



The Barracks

John McGahern

Download now

Read Online ➔

The Barracks

John McGahern

The Barracks John McGahern

One of the preeminent Irish writers of our time, John McGahern has captivated readers with such poignant and heart-wrenching novels as *Amongst Women* and *The Dark*. Moving between tragedy and savage comedy, desperation and joy, McGahern's first novel, *The Barracks*, is one of haunting power. Elizabeth Reegan, after years of freedom—and loneliness—marries into the enclosed Irish village of her upbringing. The children are not her own; her husband is straining to break free from the servile security of the police force; and her own life, threatened by illness, seems to be losing the last vestiges of its purpose.

The Barracks Details

Date : Published December 30th 2003 by Penguin Books (first published 1963)

ISBN : 9780142004258

Author : John McGahern

Format : Mass Market Paperback 240 pages

Genre : Fiction, Cultural, Ireland, European Literature, Irish Literature, Literature, 20th Century

 [Download The Barracks ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Barracks ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online The Barracks John McGahern

From Reader Review The Barracks for online ebook

Rachel says

John McGahern's *The Barracks* is a stark and depressing look at the life of a second wife to an unhappy police officer in a small Irish town. Once you realize the story you are reading is not a happy story but a bleak look at life and the purpose of life, you can appreciate McGahern's writing style. The story was middle of the road, in my opinion, and while I can see the merits of reading, discussing, and thinking about the story, it is not the most fun story out there.

Elizabeth Reegan is the second wife of a police officer. Elizabeth worries about how she fits in with her new family, she worries about the closeness of the small town, she worries about the life she used to have as a nurse in London, and she worries about the purpose of her life. Essentially she worries a lot, and it is not always easy to decide whether some of her worries are valid or are all in her head. For example, she doesn't think the children love her, but most of their actions seem kind and loving. Her husband is not happy in his job and wants to save up money to own a farm. Both characters are unhappy with their lots in life, but neither side expresses their feelings to each other. As Elizabeth's health deteriorates she struggles between wanting to live and succumbing to the comforts of death.

McGahern's story is a look at the purpose of life when everyone ends up dead. Life may not seem to have a purpose, but it is up to you to decide the direction of your life because life is not fair, it is not easy, and it will end, but by doing what you love (have passion about) you can find satisfaction.

Holly says

From Reading Matters: I could have listed dozens of books that fit this category (*Changed My World*), but I've opted for McGahern's debut novel, which I read and reviewed in 2006, because it introduced me to a writer that truly opened my eyes to the beauty and emotional power of literature. I was so moved by this novel, about a woman who marries a much older man and then discovers she has breast cancer but tries to hide it from the people she loves, that I rushed out and bought the rest of McGahern's novels. I'm not sure what astonishes me more when I look back on this: that he only wrote six between 1963 and 2003, or that I found them all sitting on the shelves of Waterstone's Picadilly at the exact moment I wanted them.

Ruth Loizides says

Interesting read. Found the pace slow and had figured out Elizabeth's situation

Catie says

Recommendation from @sennichi - 2/4/2018

Lauren says

Perfect, beautiful and perfectly beautiful. A year in life of a family living in the police barracks in rural

Ireland. This is McGahern's first novel and is, in part, autobiographical. Not much happens except life and death.

Danny Daley says

John McGahern is widely recognized as one of the greatest writers in Ireland's great literary history. The Barracks is his first novel, and in many ways epitomizes the Irish novel of the late 20th century - grim, introspective, realistic. The novel could have been lived by any number of Irish families of the time. This is a strength, although this style of writing may be running its course in Irish literature.

The novel's greatest weakness is the characters, who are largely too uninteresting to keep one's attention for long. This made the novel a bit difficult to get through at points. However, the writing style is beautiful, and the inner life of the characters so well thought through and deeply detailed that, for a first novel, it was obvious that McGahern was a massively talented writer from the start. After reading this, it would have been obvious to anyone when the novel was published that McGahern would eventually write some truly remarkable stories.

Anne says

Beautifully written, a stunning plunge into the loneliness of a fascinating woman.

