

# READING GROUP GUIDE

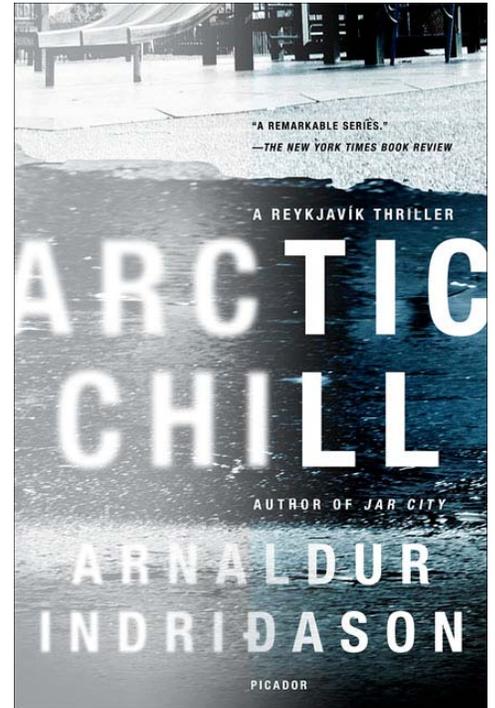
## *Arctic Chill*

*A Novel*

*by Arnaldur Indriðason*

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### About this Guide

The following author biography and list of questions about *Arctic Chill* are intended as resources to aid individual readers and book groups who would like to learn more about the author and this book. We hope that this guide will provide you a starting place for discussion, and suggest a variety of perspectives from which you might approach *Arctic Chill*.

### About the Book

Inspector Erlendur is back in another thriller by Gold Dagger Award-winner Arnaldur Indriðason. Elias, a ten-year-old boy of Thai extraction, has been found stabbed outside his apartment building. But Erlendur, Sigurdur Oli, and Elinborg conclude from Elias's history that he was a good student, and a shy but all-around sweet little boy. They cannot see how he could have been the victim of foul play. Rather, it is Elias's older brother, Niran, who makes them nervous. Unlike Elias, Niran was not born in Iceland and has had a difficult time adjusting to a different culture and a new language. He has had discipline problems at school and was

rumored to hang out with a tough crowd. But as much as Erlendur would like to talk to Niran, he can't—Niran has gone missing.

Niran eventually does turn up, but he is silent. Either fear or guilt has prompted him to keep his mouth shut. In the meantime, as the clues begin to add up, the full ambivalence of Iceland's attitude towards immigrants comes to the surface. Erlendur and his team find an openly racist teacher at Elias's school who denounces immigration in the classroom. They find 'gangs' of Icelandic children who pick fights with immigrant children. Erlendur and his team are now undecided as to whether to investigate this as a hate crime or whether to implicate the brother, who has now been secreted away by concerned family members. The heinous murder of a little boy and the complex racial tensions Indridason portrays in *Arctic Chill* give us plenty to talk about.

## About the Author

**Arnaldur Indridason** is the author of *Jar City*, *Silence of the Grave*, *Voices*, and *The Draining Lake*. He won the CWA Gold Dagger Award for *Silence of the Grave* and is the only author to win the Glass Key Award for Best Nordic Crime Novel two years in a row, for *Jar City* and *Silence of the Grave*. His thrillers have sold more than five million copies in over 25 countries around the world. He lives in Iceland.

## Discussion Questions

1. Why might immigration be a bigger problem in Iceland than in the United States? Do you think there would be more or less racism in Iceland than in the US? Why?
2. Do you think that it's possible that either Erlendur, Sigurdur Oli or Elinborg might have any unresolved feelings about immigration? Based on what we already know about their characters, do you think that their personal feelings could ever interfere with their conduct of an investigation?
3. What do you think account's for Erlendur's theory of Iceland's "indifference" to missing persons (p.85)? Do you agree with his account of how Iceland might be culturally more accepting of disappearances?
4. Elias's frozen death in the Icelandic winter brings back painful memories for Erlendur. Does Erlendur really believe that he murdered his brother when he lost him in the snow as a young boy? Did Erlendur unconsciously become a detective in order to catch *himself*?
5. In learning about what Niran's experience has been like, we come to see that Asian immigrants feel alienated in Iceland, and yet also cut off from their own cultural origins. Why? What would it look like for a person to be both Icelandic *and* proudly embrace his/her Asian heritage?
6. What were Sunee's motives in having Niran taken away? Was she right not to trust the police? What would you have done in her situation?

7. Throughout Erlendur's relationship with Marion Briem, there had been a certain ambivalence. Erlendur often went to Marion for advice, was often annoyed by Marion, and yet felt a certain obligation to be there for his mentor. As Marion dies, Erlendur finally realizes that he appreciated Marion. What was Marion's role in Erlendur's life?
8. Do you think that we might be hearing more in later books about Gestur, the mysterious man implicated by Andres as a pedophile who disappeared from the police without a trace? Or did Indridason just introduce his character in order to throw us off the scent of the real killer?
9. What do you think is likely to happen to Niran now in the Icelandic court system? Do you think he'll be treated with the same consideration that an Icelandic youth would? Will he be treated with more or less sympathy given the circumstances of his crime?
10. Do you think the killers' apparently arbitrary choice of Elias as a victim will ultimately be of greater comfort to Sunee than if his death had been a hate crime? Why or why not?
11. Why do you think Erlendur was so inclined to think that the voice he kept hearing on his phone was the voice of the missing wife from a different case? Is it difficult for Erlendur to cope with letting certain cases go unsolved?
12. Why do you think Erlendur's daughter Eva Lind was so interested in the stories surrounding Erlendur's brother's disappearance? Is she attempting to find sympathy for Erlendur or is she trying to get revenge on him for leaving them when they were children?
13. What do you think it would take for Erlendur to find peace with himself for the disappearance of his brother? If he did find peace, do you think he would remain a police detective, or would he want to try and start a new life for himself?

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