

Questions to Consider While Reading Science Fiction

SETTING (TIME AND PLACE)

- Do you think that the author accurately describes scientific principles in the novel? Why or why not?
- List some details from the novel that describe science and scientific principles.
- List some items from the story that can be found now. List some items that seem to be from the future.

CHARACTERS

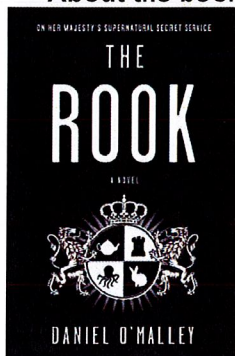
- Explain the characters' involvement in the plot and story line.
- How are the characters important to the action of the novel?
- Are there any characters in the story who are different from those in other genres?

PLOT (STORY LINE)

- Does the plot focus on a particular area of science or scientific principle? Explain.
- Do the characters of the story participate in a documented or controversial area of science? Explain.
- Do you think the conflict of the story is real or fictional? Provide examples to illustrate your choice.

SUMMARY

- Why do you think the author chose to write about this particular incident?
- Why is this book considered to be science fiction?
- Do you think this novel is a good or bad science fiction text, based on the definition of science fiction?
- What scientific principle or technology does the novel reveal?
- How can this novel be compared to contemporary time?
- Any other thoughts?

About the book


Community Rating ★★★★★

Hardcover

0316098795 Trade Cloth

9780316098793 Trade Cloth

eBook

0316193275 E-Book

9780316193276 E-Book

Softcover

0316098809 Trade Paper

9780316098809 Trade Paper

The Rook (O'Malley, Daniel) (2012)

PRINT

CANCEL

Daniel O'Malley (Author)

A woman awakes in a London park in the midst of a heap of bodies that each have latex gloves on the hands. She has no recollection of who she is or anything about what happened. She finds a letter attached to her that reads, "The body you are wearing used to be mine." The letter also gives her instructions and is from Myfanwy Thomas. It tells her that she must either flee London and never look back, or pretend to be Myfanwy and find out who caused her to lose her memory. Myfanwy is a Rook who battles paranormal forces for the top-secret governmental agency called the Chequy. She also has supernatural powers. The woman decides to pursue her new life as Myfanwy.

MAIN CHARACTERS : "Unnamed Character", Woman (who inhabits body of Myfanwy Thomas), Myfanwy Thomas, Supernatural Being (Rook)

GENRE : Mystery fiction, Fantasy fiction

SUB GENRE : Adventure, Paranormal

SETTING(S) : London, England, Europe

SUBJECT : Supernatural, Memory disorders, Fantasy, Suspense, Adventure

RECOMMENDED SIMILAR TITLES

Bloodsucking Fiends: A Love Story - Christopher Moore

Dead Harvest - Chris F. Holm

Dead Witch Walking - Kim Harrison

A Dirty Job - Christopher Moore

Level 26: Dark Origins - Anthony E. Zuiker; Duane Swierczynski

The Passage - Justin Cronin

Secret Dead Men - Duane Swierczynski

Storm Front - Jim Butcher

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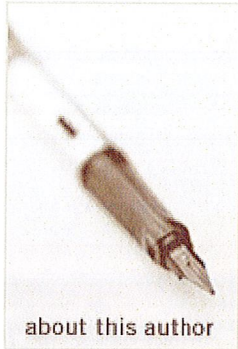
SOURCE CITATION : "The Rook (O'Malley, Daniel)." 2018. [Books & Authors](#) Gale. Farmington Community Library. 19 Mar 2018 <http://bna.galegroup.com/bna/start.do?p=BNA&u=lom_metronetmnfc>

PRINT

CANCEL



About the Author



Full text biography:

Daniel O'Malley

Known As : O'Malley, Dan

Nationality: Australian

Occupation : Novelist

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Related Information

Awards:

Aurealis Award for best science fiction novel, 2012, for *The Rook*.

Personal Information:

Son of Bill O'Malley and Jeanne O'Malley. **Education:** Michigan State University, B.A.; Ohio State University, M.A.

Addresses: Home: Australia.

Career Information:

Writer, manager. Australian Transport Safety Bureau, Australia, media relations manager.

Writings:

- *The Rook* (novel), Little, Brown (New York, NY), 2012.
- *Stiletto* (novel), Little, Brown (New York, NY), 2017.

