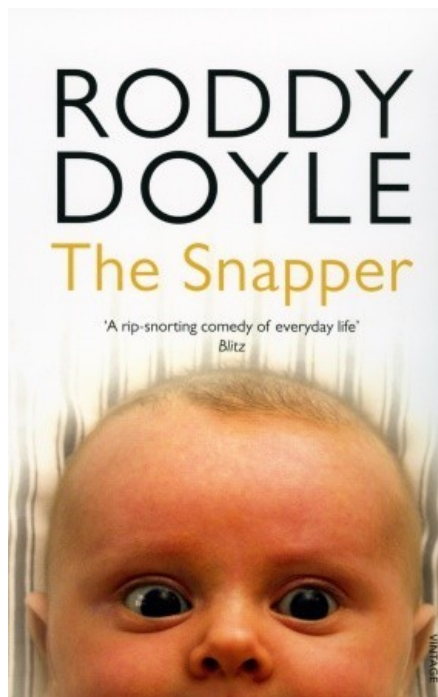




The Snapper

Roddy Doyle

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The Snapper

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The Snapper Roddy Doyle

Meet the Rabbitte family, motley bunch of loveable ne'er-do-wells whose everyday purgatory is rich with hangovers, dogshit and dirty dishes. When the older sister announces her pregnancy, the family is forced to rally together and discover the strangeness of intimacy. But the question remains: which friend of the family is the father of Sharon's child?

The Snapper Details

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Ram says

–Sharon Rabbitte’s pregnant, did yeh hear?
–Your one, Sharon Rabbitte’s up the pole.
–Sharon Rabbitte’s havin’ a baby.
–I don’t believe yeh!
–Jaysis.
–Jesus! Are yeh serious?
–Who’s she havin’ it for?
–I don’t know.
–She won’t say.
–She doesn’t know.
–She can’t remember.
–Oh God, poor Sharon.
–That’s shockin’.
–Mm.
–Dirty bitch.
–Poor Sharon.
–The slut.
–I don’t believe her.
–The stupid bitch.
–She had tha’ comin’.
–Serves her righ’.
–Poor Sharon.
–Let’s see her gettin’ into those jeans now.
Sharon giggled.
Fuck them. Fuck all of them. She didn’t care. The girls had been great.

So.... Sharon Rabitte is pregnant.

She is not willing to share who the father is, and when pressed she says it is a Spanish sailor. She is not married and lives with her parents and brothers..... A cozy family living in a working class neighborhood. How her family accepts it, how her friends accept it, how society accepts it, how does she herself accept it. I was especially touched by her father, Jimmy Sr, who manages to shed off his rough "Dublin working class" exterior and connect with his daughter's experience in special ways.

The book, sometimes funny, and sometimes sad, revolves around this issue. The language is very authentic and takes time to understand.

This book is part of a series and the first is "The Commitments". I did not read it , but the movie based on this book is clearly one of my all time favorites.

While the book did not impress me as the Commitments (movie) did, I still found it refreshing and entertaining, because of the language and the window it opens into the working class of Dublin.

Malachy says

The second entry in the Barrytown Trilogy and the best by far. Obviously, The Commitments went cult because of the film and the original book, as a result, can't quite live up to things in the same way. With The Snapper, however, despite the fact that the film was also fantastic, the book is by far the better experience - and that Roddy Doyle style of rhythmic dialogue has the feel of being best suited to this story among the three entries. The Snapper - just loved it. I suspect, however, that you probably need to have some kind of familiarity with the Dublin dialect to really enjoy the ride.

Allan says

This novel, the second in the Barrytown Trilogy, and the follow up to probably Doyle's most famous book, The Commitments, was a real treat for me. Jimmy Rabbitte Junior, the driving force behind the first novel reappears in the book, but he plays a minor role, taking a back seat while we are introduced to his family, mum and dad, Veronica and Jimmy Senior, big sister Sharon, brothers Leslie and Darren, and little sisters, twins Linda and Tracy.

