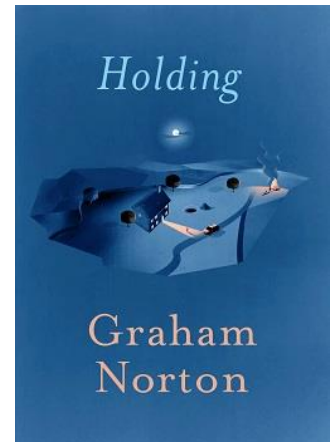


## Holding – Reading Group Questions

Duneen is a quiet place, far enough from the big towns to have kept its own rhythms. Its residents include cast down policeman PJ who lives a lonely, uneventful life punctuated only by the next meal – until now; the beautiful and mysterious family of three spinster sisters each with their own secrets and sorrows; and of course, the town's gossip who think she knows the answers. When a grim discovery is made on a building site up by the old school, it becomes the catalyst for half lived secrets and seething rivalries to come to light and this silent, once innocent and repressed-seeming town is revealed to have a much darker, hungrier undertow.



- Consider the different ways in which the word 'holding' might be interpreted in the context of Graham Norton's book.
- Duneen is a town full of suppressed feeling and long held secrets, consider the ways in which the unearthing of the body serves as a catalyst for change.
- Tommy Burke is a character who remains in the shadows. What do you make of his role in the story, and the way in which the two women project their hopes and dreams onto him?
- Are we being invited to view Tommy's reluctance to commit to any woman as a question mark around his sexuality?
- What role does religion play in the novel?
- How much did the author's known personality influence how you read this novel?
- Female characters feature strongly in this book, what do these women tell us about love and relationships?
- There is a theme of lives wasted in the novel. Does hope remain by the end, despite this?
- What passages strike you as insightful, even profound? Perhaps a bit of dialogue that's funny or poignant or that encapsulates a character? Maybe there's a particular comment that states the book's thematic concerns?
- Has this novel changed you—broadened your perspective? Have you learned something new or been exposed to different ideas about people or a certain part of the world?