

## May 2026

*Seascraper* is a 2025 novel by Benjamin Wood. It was longlisted for the Booker 2025 prize.

*Seascraper* begins by introducing us to Thomas Flett, a young man in a Northern English coastal town in the 1960s who works in the seemingly already slightly anachronistic profession of a “shanker”, using a horse and cart to collect shrimp in often hazardous conditions from a beach littered with “sinkpits”. He lives with his mother, who had him as a teenager and has been shunned by the local community. She relies on him to earn money, which he does through his unsociable, repetitive and physically exhausting work.



As a character he also feels somewhat ageless, even old, until the fog lifts a little and we start to situate him as a young man in the 1960s, but one who could not be more adrift from the ‘swinging’ sixties of the popular imagination.

The arrival of Edgar Acheson at Thomas’ doorstep swings the book into a different gear. Suddenly, here is a glamorous and garrulous American with tales of Hollywood, bearing decadent gifts and a promise of a reward far in excess of that Thomas receives from his daily toil. Thomas is intrigued enough to take him up on his offer, and soon forms an intriguing kind of friendship with the visitor. Edgar’s enthusiastic tales of creative passion stir in him a sense of the world beyond his doorstep, and that his secretive passion for playing folk music in his bedroom on his battered guitar could be something more than just an idle pastime.

It is in many ways telling a story we have heard before - a kind of coming of age or awakening for a young working class character who suddenly has his creative potential unlocked by an external instigating force or character - but it’s the way in which it goes about telling that tale that makes *Seascraper* so magical and memorable. In its relatively few pages we see a kind of reverse aging in Thomas, as he first sinks as deep as it’s possible to go into his treacherous, inhospitable landscape and with that immersion gains a new understanding of his own history, before then emerging almost reborn, a new man with endless possibilities on the horizon.

The group was unanimous in their summing up of the book. “Beautiful coming of age” “gentle, quiet novel” “delightful and sensory” “atmospheric and lyrical” “claustrophobic and intense” “optimistic” and the author a very skilled storyteller to create so much emotion and completeness in only 162 pages. The dream sequence in the novel impressed some, with threads to his deceased father and the imagination in the way it was told was impressive.

The author compiled and sang his Seascraper song in the audio book and whilst some said it was sad, it was a joy to listen to.

**Ratings:** Veronica 5, Lesley 5, Lynda 4.5, Viv 4.5, Janet 4.5, Margie 4.5, Dianne 4, Kim 4, Hetta 4, Kali 4, Nicola 4

## Other Books We Read

Lessons in Chemistry by Bonnie Garmus 5

BBC audio recording of Much Ado about Nothing 5

Remains of the Day and Never Let Me Go by Kazuo Ishiguro 5 for each

Project Hail Mary by Andy Weir 3.5

The Butterfly Man by Heather Rose, 4.5

The Museum of Modern Love, 3.5

My Friends by Fedrik Backman, 2.5

An Awfully Big Adventure by Beryl Bainbridge, 0.5

Flashlight by Susan Choi, 4

The Loneliness of Sonia and Sunny by Kiran Desai, 4

The Boy from the Sea by Garrett Carr, 3.5

A Station on the Path to Somewhere Better by Benjamin Wood, 4

She who Remains by Rene Karabash, 4

The Land in Winter by Andrew Miller, 3.5

The things we never say by Elizabeth Stroud, 4

One day, everyone will have always been against this by Omar El Akkad, 4.5

The Mushroom MTapes by Helen Garner, Sarah Krasnostein and Chloe Hooper, 3.5

The Conclave by Robert Harris, 3.5

Wilding by Isabella Tree, 4.5

Mother Mary Comes to me by Arundhati Roy, 4

Dandelion Wine by Ray Bradbury 3.5

The Funeral Crashers by Joanna Nell 3.5