Sidelights:

Daniel O'Malley grew up in Australia but attended college in the United States before returning to live in Australia, where he works for the Australian Transport Safety Bureau. His first novel, *The Rook*, revolves around Myfanwy Thomas, who wakes up in a London park surrounded by bodies, all wearing latex gloves. Myfanwy has lost her memory but discovers she has a letter that says, "The body you are wearing used to be mine."

Myfanwy discovers another letter in her pocket, which turns out to be a second missive from her former self, whose goal it seems is to help Myfanwy discover her true identity. Myfanwy is actually a Rook, a junior-level secret agent who works for the Court, a group of eight intelligence agents with super powers. It is the Court that runs the Checquy Group, a powerful British secret service agency that only answers to the highest powers as they battle supernatural forces. The Checquy Group's operatives have names based on a chess theme. The Rooks help the Bishops and Lords oversee the various field agents, who are called Pawns.

It turns out that Myfanwy's memory was wiped out by a traitor within the organization, and Myfanwy must track down the agents who want her destroyed. Fortunately, her former self has left behind various instructions to help her. "*The Rook* bounces between fantasy and science fiction effortlessly as Myfanwy attempts to unravel the mysteries surrounding

her," wrote Matt Hughes for the *Adventures in Sci-Fi Publishing* Web site, adding: "The supernatural world in which the Checquy operates is wonderfully imagined."

As Myfanwy proceeds on her investigation, she encounters a wide range of strange people and creatures with supernatural powers, from a person with four bodies to a duck who can tell fortunes. Myfanwy also discovers a secret training facility that turns children into killers. In addition, Myfanwy uncovers her own supernatural powers: the ability to take control of people's minds and bodies simply by touching them. Myfanwy, however, is a changed person since she woke up in the London park. She has gone from a meek administrator afraid to use her powers to a bold aggressor who is more than willing to employ them to their full extent. "There's a number of interesting conceits about memory here, that truly do make the reader wonder how much of your memory is what makes you who you are," noted Alex Zalben in a review for the *MTV Geek* Web site.

As Myfanwy tries to discover who erased her memory while relearning the skills she received in training, she also finds herself battling an evil organization called the Grafters, or the Belgian Flesh Alchemists. The Grafters are only one of many supernatural forces threatening Great Britain, all without the knowledge of the British citizens, who are kept unaware of the supernatural dangers that surround them. Myfanwy gains a reputation among the Court when she successfully protects the country from the antler cult and a supernatural being who manifests itself as gobs of human flesh. Myfanwy eventually discovers who the turncoat is within the organization, but only after she uncovers the ancient Grafters and their plans.

"Dry wit, surprising reversals of fortune, and a clever if offbeat plot make this a winner," wrote a reviewer in *Publishers Weekly*. A *Kirkus Reviews* contributor remarked: "O'Malley's narrative is peppered with sly humor, referential social commentary and the ironic, double-layered self-awareness that will have genre fans believing Buffy the Vampire Slayer has joined Ghostbusters." *The Rook* contains many elements often found in science fiction stories, such as people with supernatural powers and secret organizations. Nevertheless, a contributor to the *Book Smugglers* Web site remarked that the author succeeds in adding a new perspective to these plot elements, noting: "The writing is refreshingly free of the regular clichés and uses an exceptionally clever plot device to add depth and context to the novel."

Stiletto, a sequel to *The Rook*, is based on the same fantasy world-building as the earlier novel but takes a different narrative direction. The British people continue to be guarded by the Checquy Group, a secret government organization that uses supernatural means to shield the nation from other supernatural forces. The members of the group long believed that the hated Grafters, of Belgian origin, had been able to modify living flesh for their own nefarious purposes, and for this reason they regarded the Grafters as bitter rivals. They also believed, however, that the Grafters had been eradicated, but that belief turns out to be mistaken, for the Grafters are very much alive; worse, Checquy operatives have been informed that the two organizations are slated to merge in an effort to foil the machinations of a third group. It is up to Myfanwy Thomas, the protagonist of *The Rook*, to ensure that the alliance is successful. The true protagonists of *Stiletto*, however, are two women: Felicity is being manipulated by the Checquy Group, while Odette is descended from the leader of the Grafters. The two women operate from differing motives: One is out to hide the existence of a splinter group that could undermine the alliance; the other is acting as a spy.

