



England's Lane

Joseph Connolly

Download now

Read Online ➔

England's Lane

Joseph Connolly

England's Lane Joseph Connolly

Jim and Milly. Stan and Jane. Jonathan and Fiona. Winter, 1959.

Three married couples: each living in England's Lane, each with an only child, and each attending to family, and their livelihoods--the ironmonger, the sweetshop and the butcher.

Each of them hiding their lies, disguising sin, and coping in the only way they know how.

England's Lane Details

Date : Published September 1st 2012 by Quercus Books (first published January 1st 2012)

ISBN : 9781780877181

Author : Joseph Connolly

Format : Hardcover 422 pages

Genre : Fiction, Humor



[Download England's Lane ...pdf](#)



[Read Online England's Lane ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online England's Lane Joseph Connolly

From Reader Review England's Lane for online ebook

Mike Clarke says

Marriages like gated estates, to which casual visitors are barred, only allowed the briefest of glimpses past the Business As Usual facade behind which nothing remotely normal is occurring.

Connolly's novel exposes the abnormal in the intertwined lives of three such couple, who live around England's Lane in Hampstead in the 1950s. The constrained and fearful way people lived in postwar England, with its hypocritical public morality and insular dullness - as though society were seeking a safety first approach after the horror and challenge of war - is emphasised in the claustrophobic feel of this book with its internalised dialogues revealing the fears and desires of its subjects.

Connolly veers between Joycean soliloquy, with Milly's encounter with the sexually predatory butcher Jonathan recalling Molly Bloom, and Maeve Binchy's ability to 'listen in' on conversations in a naturalistic way. At times the stream of consciousness becomes a torrent that threatens to overwhelm but the setting is so vividly brought to life, and Connolly just about maintains control, pulling it back from the brink.

England's Lane really comes to life when describing place and you don't need to be familiar with this small corner of north London to get under the skin of the neighbourhood, as it's as much a proxy for every high street that's been all but obliterated by the forward march of out of town shopping malls, Starbucks and an influx of charity shops. Reminding us that there was life before everything looked the same is a worthwhile task accomplished here with wit and warmth.

Nadine Wiseman says

England on the cusp between two eras; the post-war 1950s habits of austerity, coping, and make-do-and-mend are dying hard, but dying all the same. Morality is muddled - Milly married a man she didn't know at all, thinking he might never return from the war. He did though, and now she finds she doesn't actually like him very much. She has a passionate affair, and he seeks comfort from a motherly prostitute. England's Lane is a book of voices, inner voices, that never stop worrying, analysing, scheming, rationalising, self-justifying, pontificating, soul-searching and questioning. Endless inner monologues; sometimes brutally honest and sometimes blatantly self-deceptive. We watch them weave and crash in and out of one another's lives and hear their running commentary, like a soap opera of the soul. I really enjoyed this book even though it was occasionally, fleetingly difficult to realise when one "speaker" had segued into another. All human life is here - Milly's Jim, the grubby but honest ironmonger, lonely and isolated by his clever wife and Paul, her nephew-at-the-posh-school who lives with them following the death of his parents; timid Stan and the bleakly silent Jane in the sweet shop, and their crippled boy, Anthony; and the mysteriously incongruous Fiona and Jonathan with their daughter, Amanda, in the butcher's shop where there is far more going on than meets the eye. There is some glorious use of language; the absurd pomposity and loquaciousness of Jonathan undoubtedly my favourite. Jonathan's inner world is magnificently vile, he adores himself and you get the impression that when he fucks one of his many women on the side, it is his own marvellous image in their eyes that he is most turned on by. And Jonathan is, it turns out, a very bad man...I would like to read a sequel featuring the children as adults: Paul, Amanda and Anthony. Where do they end up? What becomes of them? How were they affected by the carryings-on of their parents?

Deborah says

I liked the cover and I really enjoyed the bits and pieces of social history. The plot was clever, as was the technique of recording characters' thoughts as if one were reading their minds. But that was also one of the problems I had, since I sometimes found it over-written and difficult to follow easily because some of the speech mannerisms were unfamiliar. However, what really lowered my opinion of the book was the not-so-subtle racism. I'm not sure if it was intentional (god forbid!) but in trying to represent attitudes and behaviours of the time, the author seemed to be endorsing them. I hope I'm not being unfair, and I realise that not every book ever written has to try to change the world, and that probably he was simply trying to be accurate, but the moments that made me very uncomfortable and unhappy could possibly have been balanced by acknowledging the presence of people of colour in Britain for a longer time (just a sentence or two!), but even more so, by making the black characters more multi-dimensional and real instead of just figures (and maybe giving the reader a glimpse into their thoughts). The straw that broke the camel's back was a reference to pawnbrokers as "yids". Anyway, that's my opinion!

Linda says

I am relieved to have finished this overlong book. I felt that the characters were two dimensional and were caricatures of what the author imagined people would be like in 1959. I also felt that the constant product placement of 1950s food, drinks, artefacts etc. was overdone. Using the various characters' voices to tell the story reminded me of a 1950s Ealing comedy and the voices of Jim and Jonathan were particularly tedious. I am also unsure whether Milly's range of vocabulary would be quite so extensive. I did feel that Milly was drawn in a little more detail than some of the other characters, hence I gave it two stars instead of one. I would have abandoned this 532 page novel before the end if I wasn't reading it for book club.

