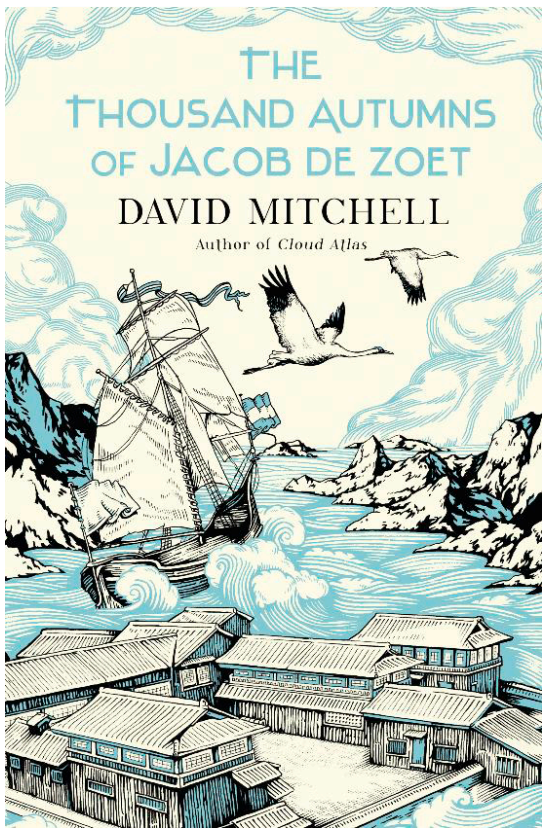




Reader's Guide



Other books by David Mitchell

Ghostwritten (1999)
number9dream (2001)
Cloud Atlas (2004)
Black Swan Green (2006)

The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet David Mitchell

Sceptre
Price £18.99

www.themanbookerprize.com

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About the author

David Mitchell was born in Southport in January, 1969. His first novel, *Ghostwritten* (1999), won the *Mail on Sunday*/John Llewellyn Rhys Prize for the best book by a writer under 35 and was also shortlisted for the *Guardian* First Book Award. His second novel, *number9dream*, was shortlisted for the 2001 Man Booker Prize as well as the James Tait Black Memorial Prize, and in 2003, he was chosen as one of Granta's Best of Young British Novelists. His third novel, *Cloud Atlas*, won the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize, the South Bank Show Literature Prize, and the Best Literary Fiction and Richard & Judy Best Read of the Year categories in the British Book Awards. It was shortlisted for a further six awards including the Man Booker Prize and the Commonwealth Writers Prize. His fourth novel, *Black Swan Green*, was longlisted for the Man Booker Prize and shortlisted for the Costa Prize. David Mitchell now lives in Ireland.

The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet

Japan, 1799; Jacob de Zoet arrives on Dejima in Nagasaki harbour. For over 150 years this artificial island, manned by the Dutch East India Company, has been the only point of contact between Japan and Europe. The foreign traders are forbidden to leave the island whilst the Japanese may not travel beyond their native land. Yet through the porthole of Dejima the new learning of the Enlightenment seeps into the Shogun's cloistered realm while tales of a mysterious land seep out. As a junior clerk, de Zoet's task is to uncover evidence of the previous Chief Resident's malpractice. Ostracised by his compatriots, he befriends a local interpreter and becomes drawn to one of the few women on the island, a midwife with a scarred face who is granted permission to study under the Company physician. But in the battles for supremacy on Dejima and the mainland, and between the Dutch and British on the high seas, trust is betrayed and loyalties are tested to breaking point.

At once a love story, an adventure, a study of power and corruption, and a glimpse into a hidden world, *The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet* brings to vivid life the ordinary - and extraordinary - people caught up in a tectonic shift between East and West. It is an historical novel unlike any other from one of the brightest talents writing in the English language.

Discussion points

Would you describe *The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet* as a 'conventional historical novel'?

David Mitchell told a Japanese newspaper, "My intention is to write a bicultural novel, where Japanese perspectives are given an equal weight to Dutch/European perspectives". Do you think that he succeeded?

Some reviewers have commented that David Mitchell doesn't have an authentic voice of his own, whilst others describe him as a skilled ventriloquist. In *The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet* which of the two did you discover?

Like other David Mitchell novels *The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet* frequently changes style, tone and mood. How does this impact on the reading experience?

Do you agree with the reviewer who said, 'the novel celebrates open-mindedness' Peter Kemp, *The Sunday Times*

Themed reading

Simon Schama *The Embarrassment of Riches*
Thomas Pynchon *Mason & Dixon*
Haruki Murakami *Norwegian Wood*
Margaret Atwood *The Handmaids Tale*

Useful links

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www.hodder.co.uk
www.thousandautumns.com
www.complete-review.com/reviews/mitchelld/1000aut.htm#summaries