



# The Deportees and Other Stories

*Roddy Doyle*

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## **The Deportees and Other Stories** Roddy Doyle

For his many devoted readers: the first collection of stories from Booker Prize-winning author Roddy Doyle.

For the past few years Roddy Doyle has written stories for Metro Eireann, a magazine by and for immigrants to Ireland. Each of the stories takes a new slant on the immigrant experience, something of increasing relevance and importance in Ireland today. **The Deportees** now brings those stories together for all of Roddy's devoted readers, ranging from a terrifying ghost story, "The Pram," in which a Polish nanny grows impatient with her charge's older sisters and decides—using a phrase she has just learnt—to "scare them shitless," to the glorious title story itself, where Jimmy Rabbitte, the man who formed the beloved Commitments, decides it's time to find a new band, and this time no white Irish need apply. Multicultural to a fault, the Deportees specialize not in soul music, but in the songs of Woody Guthrie.

## **The Deportees and Other Stories Details**

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## From Reader Review The Deportees and Other Stories for online ebook

### Clare O'Beara says

Doyle continues to write about working class northside Dublin. He gives us the same working class father as ever, presented with a new dilemma. One of his daughters is bringing a college pal to dinner, who is black. The other stories continue in similar vein, looking at a new child in school, an immigrant worker, a mixed race lad born in Ireland but wanting to be American, a music group consisting of a variety of non-Irish people. Not one of the protagonists is a woman.

That music story, title story here, features the return of Jimmy Rabbitte, of the Commitments fame, who is later seen in The Guts older and a little wiser. Personally I don't think the Deportees is a good choice for a band name, because it implies that the members are criminals. I doubt they would have wanted that. What I mainly dislike though, is the use of what are presumably song lyrics in capitals interjected between lines, occupying quite a lot of the total. The reader quickly ignores those to get on with the story. And there isn't much of that.

By all means read the book to see what Doyle makes of the sudden influx of non-Irish. But really he tells it all in the best part of the book, the introduction. He explains that in the Commitments one of the lads is an unemployed plasterer. Some years later there were no unemployed plasterers. And five years after that he says all the plasterers were Polish (not true, I've had Irish plasterers work here). I also liked the speculative fiction of a future government minister wanting to devise a test for Irishness.

My main difficulty is the language and continuous sexual references. Including a character continuously calling his wife and the mother of his children 'b-' and said wife seemingly unable to protest. If you cleaned up the swearing the book would be a quarter shorter. This just makes it unpleasant to read and substitutes for real vocabulary, while giving an incorrect impression that this is how all Dublin people behave. Doyle has now expanded this to claim that he is showing how all Irish people behave. This was funny a few decades ago, when he was caricaturing the under-represented council estate northsider Dublin kids. But it stopped being funny. And it is not representative of the Irish. I think Mr Doyle needs to meet some different people.

This is an unbiased review.

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### Ray says

A book of short stories on the theme of emigrants and emigration. Ireland is traditionally a country of net migration, but in the 90s the Celtic Tiger economy sucks in new arrivals from around the globe. How will the Irish cope with the new influx.

Doyle writes with warmth, wit and pathos about the lives of new and old Dubliners. The stories are funny and wise, happy and sad. A sort of John Irving on the Liffey. The stories are all human scale, at the level of families rather than about the clash of nations or culture.

Doyle is one of the few writers that can make me laugh out loud. This is a good book, not quite at the level of The Snapper or The Van, but worth a read nonetheless.

Warning. Profane so if swearing disturbs you this is not for you.

## Terna says

haven't actually found this book yet, but read one of the stories in it - "Black Hoodie" - funny, funny, funny. no one does dialog like Roddy Doyle

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## Colin O'Grady says

I'm between two minds here, because on the one hand, this isn't the best short story collection I've ever read, nor is it Roddy Doyle at his finest. In another way, however, it is a collection that I loved reading and it is Doyle doing all of the wonderful things that has made him my favorite writer...