The fact that I can rattle off the family's names from memory after just 220 pages says a lot for this book. It tells the story of a working class household with a hilarious and caring patriarch and strong matriarch, who are exactly like those living around them in their habits and social interactions. The story develops around Sharon's pregnancy, and the mystery of the father of the child, the reasons for which become apparent.

Sounds quite serious, but the book is so rich in its human interaction, between family members, between Rabbitte Sr and his mates and between Sharon and her pals. It's laugh out loud funny, often sparse in narrative description, yet so easy to visualise through the dialogue. Rarely have I read a book where I could feel myself transported to the kitchen table or the pub while I was reading and be able to see exactly what was occurring in my mind's eye so clearly, but that's exactly how I felt with this book-I can see why Doyle's work lends itself so well to dramatisation.

I can understand now, having loved both The Commitments and The Snapper, why The Barrytown Trilogy has been chosen as Dublin's One City One Book for 2015. I'm tempted to get stuck straight into The Van, but might leave it just a little while to allow me to savour this one.

Definitely a big thumbs up for this book from me!

Momoftwnz says

I loved this book so much I would read it out loud to myself just to give myself a 2nd laugh. Lots of the F word on EVERY page and it just added to the flow. I loved interpreting the little bit of Irish dialect which

was included (which wasn't hard-actually fun) and reading this book was like reading a play. The author didn't waste precious ink on flowery descriptions of scenery. He saved it for the impact of the statement. Simple lines like "They roared." referring to a group of girls in a bar chattin about men and their foibles-so funny! The central family dynamics held this story together beautifully. Hey-this is no "Dr.Zhivago" or "War and Peace". It's not meant to be. It's just a GOODREAD!

Aimee says

There were definitely several very funny moments in this little book. But as others have said, the fact that it is nearly all dialogue, and often feels like a script hastily turned into a novel, made it harder to really get into the story or the characters. There's very little depth to anybody, and almost no physical description of anyone or anything.

What we do see of the characters isn't flattering. Sharon, the oldest of Jimmy Rabbitte Sr.'s six children, has just announced that she is pregnant, but she flatly refuses to identify the father. Her family's reactions, even if you suddenly somehow made them non-Catholic and non-Irish, seem awfully blase. They try and get her to tell who the father is, but after it's clear that she won't, they drop the matter. Sharon knows who the father is: George Burgess, the father of one of her girlfriends, who took advantage of her in the pub's parking lot when she was drunk.

She wonders just once, idly, if it could be classified as a rape. Well, yes, it probably could. But Sharon doesn't seem to care much one way or the other. The only emotion she seems to feel about the whole thing is embarrassment, and not the embarrassment of somebody who's been assaulted, or even the embarrassment of somebody who routinely gets falling-down drunk in public and blacks out. She's mostly embarrassed because George is a short, fat, goofy-looking guy, and when he figures out he's the father and begins tagging after Sharon like a puppy, thinking he's in love with her, she isn't afraid of him, only annoyed by his silly actions and contemptuous of his obvious besottedness.

Sharon and her family's idea of morality is such that when she concocts a lie about being pregnant by a Spanish sailor, who she picked up in a pub and claims not even to know his first name, they are relieved that it isn't pathetic Georgie Burgess. It's hinted that at least some don't believe her and suspect the truth, but they elect to pretend to buy the Spanish-sailor story in order to keep the peace.

Sharon is drunk or getting drunk throughout most of her pregnancy, which definitely doesn't look good for her baby. Especially since she is going to the doctor regularly and she and her father are reading books about pregnancy.

And then, when Sharon's baby is born, Sharon decides to name it ...

Georgina. And to call her George.

So all this effort to avoid acknowledging who the father is, and at the end it's like she's just thumbing her nose at the whole issue. So all that effort was for nothing? The whole plot of the story, just negated in one sentence?

The characters are foul-mouthed and earthy, and their love for each other is clear, but they all seem so dumb. Sharon, in particular. She doesn't even seem to mind that she is pregnant and poor and unmarried, living at home where six nearly-grown kids have to share two bedrooms. Her own, and most everybody else's, outlook, seems to be one of benign apathy.

