

# Reading group: A Brief History of Seven Killings by Marlon James is our October book

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## FULL TEXT

A Brief History of Seven Killings by Marlon James has come out of the hat and will be our reading group choice for October.

This decades-spanning novel looking into the attempted assassination of Bob Marley in Jamaica in 1976 has rapidly become a modern classic. Since its publication in 2014, it has won the Man Booker prize, sold more than half a million copies, seen its author congratulated on millions of letters with a Royal Mail stamp and won over readers and critics alike around the world. The New York Times described it as an “epic in every sense of that word: sweeping, mythic, over-the-top, colossal and dizzyingly complex”. The Irish Independent called it a “vast, ambitious, burning mansion of a book, designed to reflect all the languages of its teeming island and the chambers of the human heart”. The Hindustan Times called it “gripping.”

It's been a worldwide sensation, in other words. And that in spite of the fact that it appears superficially challenging; readers have not minded that it features more than 75 characters who speak in voices ranging “from Jamaican slang to Biblical heights”, in the words of 2015 Booker judge Michael Wood. Nor have they cared that it is uncompromising in both subject and style. Writing in the Guardian, Kei Miller warned : “Despite its title, this isn't a brief novel and neither are there a mere seven killings. Readers will flinch many more times than that.” The Irish Times also counselled that “it's not for the faint hearted”. That's fine with me. In fact, it makes me look forward to it all the more. I'll be reading it over the next few weeks and posting updates here as I do so. I hope you'll join me.

And, thanks to Oneworld, we have five copies to give to the first five people from the UK to post “I want a copy, please”, along with a nice, constructive thought in the comments. If you're lucky enough to be one of the first to post, please email the lovely people on [culture.admin@theguardian.com](mailto:culture.admin@theguardian.com), with your address and your account username so they can track you down.

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