Sandra says

Admired rather than enjoyed. The persistent air of minor domestic everyday tragedy that permeates this novel too strong for that. Testament, of course to the writing that the evocation of such a drudging, begrudging, claustrophobic life is so powerful.

Slightly disconcerting to have another Quirke.

Glen says

There is a bit of humor thrown in here and there in this novel, but overall the mood is grim and depressing, dealing as it does with a couple who are dealing with the husband's resentment over his lot in life as a policeman, and his wife's dealing with terminal cancer. The entire family is dealing with poverty and boredom, and if you aren't already feeling a little bummed out from reading this description, then you might be able to make it through this book. McGahern's novel is realism of the sort I associate with writers like Zola or Dickens, but there is no hint of romanticism, and the main characters musings about the pointlessness of existence invite comparison with Gide or Camus. The closest one gets to heroism is Elizabeth's effort to not let her own personal tragedy infect those she loves with fear and Reegan's tempestuous efforts to hang on to his dignity and his final act of defiance to that end.

A. Mary says

The invention of Elizabeth and her journey are what make this novel a wonderful story. She is thoroughly compelling. The book begins and ends with a focus on Reegan, her policeman husband, modeled loosely on McGahern's father, but the bulk of the book is Elizabeth's. The transitions in and out of her story are not smooth enough to be flawless; her life and illness are something like a prolonged aside, but she is thoughtfully, tenderly, and respectfully written. McGahern makes use of a variety of autobiographical details, but this story is not his life. In the end, the book has much to say of lost dreams, and thus has a lot to say that will resonate with any reader.

Averill Earls says

Dismal, and a funnyish. Mostly just sad though.

Betty says

McGahern transports the reader to the west of Ireland, vividly portraying a woman returning from nursing soldiers in London and marrying a widower with two children. Her former lover laments, "What the hell is all this living and dying about anyway." The novel doesn't answer the question, but it rises to her mind as she faces her own death, and it will continue to haunt the reader long reading after this elegaic book.

Lucy Georges says

Want depressing? Read this and slash your wrists...

This is the kind of book that gives Irish literature a bad name.

Woman gets cancer and dies - that's about it. MacGahern tries to go further and ask 'big questions' but it just doesn't wash.

I read this several times and it doesn't improve with age, not like Bushmills.

Frank says

John McGahern was twenty-nine when this, his first and somewhat autobiographical novel, was published, as he was in fact raise in a small Garda Síochána (the Irish national police force, in English, the "Civil Guards") barracks. And like the children in the novel, his mother died when he was very young.

But this isn't a coming-of-age novel; the main characters are all adults, particularly the Sargeant, Reegan, and his second wife, Elizabeth. A veteran of the Irish War of Independence and its horric follow up, the Civil War, Reegan was a leader of men in his youth who idealistically joined the nascant nation's police service only to become embittered and disillusioned by the pettiness and officiousness of his superiors and the monotony of his duties in a quiet backwater in Co. Roscommon. In the stultifying moral atmosphere of 1950s Ireland, Reegan and Elizabeth has no outlet for their emotions which eat at their souls much like the cancer that Elizabeth contracts eats away at her body.

Significantly, the majority of the novel is the interior monologue of Elizabeth. We learn of Reegan's reticence as well as his hopes and fears, from his wife. We learn next to nothing about Reegan's life outside the chronology of the book, but much about Elizabeth as a young nurse working in London during the Blitz and immediately afterwards.

This is a powerful book, but seems somewhat dated. The Ireland that McGahern wrote about with such ferocity is no more. Not even in memory, for McGahern's last novel—*That They May Face the Rising Sun* (published as *The Lake* in the U.S.) finds him in the same landscape, older, wiser, perhaps more resigned and certainly more in tune with the ebb and flow of the rural year.

Rosalie Morris says

Harrowing and terrifying. The plot itself is gentle and slow and goes nowhere in particular but the author perfectly captures the futility of life. This is not a cheery book. Get a rainy day and a duvet and some tissue because you are fairly likely to cry.