Hobart says

★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2

Naturally, after one of the best rock band novels ever -- one fully of music, laughs, and style -- Doyle follows it up with a heartfelt story of a young woman who gets pregnant after a one-night stand. Who wouldn't?

Now, Sharon (the young woman in question) is the sister of Jimmy Rabbitte -- The Commitments' manager. So there is a tie -- and we saw a little of their father and the rest of the family last time. Still, this feels so different, it's hard to conceive of them being part of a trilogy. Oh well -- it works.

Where **The Commitments** was full of laughs, raunch, and style; **The Snapper** is full of laughs, family and heart. It's not just about one member of the family this time -- it's all of them. The focus is on Sharon and her father, Jimmy, Sr.

Sharon finds herself "up the pole," much to her distress. She knows who the father is, a one-night stand (something far less meaningful, actually) she wishes had never happened. Unwilling to let anyone know the father's real identity, she makes one up (which also relieves her of the need to let the real guy have anything to do with the kid). Initially, she's in sort of a denial -- she knows the baby will change everything. But that's months away -- right now, she and her friends can still hit the pub after she gets off working at the supermarket and pretend that everything's just like it was a couple of weeks ago. Eventually, she starts to make the changes necessary, but only when she has to. There's personal growth here for Sharon, when she has no choice. But honestly -- other than questionable taste in men, and an utter lack of awareness about Fetal Alcohol Syndrome -- she seems like she's got her head screwed on right already.

Jimmy, Sr. seems like the kind of guy you'd like to hang out in a pub with occasionally -- I think he (and his friends) would get old quickly if you hung out with them all the time. Generous, funny, and gregarious. Maybe not the most responsible guy around -- but he's making ends meet (mostly), and doing (almost) his best for his kids. Eventually, he seems to get his act together for Sharon -- or at least he tries. Which just makes you like him more -- even as (because?) he just doesn't make it some times.

While these two are on the forefront of Doyle's attention, we do get some time with Sharon's siblings (even Jimmy, Jr. -- a little bit -- still trying to make it in the music business) and long-suffering mother. We watch the family stumble along through financial woes, various school clubs, a bicycle club or two, and being the subject of neighborhood gossip. These all might not be as well rounded and Sharon and her father are, but they're close enough that you think you know them.

Back in college, I read **The Commitments** a lot -- but I think I read **The Snapper** more. It's not as fun as it's predecessor, but it's a better novel -- populated with actual people, actual growth, and something that looks a lot like actual life for many people. The Rabbits could be your neighbors, and you'd be happy to have them, which makes getting to spend time with them between the covers of a book just that pleasant.

Margitte says

It was okay. A relaxing read for a lazy Sunday afternoon with some time to spare and a way to not think about anything serious. That's what I thought.

An Irish family, the Rabbits, have to work around the pregnancy of the oldest daughter, a new dog, and how everyone adapts to the situation. The dad is the *numero uno* character: highly lovable and really funny. It is a busy family with neighbors and friends dropping in enhancing the craziness and mayhem around the daughter who refuse to make the sperm donor known. (I have a good reason for calling the sleaze bag, who got the girl pregnant, the sperm donor!)

The narrative is mostly written in dialogue form, and in dialect, which makes it a concentrated read, but the warmth and cheeriness of the characters are great. There were some scenes that really grossed me out but I am not adding any spoilers here.

WHAT I DID NOT LIKE:

The dialogue in the book is probably there to make an adaptation into a play or movie script easier. In fact, the book has become a major film. I also found it 'scratchy chalk on a black board' that the reactions of the characters were scripted in. For instance, a set of dialogue and then laughter. Then a set of dialogue and laughter. It is as though the reader is reading the script and told where to laugh. The movie might be a real hoot when the script comes to life, but as a book it did not work for me at all. There are no descriptions of the background of the story at all. It is like reading scene 1, then scene 2, and so it goes. It is not a novel. It is a script hastily turned into a book to sell as quickly as possible. The props have been left out, so to speak!

