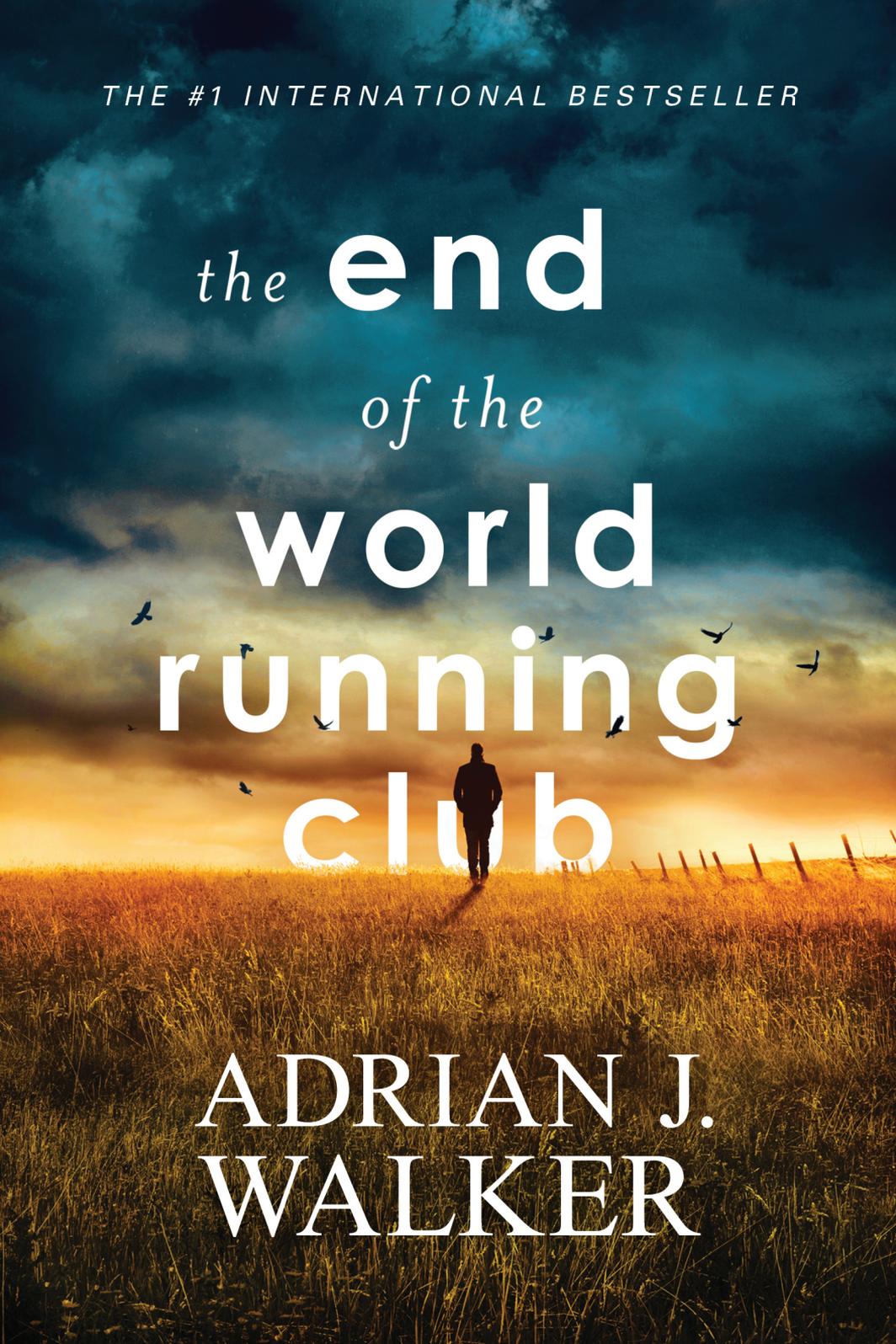


THE #1 INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLER

the **end**
of the
world
running
club

A person is seen from behind, running through a field of tall, golden grass towards a bright sunset. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and dark blue, with several birds in flight. The overall mood is one of freedom and endurance.

ADRIAN J.
WALKER

Reading Group Guide

1. *The End of the World Running Club* centers around the apocalypse but with very human themes. How did you relate to the characters and situations in the book?
2. Edgar Hill is a very flawed human being, but he achieves something remarkable. Would you call him a hero? Why or why not?
3. In an age full of streaming news, changing politics, and constant stimulation, how do you envision the world reacting to an announcement of impending doom? How would you prepare yourself?
4. Desperation and survival lead decent people into dark actions, but are there any survivors Edgar meets that you cannot forgive? What is the difference between a girl like Gloria and a woman like Jenny Rae?
5. The cast mostly comprises male characters, but there are some

very important females that feature in both Edgar's personal life and his journey in the book. Do you feel that they were portrayed fairly, clearly, or thoroughly?

