

Yer Name Here  
Poetry/Fiction  
Paddy Clarke

### No More Laughing for Paddy

Roddy Doyle's Paddy Clarke HA HA HA was a beautifully written book. It perfectly captures the mind of a ten year old boy in Ireland during the mid-1960's. Paddy Clarke, the young boy who Doyle uses to enter the mind of a ten year old, is a boy who most can relate to. The book explores most aspects of life through the eyes of Paddy. Doyle takes us through childhood and childhood's end. Doyle is able to seize the complexities of life, but at the same time simplify them enough for ten year old.

Everything is a mystery or an adventure to Paddy and his friends. From taking over construction sites to receiving polio check-ups. However not everything is a game to Paddy. His parents lack of compatibility troubles Paddy and his brother Sinbad greatly. The intensity of his parents arguments accelerate as the book goes on. At times Paddy feels he can stop them, at one point he considers himself a "referee" in the fights. "I didn't know what I'd do. If I was there he wouldn't do it again, that was all."(p.191) He ends up contemplating who he would want to win. He comes to the conclusion that he would want his mom to win because she does so much for him, however his father is his father and he loves him.

Sinbad reacts differently to his parents fighting. He doesn't try to intervene or stop them. In fact he closes up, he implodes emotionally. He cuts himself off from everyone. During one of their parents arguments Paddy tries to talk to Sinbad, but Sinbad shuts himself off. "'Sinbad?' He didn't answer. He wasn't asleep though, I knew the breathing. I could hear him listening. I didn't move. I didn't want him to think I was going to get him." (p.222)

This drama did not effect me as much as the daily life. The fights I could not relate to. I had never experienced arguments of such high caliber. But inevitably I had experienced the life of a ten year old. I could relate to Paddy's reactions to certain situations at school. For instance when Paddy and his grade are in line to receive check-ups a joke is made and Paddy says, " I laughed harder than I had to. We all did" (p.144).

Doyle was able to allow me to not just be a reader but an actor. He was able to make me believe that I was part of Paddy Clarke. Just the way the book was set up brought me closer to the days of being ten. The book was formatted like Paddy's

mind.

Jumping from thought to thought and scene to scene. This low attention span was what really brought me in to Doyle's world.

I believe that this book won the Booker Prize because of the way the book is able to avoid sentiment but touch on the important aspects of being ten. Doyle is able to take the life of a young boy and make it interesting, humorous, and most of all meaningful. It touches on subjects of life that adults still have trouble conquering. "Why do people not like each other?" is a question Paddy poses in the book. What seems to be a simple question asked in an innocent way, is actually a question that has stumped many. It may seem redundant, but the true reason the book is so powerful is how all the elements are put together to form this masterpiece. Not many books allow the reader to feel like you are one of the characters.

The most puzzling part of the book is the title. Paddy Clarke HA HA HA appears to simple enough but it is loaded with meaning. The title is only used once in the book and it is on the second to last page. "Paddy Clarke, Paddy Clarke has no da. Ha ha ha!" The book deals with Paddy shedding his childhood ways and taking on the responsibilities of adulthood. A significant part of how the title is placed in the book is the line right after it. Paddy says, "I didn't listen to them. They were only kids." Earlier in the book Paddy was often making fun of other kids. He was convinced his family was perfect. But now when things are not so perfect and Paddy is forced to step up as man of the house, he crosses over the line into adulthood. Instead of retaliating like he would have done earlier in the book, Paddy simply does the mature thing and ignores them. The key phrase is "does the mature thing". Finally Paddy has shed the coat of childhood. And to back this thesis up even further on the last page of the book Paddy sees his father after a long period of his parents being separated. He address him with a handshake and a "how are you?". To me this truly defined his maturity.

Roddy Doyle truly touched me through Paddy Clarke. Very seldomly do you get to finish a book with such a sense of fulfillment, but yet a yearning for more. It is a feeling that is seldom used. Doyle was able to stir up memories, thoughts, opinions, and emotions I had forgot I had. He was able to bring me back to the good old days of innocence and exploration, he was able to make me ten again.