I'll explain.

If you've never read Roddy Doyle, you need to. I have never come across an author who could make you care about a character the way that he can. Paula Spencer, Paddy Clarke, and the Rabbitte family are people that I could revisit time and time again, and I have by re-reading their books (although Doyle was gracious enough to give me a second Paula Spencer book and a new Jimmy Rabbitte story in the last few years). the stories he builds around his characters are almost always bittersweet, as you might expect from an Irish writer; that said, I've never read anyone else who could balance the bitter and the sweet so well. Doyle is the funniest and the most poignant in the darkest times, and isn't that what we all need to get through life?

He puts all of it on display in this book. The prose isn't as striking or crisp as it has been in his novels, but that may be a function of the fact that these stories were originally serialized in a magazine. What he does have in *The Deportees* is a picture of the 'new Ireland' that made me fall in love all over again with a country that has captivated me my entire life. The booming Irish economy has brought immigration to Ireland for the first time since perhaps the Vikings, and it is completely changing the social fabric of Ireland's cities. That's where Doyle sets his stories--in the interaction between old and new, and between familiar and foreign.

What makes this so special is that there is nothing political about it. In "Black Hoodie," an Irish boy stands up to a racist cop not because of any principal, but because he wants to impress a girl. "New Boy," the story of a nine year-old African boy's first day in his new Irish school, is a story about a black boy in a predominantly white culture; in Doyle's hands, though, it is just as much a universal story about fitting in. It doesn't matter that the character is black so much as that he is simply 'new.' All of the stories go like this; they are, on the surface, an examination of the impact of racial diversity on a culture that until the last ten years has never had any, but Doyle turns every one of them into something larger, something that everyone can relate to, black or white, Irish or not.

You should be able to tell by the length of this review that I really loved this book. Maybe it's because I love Ireland, and maybe it's because no one has ever been able to capture it the way Doyle does, but I don't think you need to have ever even been to Ireland to be able to relate to these stories, and that's precisely what makes it so good.

Oh, and if you've got a soft spot for Doyle like I do, there's a treat in here... Jimmy Rabbitte has a new band!

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## Guillermo says

"Ireland America was never Ireland America to me." It's Langston Hughes rewritten, but the message works an ocean away from Harlem. And that's what drew me into Roddy Doyle's stories. Racism isn't just an American issue, nor is immigration. I'm sure the world will like to think so, but Doyle has painted a clear picture that it's not. But it's those topics that hit home. That made these stories memorable.

The book collects nine stories - eight of which are set in Ireland, one in New York - and each deals with the xenophobia\racism of a nation.

The title story is a sequel of sorts to Doyle's novel, *The Commitments*, in which Jimmy Rabbitte decides it's high time for another band. No whites, he wants to write in the ad. In fact, that's part of the interview. Do you like the Corrs? Are you sure you're not white? With a rag tag of immigrants, Jimmy decides that the name of this new band is *The Deportees* and they will sing folk songs rather than soul.

"The Pram," a Polish nanny decides to seek revenge on her troublesome charges, two daughters who seemingly sabotage her romantic life, by telling them a ghastly story. Only the hauntings enter her waking life rather than their nightmares. The story echoes *The Turning of the Screw* with a slightly different ending.

In "Guess Who's Coming for the Dinner," a liberal-thinking father is faced with the fact that one of his daughters might be seeing a black man. How he acts surprises him and his family. Luckily, they're there to make sure he doesn't embarrass himself.

A group of teenagers shine some light on racism and stereotypes at local shops and how it hurts the stores financially in "Black Hoodie."

*The Deportees and Other Stories* is an eye opener at the state that we're in. Cross out Ireland and Irish and replace with America and American, and you'll see how this stories echoes across the sea. It makes the reader take a side step and evaluate how low we've come as a people by refuses others the seem benefits and dreams that we hold close to our hearts.