This was a book-borrowing swap with a friend. Although I love wit and humor in books, and Irish authors are favorites with me, this did not work. Various blurb writers on the back page described it as a 'cease-me-upper'. In fact, it was most often the opposite and I had shivers running down my spine for some of the incidences. I was totally grossed out.

Take away the over-indulgence in dialogue, add some really good prose fit for a real novel, and I might reconsider, but I doubt it.

A novel it is not. But not even remotely so.

Okay. Forgettable. Did not work for me.

Jessi says

This book is almost totally dialogue, hilarious dialogue. Back with the Rabbitte clan after The Commitments and they are in fine form Jimmy is a DJ, Les is no where to be found, the twins are irritating as always, Darren is sweet and enthusiastic and Sharon is in a spot of trouble. This book focuses on Sharon and Jimmy Rabbitte Sr. I love Jimmy Rabbitte Sr, he is is hilarious the whole way through his reactions are never what you expect and always entertaining. No matter what important matter is being discussed he will not miss a chance to berate or complain about eldest son Jimmy Jr. Even as Sharon is telling him and his wife Veronica that she is "up the pole" (pregnant) he stops twice to call Jimmy and idiot and then asks "*what is wrong with that boy?*" **Matter at hand JIMMY**

Sharon finds her self pregnant after a drunken night of partying, she questions (only to herself) if what happened to her was rape. I think its fair to say that someone having sex with her while she is unconscious would be considered rape. That's as far as that is dealt with, I know it was rape, you know it was rape. But the subject is now closed, which was kind of gross.

The book covers all of Sharon's pregnancy and the scandal it causes, which is pretty hilarious. Also Jimmy Sr reads the "What to Expect when Expecting" and questions Sharon at inopportune times "*if her hormones are causing her troubles? Do you have problems on the toilet? How ya sleeping?*" Sharon finds these questions off-putting as well as surprising as her father has 6 children and never seemed to notice any of these pregnancies or was present for any of the births. But that's Jimmy ya never know what he is going to

do.
Really funny !

Glenn Sumi says

As much as I liked *The Commitments*, the first novel in Roddy Doyle's Barrytown Trilogy, *The Snapper* – book two – is much more satisfying. It's just as funny and profane, but it has more emotional depth, an amusing if troubling mystery and characters who feel alive and authentic.

It focuses on Sharon Rabbitte, the 20-year-old sister of the *Commitments*' manager, Jimmy. I remember meeting her briefly in the first book, when Jimmy's friend Deco complimented her as she passed him in the Rabbitte's North Dublin home. I believe she told him: "Go an' shite." *Ouch*.

The Snapper opens with Sharon announcing to her parents – Jimmy Sr. and Veronica – that she's pregnant. She works at a grocery store and lives at home with them along with Jimmy Jr. (who's trying to break into the DJ field), directionless Les, charmed youngest boy Darren and the twins, Linda and Tracy, who take up one hobby then quickly move onto another.

The news is greeted with some happiness – it's the late 80s, and the stigma against pregnancies out of wedlock isn't what it used to be. Sharon's clearly Jimmy's favourite child, and he's gonna be a grandpa! However, Sharon refuses to say who the father is, and as her situation becomes more evident – she also hides the news from her girlfriends for some reason – her conflicted emotions, and those of her pa, begin to surface.

Rumours spread (their neighbourhood is pretty small, after all), and soon Jimmy Sr is upset that he can't go to his local bar without overhearing gossip. In the lively Rabbitte household, between tea, TV watching and friendly familial shouting, father and daughter soon aren't talking. Jimmy, normally voluble and jokey (he is the book's great character), is glum.

I loved this book. I loved these people. Doyle is one of the best writers about working class lives. (There's a fascinating subplot about one of Jimmy Sr.'s out-of-work friends trying to find employment.) I came to love the cluttered, loud house the Rabbittes live in.

And I especially loved witnessing the tender, complex relationship between a father and his daughter. When Jimmy starts reading up about pregnancy (in "a buke") to help out Sharon, at first I thought it was ridiculous. I mean, the man's sired half a dozen kids himself. But later Jimmy admits that he wasn't really around for those deliveries (see quote below). He discovers the miracle of birth not through his own children but through his child's child.

