

# A Ladder to the Sky

*author: John Boyne*

---

2026-08

## Synopsis

---

| author     | John Boyne                                                        |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| readBy     | Richard E. Grant, Richard Cordery, Nina Sosanya, Laurence Kennedy |
| inLanguage | english                                                           |

**“A satire of writerly ambition wrapped in a psychological thriller . . . An homage to Patricia Highsmith, Oscar Wilde and Edgar Allan Poe, but its execution is entirely Boyne’s own.”**—Ron Charles, *The Washington Post*

**NAMED ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY *THE WASHINGTON POST* AND *MINNEAPOLIS STAR TRIBUNE***

Maurice Swift is handsome, charming, and hungry for fame. The one thing he doesn’t have is talent—but he’s not about to let a detail like that stand in his way. After all, a would-be writer can find stories anywhere. They don’t need to be his own.

Working as a waiter in a West Berlin hotel in 1988, Maurice engineers the perfect opportunity: a chance encounter with celebrated novelist Erich Ackermann. He quickly ingratiates himself with the powerful—but desperately lonely—older man, teasing out of Erich a terrible, long-held secret about his activities during the war. Perfect material for Maurice’s first novel.

Once Maurice has had a taste of literary fame, he knows he can stop at nothing in pursuit of that high. Moving from the Amalfi Coast, where he matches wits with Gore Vidal, to Manhattan and London, Maurice hones his talent for deceit and manipulation, preying on the talented and vulnerable in his cold-blooded climb to the top. But the higher he climbs, the further he has to fall. . . .

Sweeping across the late twentieth century, *A Ladder to the Sky* is a fascinating portrait of a relentlessly immoral man, a tour de force of storytelling, and the next great novel from an acclaimed literary virtuoso.

**Praise for *A Ladder to the Sky***

“Boyne’s mastery of perspective, last seen in *The Heart’s Invisible Furies*, works beautifully here. . . . Boyne understands that it’s far more interesting and satisfying for a reader to see that narcissist in action than to be told a catchall phrase. Each step Maurice Swift takes skyward reveals a new layer of calumny he’s willing to engage in, and the desperation behind it

. . . so dark it seems almost impossible to enjoy reading *A Ladder to the Sky* as much as you definitely will enjoy reading it.â€•**â€”NPR**  
Delicious . . . spins out over several decades with thrilling unpredictability, following Maurice as he masters the art of co-opting the stories of others in increasingly dubious ways. And while the book reads as a thriller with a body count that would make Highsmith proud, it is also an exploration of morality and art: Where is the line between inspiration and thievery? To whom does a story belong?**â€•***Vanity Fair*

# Reader's comments

---

comment 1:

â€"â€" ()