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## James says

Fucking in fiction: are you for or against? I only ask because Roddy Doyle's frequent use of the F-word might cause even Gordon Ramsay to turn salmon-pink. Bad language as a shock tactic often falls flat, but sometimes profanity signals credibility. So thumbs up for *The Deportees*; If you're looking for the real Dublin, forget Bono, Riverdance and Dustin the Turkey, Doyle has the Irish capital to a T. And an F.

*The Deportees* is a compilation of short stories written by Doyle for Dublin's first multicultural daily newspaper. These tales of the uninvited show what happened when a small nation suddenly became a honey pot for the world's dispossessed.

It was during the 1990s that Ireland started booming. The Celtic Tiger roared, and from Lagos to Latvia, they responded. Ireland experienced a greater percentage increase in immigration in a single decade than Britain had experienced in half a century. As Doyle himself observes, "I went to bed in one country and woke up in another."

The book is about encounters between immigrants and home-grown Dubliners. Humour is never far away, even in the darker stories, and there's a liberal helping of the craic.

In "I Understand," a Dublin waiter gives the kitchen help a masterclass in the gentle art of Irish cursing.

"I have a new one for you, he says - Ready?"

"Yes."

I take my hands from the water.

"Me bollix," he says. "Repeat."

"My.."

"No. Me."

"Me. Bollix."

"Together."

"Me bollix."

"Excellent," says Kevin, "Top man."

Meanwhile, in "75% Irish," a graduate student hits upon a novel test of citizenship. His device records the user's response to a replay of Robbie Keane's goal against Germany in the World Cup. For a government minister scrambling to defuse the political impact of a demographic time bomb, it's a gift.

Preposterous? Of course. But let's remember the Tory Party chairman, who contended that Britishness could be determined by which cricket team you supported when England played the West Indies. Under those criteria, I'm 100% Antiguan.

Pride and prejudice, stereotype and stigma loom large in "Home to Harlem." Declan, a black Irish student, hopes a literature course in New York will resolve his identity crisis. Explaining his quest to an unsympathetic professor, Declan is both eloquent and to the point.

He tells her about first reading *The Souls of Black Folk*, about the question repeated in the first paragraph of the first chapter: "How does it feel to be a problem?" "The problem is, he says, "I'm black and Irish, and that's two fuckin' problems."

Back in Dublin, the immigrants have problems aplenty. An African boy is bullied at school, an illegal immigrant is the victim of blackmail; and a Polish childminder is spooked by the unlikeliest of ghosts.

The centrepiece of the book resurrects Jimmy Rabbitte, erstwhile godfather of *The Commitments*. This time, he's putting together a new band, with assorted imports from Romania, New York and Nigeria, plus a couple of Dubliners. After a shaky start, the deportees find their feet and harmony reigns.

But just when we're starting to view things through emerald-tinted glasses, the author brings us back to reality. There's enough menace in Roddy Doyle's stories to show that in Dublin's fair city, the rattle and hum of racism is alive, alive-oh.

## Trin says

Really interesting collection of stories about race and racism in Dublin. These were originally published serially, with each of the stories broken down into 800-word segments, and Doyle admits in the introduction that he didn't really plan ahead, so a couple of them sort of meander and change direction in ways that can be slightly disconcerting. (This is most apparent in the collection's first story, "Guess Who's Coming to the Dinner"; I think Doyle was still getting used to the format.) Most of them are really excellent, though, and MY GOD did they make me miss Ireland. Possibly Doyle's number one strength is his ability to capture the rhythm and character of speech; reading his dialogue really does make you feel like you're listening in on a conversation on an O'Connell Street corner. \*sniff\* And how much do you wanna bet Siria's laughing and rolling her eyes at me now? ;-)

Anyway, I'd definitely recommend this, although I'd also recommend that you read The Commitments—and maybe the whole Barrytown Trilogy—first, as one of the stories here is a quasi-sequel to that. Now if you'll excuse me, I'll be off crying over Aer Lingus ticket prices.

