

# NERO

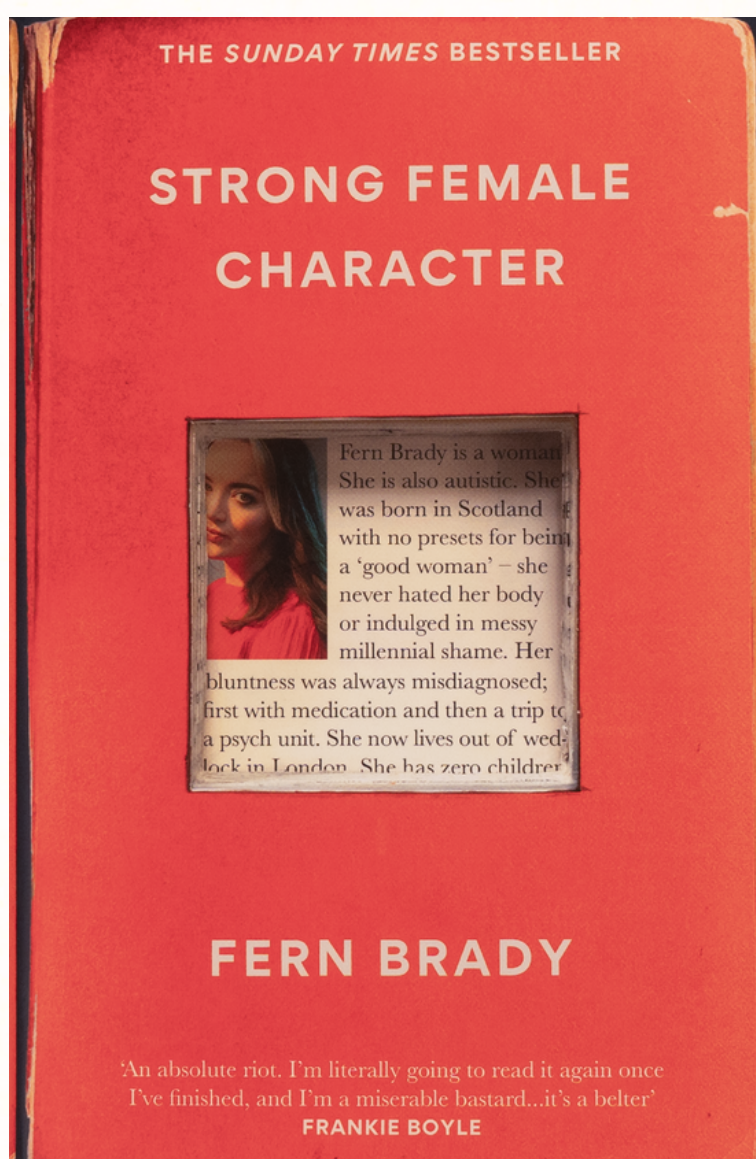
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## BOOK AWARDS

## Reading Guides

### Non-Fiction Shortlist

#### *Strong Female Character* by Fern Brady



Taskmaster fan-favourite **Fern Brady** is known for her caustic wit, exceptional writing and electric stagecraft. Her debut memoir, *Strong Female Character*, discusses everything from her Catholic upbringing, to homelessness, to her late diagnosis of autism and much more, is a *Sunday Times* Bestseller. As seen on *The Russell Howard Hour*, *Live at the Apollo* and *Live from the BBC*.

*'A savagely funny, beautifully written and fearlessly honest book that is as inspiring as it is hilarious.'* - **Non-Fiction judges, 2023 Nero Book Awards**

*'If you've ever been on a night out where you got blackout drunk and have laughed the next day as your friends tell you all the stupid stuff you said, that's what being autistic feels like for me: one long blackout night of drinking except there's no socially sanctioned excuse for your gaffes and no one is laughing.'*

Aged 34, Fern Brady is diagnosed with Autism, but this comes as no surprise to her. Growing up working class in West Lothian, Scotland she is most definitely the odd one out in her family...and at school, university, and work.

A raw and sometimes outrageous memoir, in *Strong Female Character* Brady looks back on a life shaped by the neurodiversity that went undetected by teachers and medical professionals alike, from the obsessive, self-inflicted grammar drills that won her a place to study languages at Edinburgh University, to working as a stripper to pay her way through her degree.

Now a hugely successful stand-up comedian, Brady's path to success has been anything but smooth. Unafraid to reveal the darker parts of herself, Brady's self-awareness and candour regarding her struggles with poor mental health, addiction, poverty and homelessness are as moving

to read as they are shocking. Taking her own experiences as a starting point, *Strong Female Character* offers a clear-eyed analysis of why women, especially those from working-class backgrounds, are so routinely failed. But Brady's dry and dark humour suffuses every page resulting in a memoir as hilarious as it is heart-breaking.

#### Discussion points:

- Fern Brady is brutally honest about her promiscuity and her struggles with addiction, homelessness and self-harm. How did this make you feel while reading?
- In the book, Brady says of working as a stripper that "I liked that in a strip club men's contempt of you was out in the open. In the outside world, misogyny was always hovering in your peripheral vision." Do you agree with Brady's take on misogyny?
- How, if at all, has *Strong Female Character* changed your understanding of autism? Do you think that the book can be helpful to other young autistic women?