Reviewers were somewhat mixed in their reaction to *Stiletto*. A *Publishers Weekly* reviewer found the novel to be "lackluster" and "a rough slog." A reviewer for the *Speculative Herald Online* felt that "the novel is weighed down here and there by some bloat" in the form of "huge chunks of history and background information." This view was seconded by Colin Steele, who wrote in the *Sydney Morning Herald Online* that "O'Malley's action sequences work extremely well, although the narrative pace is weakened at times by historical and information backfill." A more positive review came from Joshua S. Hill, who, in *Fantasy Book Review*, called the novel "a masterful sequel" and predicted that it will "make you laugh out loud and cringe in horror, but will never leave you bored." Vicki Briner, in a review for *Library Journal*, praised the novel for its "skillful balance between irreverent humor and adventure," while a *Kirkus Reviews* contributor called the novel "a craftily imaginative mashup of spies and the supernatural." Finally, *Booklist* writer David Pitt lauded the novel as "a much-anticipated sequel that is completely worth the wait."

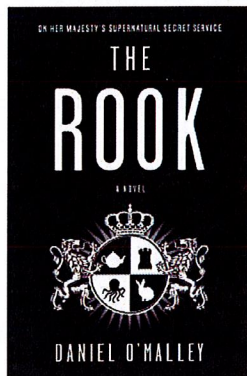
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Community Rating ★★★★★

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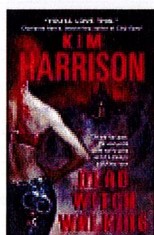
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The Rook (O'Malley, Daniel) (2012)



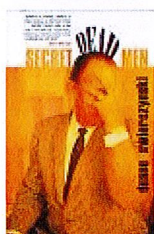
The Passage (Cronin, Justin) (2010)

In *The Passage*, award-winning author Justin Cronin tells a tale of vampires, suspense, and survival



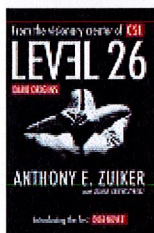
Dead Witch Walking (2004) AWARD WINNER

In an alternate universe where a food-borne genetically-engineered virus has decimated most of the human



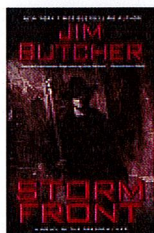
Secret Dead Men (2005)

Special Agent Kevin Kennedy isn't the man his co-workers, family members, and friends believe him to



Level 26: Dark Origins (2009)

According to law enforcement professionals, the danger level of people who murder can be classified from



Storm Front (2000)

The first book in the Dresden Files series, Jim Butcher's *Storm Front* introduces Harry Dresden, a wizard-for-hire

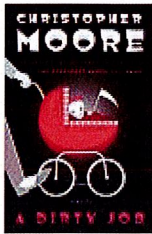
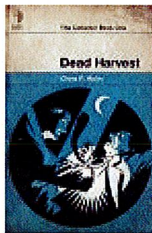


Bloodsucking Fiends: A Love Story (1995)

Vampirized for reasons she cannot understand, Jody seeks the assistance of Tommy Flood, an aspiring writer

Dead Harvest (2012)

In this urban fantasy novel by Chris Holm, Sam Thornton spends his time in the afterlife as a collector



A Dirty Job (2006)

Christopher Moore's funny, slightly macabre novels have earned him a cult following. In this tale, introverted

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[Booklist Reviews 2011 December #1](#)

[Kirkus Reviews 2011 December #1](#)

[LJ Reviews 2011 August #1](#)

[LJ Reviews 2011 October #1](#)

[PW Reviews 2011 October #5](#)

Booklist Reviews 2011 December #1

This Australian author's first novel adroitly straddles the thin line between fantasy, thriller, and spoof. Myfanwy Thomas awakens in a park with no memory of who she is and not a clue about whom all these dead bodies belong to or why they're all wearing latex gloves. Finding an envelope in her pocket, she reads the letter inside and discovers that she is an executive in a shadowy organization, the Checquy Group, that keeps the world safe from all manner of supernatural threats. And apparently, Myfanwy has been plunked down, memory-less, at a time when an ancient enemy of the Checquy Group is massing for a resurgence. The book has, in approximately equal measures, an X-Men vibe (the Checquy Group runs a boarding school for gifted youngsters) and a Tom Holt vibe (the story is about an ordinary woman thrust into an extraordinary world and scrambling to play catch-up). O'Malley is a nimble writer, effortlessly leaping back and forth between comedy and action. There's plenty of room here for a sequel that readers will no doubt begin clamoring for before they've even finished this book. Copyright 2011 Booklist Reviews.