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## Jesse says

I can award these stories for a great degree for originality and fresh talent to my american eyes. After watching the Commitments a ton when I was growing up I was happy to see Roddy Doyle's blunt writing transition especially into dialogue. Many of the stories didn't go past the bluntness of 'a lot of people are racist and here's how it affects society so yeah.' However there's a lot of technical writing prowess and smack-across the cheek humor to be had throughout to keep the repetitive theming interesting.

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## Michael VanZandt says

I loved reading this collection of short stories -- which Doyle wrote for a Dublin weekly, with a primarily African and/or immigrant readership -- after having read Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao. I read this within the general context and reflection of "strangers", group membership and identity. I have also thought much about it in relation to the book, Murder in Amsterdam (the case of Theo Van Gogh's murder at the hands of a second-generation Moroccan-Dutchman) and my own teaching experiences in an urban Catholic high school, with a student body largely from immigrant families of Boston.

Doyle is an enlightened cat. Not so much because he dares to talk about people of color in Ireland, but because of the flexibility, sensitivity and flair with which he tackles each story. I did not love all of them, but I appreciated each one. As Doyle floats between different narrators, cultures of origin and styles, the reader is led through an unpretentious debate of nationality, ethnicity and identity.

My personal favorite was one of the final stories about a lad named Declan, whose grandfather was an African-American from Harlem who hooked up with his grandmother from Dublin, on one miserable night in Glasgow during World War II. Declan narrates through his flight to Harlem for an academic fellowship, connecting the Harlem Renaissance to Irish writers. His motives are ambiguous, and become heartfelt, flowering with a number of poignant themes, and parallels. Besides, any story that fits Langston Hughes in with James Joyce registers well in my book.

Also, I loved that there was a bit about testing one's Irishness based on Robbie Keane's goal against Germany

in the 2002 World Cup. Fuckin' brilliant. I was in Galway at the time, bag-pipes were playing a funeral march in a pub, when \* crack \* he scored. Sorry, that was an aside.

Good, fun read.

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### **Laura Hoffman Brauman says**

3.5 stars. This collection of short stories from Roddy Doyle all center around a theme of someone from Ireland meets someone who is coming to live there. Within that framework, he explores ideas of race, nationality, and how those things influence both our own sense of identity and how others see us. I appreciated Roddy's sharp use of dialogue and his ability to create moments that make the reader look at some uncomfortable truths. Looking forward to trying one of his novels soon.

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### **Jen says**

God damn, Roddy Doyle is incredible.

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### **Bob says**

"THE DEPORTEES AND OTHER STORIES,"  
by Roddy Doyle

Ireland has changed.

The Ireland that for so many years forced its native population to leave has in recent times, seen a booming economy, so people struggling in other parts of the world are flocking to this new land of opportunity, Ireland.

Thank God Roddy Doyle is alive and well and writing to capture the turn around, and doing it in the manner that causes laugh-out-loud reading.

As always with Doyle, the humor percolates from human nature. His fiction takes advantage of the typically funny way the Irish have of dealing with life. He celebrates the joys in understated ways, but more often Doyle taps the embarrassing moments, exposing those insecurities that anyone human might laugh at, getting the largest chuckles from the instances when bigotry is revealed for what it is, when his characters realize the foot they've put into their own mouths, when David bests Goliath because of the big oaf's self-righteousness.

"The Deportees" is the longest of the eight short stories, and arguably the richest. Doyle revives Jimmy Rabbitte, the main character of "The Commitments," his story about a young Irish lad who loves soul music and puts together a soul band.

Rabbitte is grown up now, but he still loves music enough to name his children -- besides Jimmy Two -- Mahalia and Marvin, and wants to name the one his wife is carrying Aretha if its a girl, Smokey if it's a boy.

