

PICADOR

# Discussion Guide

## *The End of Eddy*

by Edouard Louis

"Canny . . . brilliant . . . a devastating emotional force."

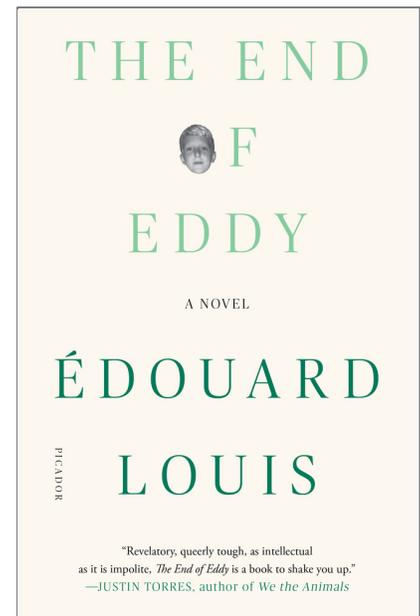
—Garth Greenwell, *The New Yorker*

### ABOUT THE BOOK

*San Francisco Chronicle* Best Book of the Year, Lambda Literary Award - Nominee, *The Guardian* (UK) Best Books of the Year

"The *Hillbilly Elegy* of France . . . *The End of Eddy*, however, is not just a remarkable ethnography. It is also a mesmerizing story about difference and adolescence, one that is far more realistic than most."

—Jennifer Senior, *The New York Times*



ISBN: 9781250181992

**An autobiographical novel about growing up gay in a working-class town in Picardy.**

"Every morning in the bathroom I would repeat the same phrase to myself over and over again . . . Today I'm really gonna be a tough guy." Growing up in a poor village in northern France, all Eddy Bellegueule wanted was to be a man in the eyes of his family and neighbors. But from childhood, he was different—"girlish," intellectually precocious, and attracted to other men.

Already translated into twenty languages, *The End of Eddy* captures the violence and desperation of life in a French factory town. It is also a sensitive, universal portrait of boyhood and sexual awakening. Like Karl Ove Knausgaard or Edmund White, Édouard Louis writes from his own undisguised experience, but he writes with an openness and a compassionate intelligence that are all his own. The result—a critical and popular triumph—has made him the most celebrated French writer of his generation.

### QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. While *The End of Eddy* is a work of fiction, the author, Edouard Louis, has claimed that all of the events he recounts are true. Does this enhance your reading in any way or change the way you approach the novel? Why or why not?
2. The novel begins plainly and simply with the line, "From my childhood I have no happy memories." Why do you think the author chose to begin the novel with such a stark line? How does this line set the tone for the novel?

3. When a very young Eddy asks his mother about the village factories she tells him that he too, like the majority of men in the village, will end up working at one of them when he is older. What do you make of her straightforwardness? Do you agree with this painfully honest style of parenting?
4. Eddy is a target for bullies because of his sexuality. Why do you think Eddy is so complicit to the beatings inflicted upon him by the two boys at school? Do you think he had any other options?
5. Throughout the novel, italics are used to denote the vernacular of the people from the village. What does this technique add to the novel?
6. Eddy has a fraught and complicated relationship with his father that is further strained when Eddy does not display the same masculine attributes typical of men from his village. However, there are times that Eddy's father asserts his love for him. Which of these moments stood out to you? Do you think Eddy's father was doing the best he could considering the circumstances? Could he have done anything differently?
7. Eddy references a scene from Stefan Zweig's biography of Marie Antoinette to help illustrate the conflicted politics of village women like his mother. He cites the poor women who "descended upon Versailles to protest," but cried, "Long live the King" when they actually saw the monarch. How do the actions of these protestors correlate to the actions of the people in the village?
8. In what ways does school become a way out for Eddy, both figuratively and literally?
9. Like many of the people Eddy grows up around, his father expresses racist and homophobic views, despite the fact that one of his father's best friends from his youth was Arab and his own son is gay. Why do you think Eddy's father and the other people from the village have such rigid views? Do you find this small French village similar to American towns in any ways?
10. What does the story about Eddy's cousin Sylvian reveal about the culture and values of the village? Why do you think he was such an admired figure?
11. If you were Eddy would you have drunk from the dirty glass filled with strawberry syrup and soapy water that his grandmother offered him? Why or why not?
12. The novel is organized into short, essay-like chapters through which we gain glimpses into the childhood of Eddy. Why do you think the author employs an unconventional structure such as this for the novel?
13. Towards the end of the novel, when Eddy learns of his acceptance into a prestigious drama school, he rushes off into the night to celebrate alone. Why do you think he wanted to be by himself in this moment?
14. How does the novel embody its title, *The End of Eddy*?

written by Kianoush Hashemzadeh

## About the Author

Born Eddy Bellegueule in Hallencourt, France, in 1992, **Édouard Louis** is a novelist and the editor of a scholarly work on the social scientist Pierre Bourdieu. He is the coauthor, with the philosopher Geoffroy de Lagasnerie, of "Manifesto for an Intellectual and Political Counteroffensive," published in English by the *Los Angeles Review of Books*.



# PICADOR BOOK CLUB

Join the discussion online:

[www.facebook.com/PicadorBookClub](http://www.facebook.com/PicadorBookClub)