6. What recurring symbols or themes did you see throughout the book, and how do you feel they support Edgar's journey or development?
7. Edgar meets many people in his run across the country, from Harvey to Lord Bartonmouth. What did they all contribute to Edgar's transformation, and who do you think was the most important?
8. If you could only choose five things to save at the end of the world (not including food and water), what would they be and why?
9. The ending is ambiguous on who is buried under the three crosses. How do you think the story concludes for Edgar, and what leads you to that conclusion?

A Conversation with the Author

What was your inspiration for *The End of the World Running Club*?

I have had an unhealthy interest in postapocalyptic literature ever since I read *Lucifer's Hammer* as a teenager, so I always knew I wanted to write something in that genre. I also got into running in my twenties, especially off-road endurance running, and reading about the psychological effects that long distances can have on an athlete. When I became a father in my thirties, the idea of combining the apocalypse, running, and parenthood seemed to come naturally.

To which character do you feel closest?

Ed, since I wrote it from his perspective, although we're not the same person! I share much of his introspection and views on the world, but I'm not nearly as gloomy and (I hope) I'm a more capable father. Perhaps Ed is who I might have become had I not discovered running.

I feel close to all the characters, though. I think you need to put a bit of yourself in everyone you write, otherwise they don't sound genuine.

How do you envision the apocalypse?

In *The End of the World Running Club*, I tried to make the event itself as real as possible; that visceral feeling of *Is this really happening?* and *What the hell do we do now?*

If we survived something major like an asteroid strike, my hope is that after the initial confusion, panic, and conflict, we would be forced into simpler and more harmonious ways of existing.

Do you have a plan for when you see STRIKE IMMINENT?

Run for the hills!

No, not really...but my family and I lived in Texas for a year or so and I had great fun putting together a disaster preparedness box in case of hurricanes. I went a little overboard—the staff of Home Depot must have thought I knew something they didn't.

Do you have a personal preference for how a reader should interpret the ending?

I have had quite a few emails from readers on this subject, one or two of which were genuinely chilling because I hadn't thought of that particular interpretation before! The views seem to range between the hopeful, the bizarre, and the downright miserable. My preference is on the happier end of the spectrum.

What draws you to the postapocalyptic and science-fiction genres?

The main reason for my interest in apocalyptic literature is that a global cataclysm gives you a level playing field on which to explore characters and relationships without the small stuff getting in the

way. That's why the best PA books (e.g. *The Road*, *The Stand*, and, more recently, *Station Eleven* by Emily St. John Mandel and *The Last of Us* by Rob Ewing) are just as much character-driven as they are plot-driven.

How long have you been writing?

On and off since I was a teenager. I spent a month in my twenties on a remote beach in New Zealand trying to write a novel, but I was thirty before I had enough to write about! I've been writing full-time since 2013.

Are you an outliner or a "pantser"?

I've tried both and I'm definitely an outliner. I need to know what I'm aiming for, right down to the final scene.

However, I do "pants" within scenes. The screenwriter John Logan tells a great story about when he was writing *Gladiator* and he realized that he had not yet put Commodus and Lucilla alone in a room together. He started writing with no idea what would happen, and that scene turned out to be the one where Commodus kisses his sister. There are some things you just can't plan for on a storyboard.

What do you love most about writing?

I spend a lot of my time thinking and daydreaming, so writing means I get to do this for a living. It's also a way of exorcising fears and neuroses. If I didn't write, my head would be full.

Who is your favorite author and why?

I tend to have favorite books rather than favorite authors, but I

would include David Mitchell, Douglas Adams, Glen Duncan, and Zadie Smith in my top five.

Do you have any writing rituals?

When I wrote *The End of the World Running Club*, I wore a pair of heavy duty boots and a Fender baseball cap. No idea why. Now I just write in a small space with the door closed. I try to write as early as possible in the morning—5:00 a.m. is best—and I always scribble out a sketch of what I'm going to write before I start. I've also recently started to storyboard on A3 sheets, which helps me break down the work and juggle the shape of the narrative.

What do you do when you're not writing?

My life is fairly simple so when I'm not writing, I'm either spending time with my family, walking the dog, or running. My local pub puts on a good mix of live bands, so you'll sometimes find me there on a Thursday evening.

I love music and have a growing collection of guitars, which I play when I get stuck writing. (I wrote a theme to *The End of the World Running Club* when I was writing the book, which my UK publishers included on the audiobook.)

My wife believes that when there are more guitars in the house than mammals then you have a problem. I don't think she's thought this through.