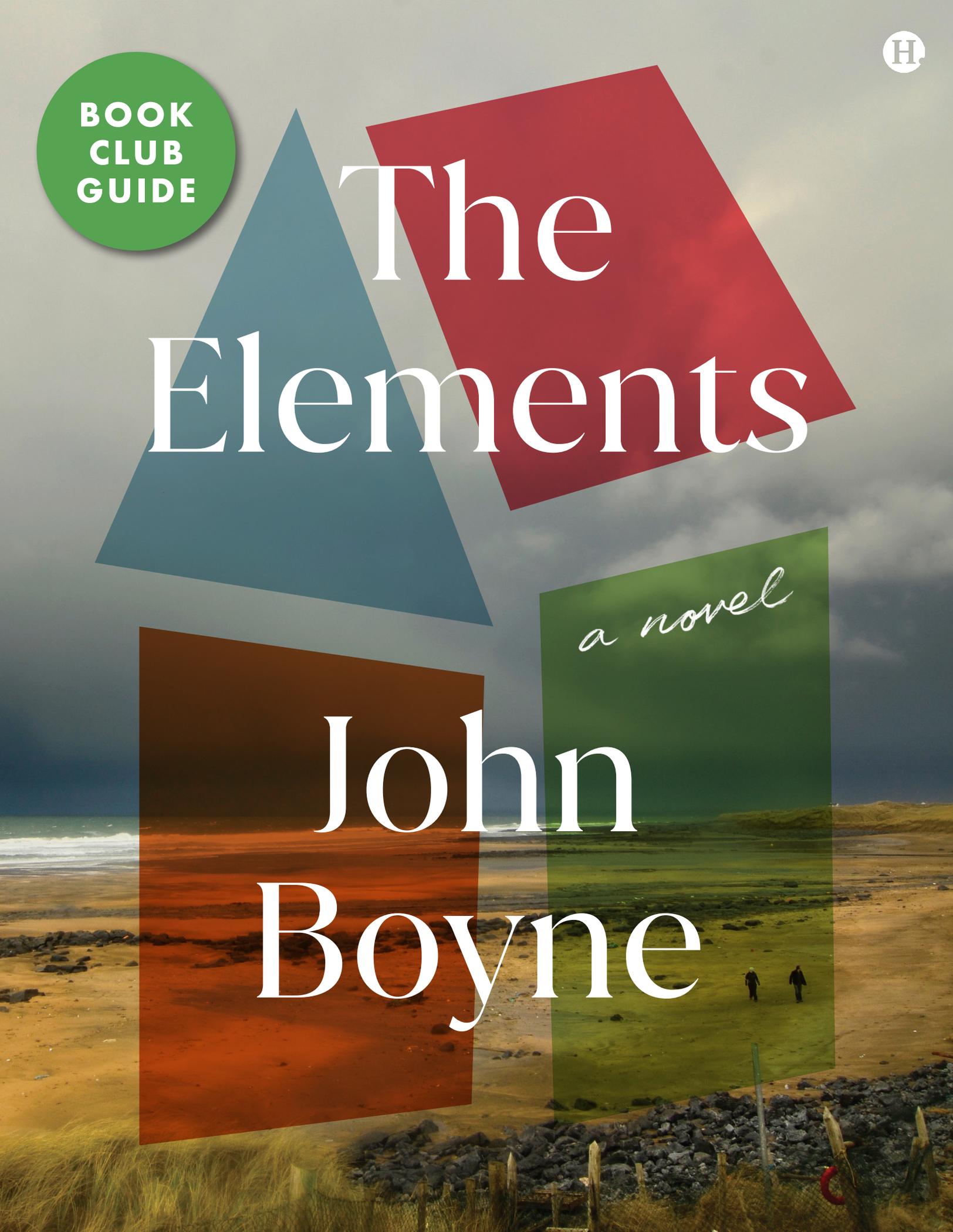


BOOK  
CLUB  
GUIDE

# The Elements

*a novel*

# John Boydne





Welcome to the Book Club Guide for

# The Elements

by John Boyne

Please Note: In order to provide book clubs with the most informed and thought-provoking questions possible, it is necessary to reveal aspects of the story, as well as the ending. If you have not finished reading *The Elements*, you may want to wait before reviewing this guide.

1. *The Elements* is a novel exploring the complexity of crime around sexual abuse, where each of the four sections focuses on enabling, complicity, a perpetrator, and a victim. How do these perspectives inform each other?
2. In the first section, Water, did you feel any sympathy for Willow? Or do you believe she simply turned a blind eye to her husband's actions to protect her privileged place in society?
3. In the second section, Earth, does Evan ultimately earn redemption, or is it too late for him to achieve that?
4. In the third section, Fire, Freya is committing heinous actions. Should Aaron have gone to the police earlier to stop her, or is he justified in wanting to know her better before exposing her behavior?
5. The final section, Air, explores the relationship between a father and his fourteen-year-old son. Was Aaron justified in invading Emmet's privacy by looking through the photos on his phone?
6. Is the search for comfort in the face of trauma ever truly justifiable? To what extent do Freya's traumatic past and longing for love explain her attempts at self-consolation?
7. Much of the novel is set in Ireland or is drawn from Irish experiences. Did the book change your view on that country, particularly with regard to its recent history of sexual abuse being brought into the open?
8. The Nigerian priest, Fr. Ifechi Onwun, is a recurring character throughout the novel. What was the author's purpose in having him reappear?
9. The structure allows a minor character from each section to become the narrator of the next. How did you feel about this narrative choice, and did it enhance your reading experience?
10. All these characters have experienced something unimaginable. Do their choices define who they truly are? How might you respond if faced with the same trials?
11. The novel ends exactly where it started. Did this feel like a satisfying resolution? If so, do you think Aaron's future will be happier than his past?