

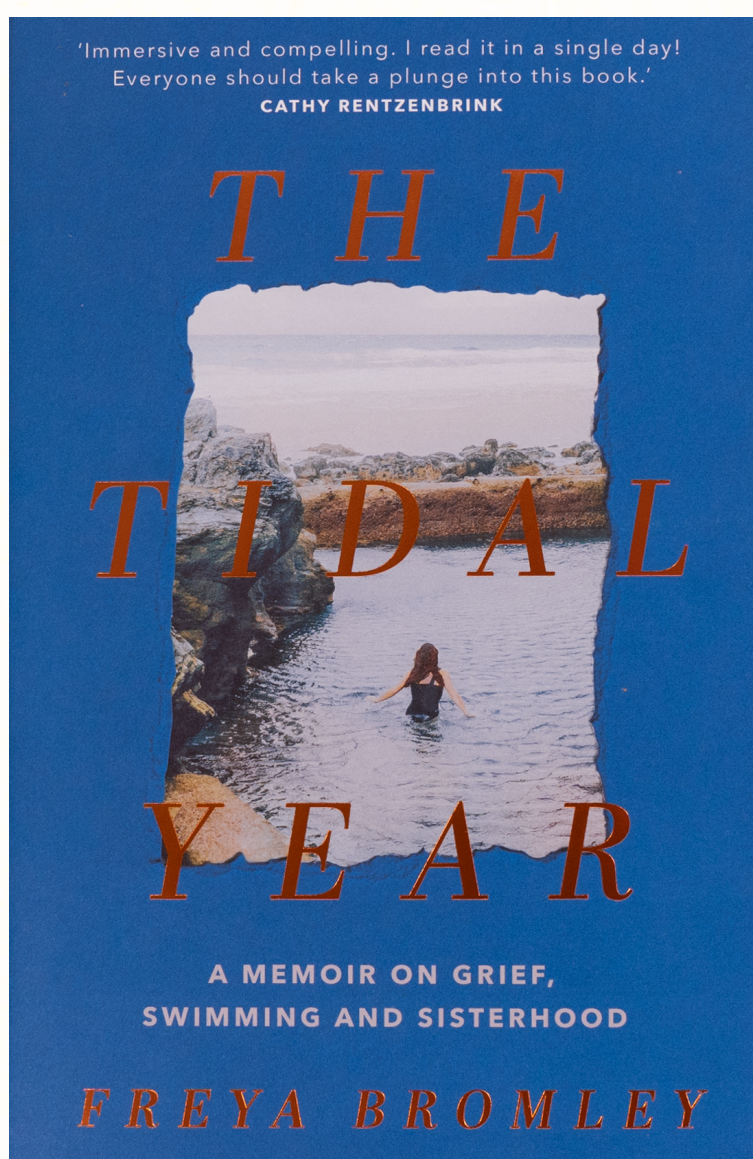
NERO

BOOK AWARDS

Reading Guides

Non-Fiction Shortlist

The Tidal Year by Freya Bromley



Freya Bromley is a writer, wild swimmer and podcaster. She lives in London, just a short cycle from Brockwell Lido. On her podcast, *The Tidal Year*, Freya discovers the human stories behind why we swim. Freya is currently studying on the Creative Writing Master of Studies at Cambridge University. *The Tidal Year* is her first book.

'An honest, open and, in places, darkly comic look at grief, and how one woman's loss led to a UK-wide, coastline adventure.' - **Non-Fiction judges, 2023 Nero Book Awards**

'I pulled the water over me like a blanket. It was warmer submerged in the water than exposed on the wind-lashed coast. Just metres away, the waves tugged at their leash like a hungry dog. We lingered a while and the tide bounded towards us, ready to swallow the stillness of the pool. It broke over barnacles and fossils, then showered us with seawater like a blessing.'

Four years after she loses her younger brother to cancer, Freya Bromley is still grieving, and still trying to make sense of her loss. Always a keen swimmer, she challenges herself to swim every tidal pool in Britain in a year, a way to fill the empty space her brother's death has left behind. Setting out from London with her friend Miri, Freya journeys from Cornwall to Caithness, Swansea to Somerset; criss-crossing the country on what becomes a journey of self-discovery as well as a search for respite and refuge. Rather than taking her further away from the loss of her brother, Bromley discovers that the further she swims, the closer she draws her memories of him to herself.

Honest and intimate, *The Tidal Year* is a thoughtful book that resists categorisation as a grief or swimming memoir. Instead, Bromley has written movingly, and with humour, about the resilience of both humans and the

natural world.

A love letter to family, female friendship as well as the power of wild swimming, Bromley documents the ways in which grief can seep into every corner of life but also how swimming in nature creates space inside us for hope and reconnection with ourselves and others.

Discussion points:

- Can you recall a time when immersing yourself in water, or in nature more generally helped you heal from a difficult experience? Can you describe what it was about being in water that was healing for you?
- Freya Bromley's descriptions of the places she swims in are very evocative. For example, she describes the Ladies Pond in Hampstead Heath as an amber spyglass, and a tidal pool in Cornwall as being like a saucer of milk. Did these images resonate with you?
- Having read this book, do you feel like your attitude to grief has changed? Do you feel like you would be better able to support someone grieving?