He gets the idea for a band composed of members from around the globe who have come to call Ireland home, and the fun gets going big time as Jimmy opens auditions.

In all the stories, "The Deportees" included, the hard edge of dealing with racial and national prejudice rides right along side the humor.

In "57% Irish," Doyle takes on the idea of how Irish you have to be considered one, and in "Black Hoodie" he's crafted a combination of "Black Like Me" and "Ferris Bueler's Day Off" that points a finger at many of our biases -- and you don't have to live on the Emerald Isle to see them in our own society and in ourselves.

He also has the wonderful ability to put himself into his characters and let them speak about their situation. And, if we learn a little bit about what a refugee to Ireland sees and feels, maybe -- just maybe -- we'll be a bit more sympathetic to the immigrants who've come to our own land and our own communities in search of work, safety and freedom.

Fair warning: Some of the human is earthy and sexual; this is a book for mature audiences. -- bz

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### **Boyana says**

amazing short stories which focus on immigrants starting their life once again in Ireland. The stories and the experiences of the characters resonated deeply with me and I love the way the author manages find different plots with which to convey similar core ideas - what is the thing which defines your identity; what is it which defines where you belong; how do you become part of a new culture without losing yourself in it and much more...

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### **Ryan Mishap says**

The author explains that these stories were in a newspaper devoted to immigrant issues in Ireland, and many of the stories are snippets of people coming to terms with a changing demographic in Ireland and cultural clashing. A good goal, to be sure, but the execution of the writing wasn't appealing to me. I actually didn't finish, which is rare for me. The titular story involves the guy from the author's *The Commitments* as he tries to form a new band made up of immigrants while helping raise his too many kids and lovingly calling his harried wife "bitch." I don't care how ubiquitous "bitch" has become in our societies, it utterly fails as a believable sobriquet for lovers in a fiction piece. In real life, I think she'd kick the living shite out of him. Anyway, this book has garnered rave reviews and I don't know why. If you already know him, then you probably already read it.

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### **Yulia says**

Read this for the title story, "The Deportees," which is a five-star gem, hilarious and refreshingly honest and really great in bringing out the frightened optimist in you.

Unfortunately this collection includes seven others stories, which aren't nearly as good. The next best would be "Guess Who's Coming for the Dinner," an Irish retake on the classic Poitier film, with great dialogue and more candid moments that will make you smile.

"New Boy" shouldn't have been written. It was completely implausible that this was from a foreign kid's perspective. It may represent a real situation for young refugees in elementary school, but please don't pretend you're the refugee, Doyle. That applies to "I Understand" as well, though it's not as painful.

"57% Irish" seemed a lost effort, with some cute moments, but just that. Nothing thought-provoking or meaningful to take away.

"Black Hoodie" expands its look into Irish stereotyping by including our assumptions about the disabled as well and considers how much time is wasted by security guards' profiling of minorities and shady looking characters. Nothing profound, but sweet enough and funny.

"Pram" stands out as the one story from a female perspective and Doyle does a great job of immersing you in the life of a Polish nanny to an Irish family, but its haunting darkness made it an odd fit in this collection. I felt like I was reading Angela Carter.

And "Here to Harlem" examined the outsider perspective of a black Irishman, who never feels he's accepted by other Irish as one of their own because of his skin color. A very interesting subject to explore, but I'm not sure this was the most effective way to do so. It just wasn't plausible that someone with so little background in the Harlem Renaissance or Irish literature could be accepted into Columbia to study these topics. Why didn't Doyle have him be a summer visitor staying at a friend's or relative's home instead? The notion he could just have discussions with a professor about a thesis or dissertation and not need to take classes or teach as well was implausible. But perhaps I'm looking for more accuracy that is expected in stories.

Hmm, it's too bad "The Deportees" couldn't have been a stand-alone work. Roddy Doyle seems rather hit or miss. I was in love with this collection in the beginning, but now I'm straying. Keep me committed to you!

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