

## Reader's Guide to *All Fall Down*

### Summary

When small-town real estate mogul Dickie Sutcliff is found dead one night in his office, nobody really questions the circumstances—his death is considered accidental by everyone except Reverend Bryce Orr, the unconventional minister who presides over the funeral. Spurred into action both by the suspicions of Dickie's girlfriend and his own curiosity, Bryce turns to the residents of Furnass, Pennsylvania, to uncover the truth. Although readers may be able to guess the identity of the murderer early on, many of the characters, including Bryce, remain in the dark. Reminiscent in this way of several of Agatha Christie's iconic murder mysteries, *All Fall Down* quickly becomes both a whodunit and a "whydunit": Who else in Furnass knew the truth about what happened that night? What possible motive could there have been for this crime? Told through multiple perspectives, the novel allows readers to gradually unearth the answers and discover just how deep some allegiances can run. The third installment in Richard Snodgrass's Furnass Towers series, *All Fall Down* is a compelling and complex read that grapples with the intricate concepts of morality, loyalty, and vengeance.

### Questions and Topics for Discussion

1. How does the information offered in the italic passages set this work apart from other novels in the mystery genre? In what ways does the author maintain the suspense of the story despite disclosing key information at the beginning?
2. Do you feel Kim truly acted in self-defense during the violent altercation with his father? How does your opinion relate to your views of acting in self-defense in general, both within this novel and in your own life?
3. *All Fall Down* contains detailed descriptions of architecture and interior design from the perspectives of many characters. What do you feel is the significance of these passages? In what ways do these descriptions contribute to the development of various characters and their experiences in Furnass?
4. How does humor, particularly as introduced by Bryce's character, work with the dramatic nature of the plot? Why do you think the author chose Bryce as the primary comedic outlet in this novel?
5. What theories regarding the motive for Dickie's death did you develop as you read? How did these theories change as more information was revealed?
6. While reflecting on past events, Kim thinks to himself, "The world isn't about thinking; it's about acting. Doing whatever needs to be done, whenever it needs to be done." Do any other characters in *All Fall Down* seem to abide by this mind-set? Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

7. How does Kim's relationship with Cory add depth to his character? In what ways has his past influenced this relationship?
8. Do you think Julian's loyalty to Kim is based on fear or genuine respect? Discuss the ways in which this friendship changes as the book progresses.
9. How do you think the rivalry between the Sutcliffs and the Lyles affected Julian's reaction to Dickie's death? Do you think Julian would have reacted as he did if someone other than Dickie had been murdered?
10. Discuss the similarities between Tinker and Julian, especially within the context of their ties both to each other and to Dickie. In what ways do these similarities create problems for the two toward the end of the novel?

### **About the Author**

*Richard Snodgrass's* short stories and essays have appeared in the *New England Review*, *Bread Loaf Quarterly*, *South Dakota Review*, *California Review*, and other publications. He is the recipient of a fellowship from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts and has been artist in residence at Light Work, in Syracuse, New York, and at the Helene Wurlitzer Foundation, in Taos, New Mexico. His other books include *An Uncommon Field: The Flight 93 Temporary Memorial*, published in September of 2011 by Carnegie Mellon University Press, and *Kitchen Things: An Album of Vintage Utensils and Farm Kitchen Recipes*, published in 2013 by Skyhorse and named one of the year's "best books to get you thinking about food" by the Associated Press.