And when Sharon finally gives her child its name? Wow. I teared up.

I noticed that many Goodreads readers were upset that Sharon continued to drink alcohol while pregnant, and criticized the book for that. Really? Of course, it's not responsible behaviour, but it's not an author's job to judge his characters. The cause of Sharon's pregnancy is also controversial, especially for a contemporary reader. But the way it's depicted feels honest and real. Again: no judgement.

A word of advice: It's a short book, and there's a lot of dialogue, but don't read it too quickly. Savour it. Doyle's writing is so good. Here are some examples:

Jimmy Sr., after learning about the pregnancy, is out drinking with Sharon and gives her a fiver to go join her friends across the bar.

- Ah, there's no need, Daddy.

- There is o' course, said Jimmy Sr.

He moved in closer to her.

- It's not every day yeh find ou' you're goin' to be a granda.

He'd just thought of that now and he had to stop himself from letting his eyes water. He often did things like that, gave away pounds and fivers or said nice things; little things that made him like himself.

And here's Jimmy talking to Sharon about what he was doing when his children were born. (I take it Conways and Hikers are pubs.)

- When your mammy was havin' Jimmy I was in work. An' when she was havin' you I was in me mother's. When she had Leslie I was inside in town, in Conways, yeh know, with the lads. The Hikers wasn't built then. For Darren, I was - I can't remember. The twins, I was in the Hikers.

- You've a great memory.

- Nowadays the husbands are there with the women, said Jimmy Sr. - That's much better, I think. I'd

He scratched his leg.

- Because he can hold her hand an' help her, an' encourage her, yeh know, an' see his child bein' born.

There wasn't even a car going past. The pipes upstairs weren't making any noise.

- Sharon, I'll - Only if yeh want now - I wouldn't mind stayin' with you when - you're havin' it.

- Ah no.

- Okay.

That's lovely writing: heartfelt, honest, the words and pauses capturing the real rhythms and cadences of ordinary life.

I can't wait to finish the trilogy with *The Van*. And while I'm a little upset that the Rabbitte mother, Veronica, was mostly in the background sewing outfits for the twins' hobbies, I look forward to reading Doyle's two Paula Spencer novels to see how he gets inside the head of a mature woman.

Mark says

Shorter and ostensibly simpler than *THE COMMITMENTS*, the second volume of "The Barrytown Trilogy" is a deceptively beautiful and brilliant book. Sharon Rabbitte announces that she's pregnant out of wedlock, and the novel follows the reactions and accommodations of her family and, to some extent, most of the town.

THE SNAPPER is heavily dialogue-driven, and Doyle is a master of voice and cadence. And the story itself is funny, profane, and poignant--sometimes all at the same time. Highly recommended.

Barbara says

For me, more than anything, this is a book about family and above all fatherly love. I love Jimmy Rabbitte's affection for his daughter Sharon who becomes pregnant. Sharon's pregnancy is the result of a drunken encounter with an older neighborhood in the parking lot of a party. These days this would be considered rape because an intoxicated person is considered incapable of consenting to sex. I have used this film in a class I teach and interestingly the young students all recognize it as such, but I had an older student, a man in his 60's who argued it wasn't rape. Finally one of the young women in the class was able to get him to understand that now it would be considered sexual assault. Another sign of the times is Sharon's heavy drinking throughout her pregnancy - something that even in the 80's was discouraged, but perhaps not in 1989 working class Dublin. These comments make this sound like a dreary story. On the contrary, it is a look into a family that sticks together through the trials of one daughter's "out-of-wedlock" pregnancy with humor and love. The novel notes the times in Ireland are changing and women can keep their babies even if they are unmarried. The dialogue is always hilarious and Doyle is a genius at it.

Nancy Oakes says

Like a 3.8, rounded up.