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Kirkus Reviews 2011 December #1

Secret agents as Rooks and Pawns? Plausible, since Checquy Group "is a paranormal version of Britain's MI5." In O'Malley's fantasy debut, Myfanwy Thomas awakens in a London park, chilled, wet, suffering amnesia and surrounded by dead people wearing latex gloves. In her pocket are letters from her past self, a self who understood she was in peril of memory loss and possible assassination. The letters are plans for her body's future. With that, Myfanwy (rhymes with Tiffany) discovers she is a Rook in employ of the Checquy, an organization in service of Britain since ancient times. Checquy has field agents called Pawns who are overseen by Rooks, Bishops and Lords. Each has a supernatural power, as exemplified by the Pawn able to "breathe cyanide and sweat tear gas." Employing more letters and dossiers left by her former self, Myfanwy-without-memory takes her place in Checquy, attempting to suss out who she is, what she does and who wants her dead. She learns she is a high-level administrator, her supernatural power being mind control, but with a personality more forceful than formerly, she attracts the attention of her Rook counterpart, the disturbing Gesalt, one personality alive in four bodies. Myfanwy soon earn kudos protecting Britain against the antler cult, a houseful of goop and a villain manifesting as a roomful of human flesh. However, it is only after she uncovers the ancient Wetenschappelijk Broederschap van Natuurkundigen of Brussels—the Grafters—that she finds clues leading to the Checquy traitor who robbed her of her memory. With O'Malley using first-Myfanwy's letters to provide history and backstory, second-Myfanwy grows into her hero-role and other characters are revealed as suitably creepy in the right and wrong ways. O'Malley's narrative is peppered with sly humor, referential social commentary and the ironic, double-layered self-awareness that will have genre fans believing Buffy the Vampire Slayer has joined Ghostbusters. No clairvoyance required to recognize there will be more outlier reports from Myfanwy, Rook of the Checquy. Copyright Kirkus 2011 Kirkus/BPI Communications. All rights reserved.

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LJ Reviews 2011 August #1

Myfanwy Thomas wakes up in a London park with no memory but a new body and instructions left behind by her former self. Following them, she discovers that she's a Rook, that is, a high-level operative of a shadowy agency charged with countering supernatural forces. Alas, she's been targeted by a mole within the agency. Part suspense, part dark humor, this debut is rumored to be one of those up-all-nighters. [Page 57]. (c) Copyright 2011. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

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LJ Reviews 2011 October #1

Myfanwy (rhymes with "Tiffany") Thomas wakes up in a London park surrounded by dead men, all wearing latex gloves. She has no idea who she is or how she got there. She finds two letters in the pocket of her jacket from her body's former owner. The first tells her the body is now hers and warns of danger. Myfanwy is a Rook, a high-level operative in a clandestine security force charged with protecting Britain from supernatural forces, and there's a mole in the organization who's trying to kill her. Possessed of her own supernatural powers, underestimated until now, Myfanwy proves unexpectedly resourceful and is soon kicking butt with the best of them. The pace never lets up in this entertaining high-action read. The ending is a letdown, but that's a small flaw in a great thriller. VERDICT First-time novelist O'Malley has fashioned a near-perfect supernatural thriller. The heroine is appealing, the villains all monsters or freaks, and something unexpected happens on almost every page. Don't start this book unless you've got lots of time, because you won't want to put it down. It's that good. [See Prepub Alert, 7/11/11.]—David Keymer, Modesto, CA

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PW Reviews 2011 October #5

At the start of Australian author O'Malley's impressive debut, a supernatural detective thriller distinguished by its adept use of humor, an unknown woman reads a letter that opens "Dear You" and closes "Sincerely, Me." The letter informs the woman that she now inhabits the body of Myfanwy Alice Thomas. A second letter from Thomas gives her body's new mental occupant a choice—either flee London to take up a new, carefree life of affluence, or pretend that she is in fact Thomas in order to identify the person responsible for her memory loss. If the situation isn't confusing enough, the "new" Thomas finds herself in the middle of a park in a heavy rain; scattered on the ground are motionless bodies wearing latex gloves. After making the more interesting choice, she learns that Thomas is a "Rook," one of the leaders of a super-secret government organization that protects an unknowing public from a wide variety of paranormal threats. While the "old" Thomas has left detailed explanations about people and things for her successor, the "new" Thomas still must struggle to mask her complete ignorance about some of her major responsibilities. Dry wit, surprising reversals of fortune, and a clever if offbeat plot make this a winner. Dr. Who fans will find a lot to like. (Jan.)

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