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Spotlight on Books:

Do Not Say We Have Nothing: A Novel by Madeleine Thien

Autumn brings a lot of excitement to the publishing and literary worlds as writers vie for various prestigious awards. The Man Booker shortlist was announced earlier this week and includes two Canadians – Madeleine Thien (*Do Not Say We Have Nothing*) and Canadian-born Hungary-based author David Szalay (*All That Man Is*). The Man Booker award was founded in 1969 and was originally open to writers from Britain, Ireland and the Commonwealth and in 2014 was expanded to include all English-language authors. This international prize carries with it an \$87,000 prize.

Madeleine Thien is considered one of Canada's most talented authors and *Do Not Say We Have Nothing* will solidify her stellar reputation. While *Do Not Say We Have Nothing* could be categorized as historical fiction it is never weighed down by detail. Narrated by a character we know as Marie, who resides in Vancouver, the novel reaches back to China's civil war, the 1989 massacre at Tiananmen Square and carries the reader along to the present day. The story revolves around her father, his mentor (Sparrow the composer), and Sparrow's cousin, the violinist Zhuli, all three of whom were studying at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music at the start of Mao's Cultural Revolution. The conflict between their creative needs and the political prohibitions around composing and performing music that originated prior to the Revolution is chillingly portrayed. Thien's characters inspire us with their tenacity as they cling to the music they love despite persecution.

Do Not Say We Have Nothing is both thoughtful and harrowing; Thien's prose is luminous and it is no surprise that this novel has also been longlisted for Canada's Scotia Bank Giller Prize. It is available for checkout from Yellowknife Public Library's display of shortlisted Man Booker titles but will not last long so hurry!

- *Review prepared by Deborah Bruser, Library Manager*