Sheena says

Stirred a lot of memories. I was born in 1958, albeit up North, that's probably why it's reminiscent of my childhood; progress took a little longer to arrive up there. I lived in a terraced street among lots of characters whose stories I partially understood as being a child things were hushed up and only by listening carefully, when grown ups didn't think you were taking any notice, were you able to pick up the gossip, which inevitably, being filtered through a child's understanding sometimes were beyond comprehension and only became clear years later on reflection. If I had the ability of an author such as Joseph Connolly I too could have produced a novel like this one based on the people and their stories I recall in that one street. Connolly captures the feel of the times and sadly attitudes were extremely different then or shall we say were allowed to be expressed in public, whereas now at least society frowns on morally obnoxious views, consequently I can't take task with him for being true to what I remember as presumably he wanted his voices to be authentic and in this I think he succeeded.

Helen Hanschell Pollock says

Never read any of his books before but on the strength of this one I won't be reading anymore. I live in Belsize Park and the author reviews local eateries and wrote such a funny and damning piece on a local hotel which had a new chef and restaurant and knowing England's Lane well I had to take the plunge...He does

write stream of consciousness pieces with his characters, the shopkeepers in the Lane, and it tweaks memories of products and brands commonplace in 1959 but to my mind it has little depth and is rather empty. Best bit is the author's description of what he feels a writer should be;

"The novel...is no more than a baggy contrivance, a ramshackle edifice without foundation-alluring only as is a tawdry bubble, a bright-painted Jezebel jammed and caked with gimcrack coincidence so as to insult the intellect, while peopled by the flimsiest shades that defy all absorption or credulity." Tongue in cheek and the Daily Mail says "May well be his masterpiece."

Ian Mapp says

Just before starting this book, I was following a Literary London Walk that took up from Chalk Farm to Hampstead. In England's Lane was the flat where Alex Garland wrote "the beach" and also rather a darkly lit pub called the Washington, which just had to be called into for a cheeky half.

Two days later, I started this book. The street and pub are main characters of the book.

Set in 1959, it tells the story of three shopkeepers, their families and how they inter-relate to each other.

Once again, Mr Connolly writes in a very distinctive manner - we get right into the characters' heads - what they think and what they say - with the reader provided with little ticks so they know which character it is at anytime. This requires concentration but is ultimately rewarding.

The families run a hardware shop (Jim and Milly), a sweet shop (Stan and Jane) and the Butchers (Jonathan and Fiona).

Each person has got their secrets, each person has got their hardships. Hard pushed to say who my favourite character is, but I think the way Stan just accepts his lot in life - with a disabled son and bed-bound wife, has the edge.

The time period is beautifully evoked through the language and frequent cultural references... there's a bit of everything in the story - crime, sex, affairs.... even throwing in a bit of murder.

The book does reach a natural end at the end, as things get resolved and we enter into the 1960s. I would not be surprised to see a future book with these characters.

Has all my favourite attributes - London, History and Characters you can believe in. Recommended.

John says

I can understand why many reviewers found this book difficult to read; the style, a series of internal monologues without natural divisions between them made me struggle and the fact that the language of the monologues was beyond the capability of some of the characters irritated me. But I got used to it and enjoyed the last 300 or so pages (yes, it is much too long for its relatively slender plot line. For those who don't know it, England's Lane is a real street in Camden, London and although I did not know it in 1959, this seems a very likely accurate portrait of it. Similarly the picture of London in 1959 is fairly realistic.

Laura Bakker says

HATED IT! I was so excited to read this but it was in my opinion so disappointing, I didn't like anything about it.

Jade Maree says

I really hated this book at the start. The writing style drove me insane. Very difficult to keep up with which character was speaking/thinking and it jumped from first to third person a bit. However, I don't understand the reviews which state that not much happens. Quite a lot happens in this book, especially after the first 300 pages. I found the lives of the characters very interesting and believable. I like Jim, and I wanted to know more about Fiona. Not sure I'd pick it up for a second time, or recommend it, but it wasn't bad.

Andi says

veri good

Winnie Tan says

I can't quite make up my mind on this one. On one hand I found this book tolerable enough to finish, but I also didn't enjoy reading it very much.

Maybe if it wasn't so ridiculously long I wouldn't feel so bad about having wasted a whole damn year reading this on and off.

El says

A very peculiar book which is hard to define. I enjoyed it initially but it just went on and on with a plot not substantial enough to sustain the interest. The speaking style of some of the characters was very odd, with reversed order at times ("Busy, you are?" type of speaking), and made the characters seem mannered and unreal. Jim spoke in an English I've never heard spoken and Jonathan was just annoying. The long, long streams of consciousness when characters should just be moving the plot along were way too frequent and detracted from the storyline (which was itself bizarre in places). On the plus side I found the social history fascinating and Milly's story and development were interesting to observe.

Paul says

Odd!!

Charlotte says

Cannot think why I persevered with this book. Not a writing style I personally enjoyed and pretty unappealing characters. Odd dialogue, and a business idea swiped from a Roald Dahl short story. Double subjects in far too many sentences, as in "the boy, he shivered" or "the car, it was blue". Felt almost Poirotish and really maybe that's how English people actually spoke in 1950s north London, but it was extremely irritating after a while. But, I ploughed on through. Quite liked the end, anyway. (I had a long train ride to fill....)
