in English in 2019?

Do the detailed descriptions of the disappearing items make you think differently about everyday concepts and objects?

What does the disappearance of these things represent for the islanders? How does it affect them?

What does the novel say about the relationship between art, memory and subversion?

## Themed reading

*The Vegetarian* by Han Kang  
*In Search of Lost Time* by Marcel Proust  
*The Buried Giant* by Kazuo Ishiguro  
*The Trial* by Frank Kafka

## Useful links

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/aug/23/the-memory-police-yoko-ogawa-review>

<https://www.wired.com/story/book-review-memory-police-yoko-ogawa/>

<https://www.newyorker.com/books/under-review/how-the-memory-police-makes-you-see>

<https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/the-curse-of-memory-yoko-ogawas-the-memory-police/>

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