

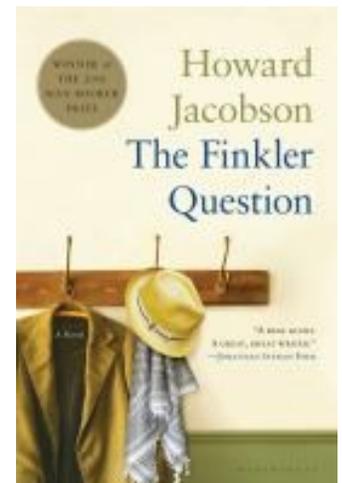


The Finkler Question

Howard Jacobson

Discussion Questions

1. What's wrong with Julian Treslove? Why has his life been such a disappointment? What is missing in him?
2. How does Julian view his friend Sam Finkler? Why does Julian consider him a prototype of Jews? What is the catalog of traits he ascribes to "the Finklers"?
3. What is the significance of the mugging incident, and why does it awaken Julian's desire to become Jewish?
4. Do you find Julian's regard for Judaism funny, endearing, or disturbing? Is he anti-semitic? Can you tell if (or when) he's joking?
5. Describe the contrasting stances on Israel and Judaism taken by Sam and Libor Sevcik? Why, for instance, won't Sam even use the word "Israel"? What are the range of positions on the Israel-Palestine question? Whom do you side with?
6. What is the significance of the book's title, the "Finkler Question"?
7. Does Jewish exceptionalism exist? What are the arguments for or against?
8. There is a lot of wit in this book. What did you find especially funny—when Libor, for instance, tells Julian at the Lewis Carroll Seder (!) that "the chicken symbolizes the pleasure Jewish men take in having a team of women to cook it for them"? What about Sam's bestselling book titles?
9. Is there far too much rumination, navel-gazing, or self-analysis in this book? Do you find it tedious...or does Jacobson's humor enliven the book's introspection?
10. Is this book a comedy or tragedy?





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About the Author

Howard Jacobson is a British author and journalist, best known for his comic novels that often revolve around the dilemmas of British Jewish characters. Born in Manchester, Jacobson was brought up in Prestwich and was educated at Stand Grammar School in Whitefield, before going on to study English at Downing College, Cambridge under F. R. Leavis. He lectured for three years at the University of Sydney before returning to England to teach at Selwyn College, Cambridge. His later teaching posts included a stint at Wolverhampton Polytechnic in the 1970s.

As well as writing fiction, he also contributes a weekly column for *The Independent* newspaper as an op-ed writer. In October 2010 Jacobson won the Man Booker Prize for his novel *The Finkler Question*, which was the first comic novel to win the prize since Kingsley Amis's *The Old Devils* in 1986. The book, published by Bloomsbury, explores what it means to be Jewish today and is also about "love, loss and male friendship." Andrew Motion, the chair of the judges, said: "*The Finkler Question* is a marvellous book: very funny, of course, but also very clever, very sad and very subtle. It is all that it seems to be and much more than it seems to be. A completely worthy winner of this great prize." Jacobson—at the age of 68—was the oldest winner since William Golding in 1980.

Jacobson's 2014 dystopian novel, *J*, was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize.

This book is available for download as an eBook. For more information, please visit lpl.overdrive.com or call 519-661-4600.