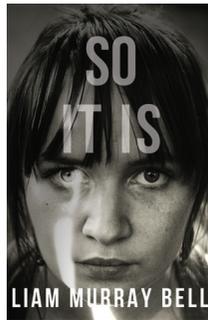


# BOOK GROUP READING GUIDE

## SO IT IS by Liam Murray Bell

Spanning the decades that saw Northern Ireland move from brutal conflict to uncertain peace in the 1990s, this powerful new take on the literature of the Troubles is both a political coming-of-age novel and a fast-paced literary thriller.



Aoife, a young girl growing up in 1980s Belfast, finds herself the last line of defence between the violence and her family. While her mother sinks deeper into a medicated stupor, and her father leaves the family for the comforts of the local bars, Aoife cares for her brother Damien, trying to keep him out of harm's way, while all around her friends and neighbours are swept up in the conflict.

Meanwhile Cassie, a Republican paramilitary and honeytrap, lures and seduces her victims, inflicting lasting damage. But her infamous tactics have their repercussions, and before long her past catches up with her.

*So It Is* is an unflinching and suspenseful debut that reflects the factions and fractures of the Troubles from a new perspective, culminating in a breathless sequence in which the choice between violence and personal morality becomes shockingly acute.

For more information about *So It Is*, and other books published by Myriad Editions, please visit [www.MyriadEditions.com](http://www.MyriadEditions.com)

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1. Does the novel approach the contentious subject matter of the Troubles in a new way? Can you relate to it?
2. How central is the relationship between Aoife and her brother Damien to the narrative?
3. Is Cassie a sympathetic character? Does she have any redeeming qualities?
4. At what point did you realise how the two storylines were connected? Did it feel like a sudden 'twist' or a gradual realisation?
5. Does the open-ended conclusion to the novel appeal to you or would you have preferred more closure?
6. How does the fact that the main character, Aoife, is a teenager during the worst of the violence affect the ways in which the events of the novel are presented?
7. Does the fact that the author is male and the main character is female impact upon your reading of the novel as a whole, or Aoife as a character?
8. Were you shocked by Cassie's method of revenge? How realistic do you think it is, in the context of the Troubles violence?
9. Do you think Cathy's addiction to medication is understandable given the trauma she endures?
10. Is Shay a good father?
11. Of the two narratives, Aoife and Cassie, do you have a favourite? If so, why?
12. Has the novel deepened or changed your understanding of the Troubles?
13. What does the character of Becky add to the novel?
14. Does Ciáran redeem himself during the course of the novel?
15. Do you think that Baldy holds stronger convictions than Cassie? If so, what are these founded upon?
16. How important is the setting? Does a sense of Belfast, as a place, emerge?
17. To what degree is sex and sexuality used as a weapon?
18. Does Aoife's transformation feel justified, or understandable?
19. Does the novel 'take a side' in the Troubles conflict? Could it be described as a Republican or Loyalist book?
20. What fate would you welcome for Cassie at the end of the book? And Aaron?