Not quite as entertaining as its predecessor, *The Snapper* is still a good read. As in *The Commitments*, the plot is unraveled via the brisk dialogue and the action takes place within a working-class neighborhood; unlike *The Commitments*, the author takes his readers deep into Barrytown life and more specifically inside the Rabbitte home.

Daughter Sharon Rabbitte, aged 20, is pregnant, and is keeping mum on the identity of the father, for reasons she doesn't care to discuss with anyone. A chance remark overheard in a pub sets off the Barrytown rumor mill, leads to some embarrassing problems for Sharon. Her father, Jimmy Rabbitte Sr., tries to be supportive, but also endures his share of headaches caused by the scandal and "Barrytown's sense of humor," which he and his daughter are both fighting. Her pregnancy and the resulting fallout test both of their respective mettle, their individual senses of who they are, and also their relationship. In the meantime, life at the Rabbitte house goes on -- the twins, Linda and Tracy, adopt a dog that provides many comic moments and drive their mother Veronica up the wall by changing their minds so many times; Darren gets kicked out of Barrytown's cycling club so Jimmy Sr. starts one, Leslie won't get up in the morning, and Jimmy Jr. (of previous *Commitments* fame) is honing his DJ skills upstairs.

While perhaps not as funny as *The Commitments*, *The Snapper* is still a joy and an entertaining look inside the lives of these people -- not just the Rabbittes, but their friends and neighbors as well all in this little slice of the city called Barrytown. I particularly enjoyed the character of Jimmy Rabbitte Sr., and the way he often calls into question his role as a father and as the head of the household -- all done with punchy humor that needs no sentimentality for his character to be fully understood. The comedy runs throughout -- there's a particular scene in the pub where a calculator giveaway had me laughing out loud, and another where Sharon and her friends are giving the poor lounge boy a hard time, and then there are the bits of every day life in the Rabbitte household which were the funniest for me -- but there's also a large measure of sensitivity in Mr. Doyle's writing. Even the real father of Sharon's little snapper gets his due, despite the fact that the

circumstances under which the baby was conceived bring Sharon a lot of anger and pain as she remembers what happened. The story isn't always pleasant reading, but it comes off as very real.

I don't get testy about things like no quotation marks or the fact that this book is written in dialect -- okay, so that's the way the author writes. Big deal. The bottom line is that I'm really enjoying Roddy Doyle, and he's a writer I'd definitely recommend.

Mallory says

Like Juno, but without the annoying hipster music and with lots of drunk Irish people yelling at each other.

This was a fun read. You know I embarrassed myself a few times by laughing out loud on the subway. This story chronicles a young, single, Irish girl from a blue-collar Dublin family who finds herself pregnant. She won't reveal who the father is. Despite the Lifetime-movie setup, this book is hardly melodramatic. It's a funny, lighthearted look at pregnancy. The dialect and conversations are hysterical. You can really hear the characters as you read. Sharon, the pregnant girl, her best friend, Jackie and her father, Jimmy Sr. are the funniest in the book -- and, fortunately, also get the most page time.

This book doesn't always feel like it's "going somewhere" because it's more character- than plot-driven, but that works in the story's favor. It is a charming and chipper read, even when people are cursing and throwing half-full pint glasses at each other.

You'll love it.

Though I'd like to register my dismay at the amount of pregnant drinking in this book. I don't care if it's written and set in 1980s Ireland.... the year is 2009 and I live in Brooklyn and I know what FAS is. That said, when I forced myself to adjust I got over it and started to laugh when on every 3rd page the pregnant Sharon says "I'm pissed" or "I'm knackered." :)

Benjamin says

What's funnier than unwanted pregnancy? Not much, if you're Roddy Doyle. Sharon, the oldest daughter of the Rabbitte family, is knocked up by a man she won't identify. In the aftermath of the subsequent minor scandal, her family rallies around to support her, each in their own weird way.

Mostly, though, this book is about Jimmy Sr., father of the Rabbitte family - an old-fashioned working-class Dubliner who largely just gets drunk and says funny things. It's your typical story of an emotionally repressed man softening up and becoming a more complete father and husband because his daughter got knocked up.

I read this book in about 3 days. It helps that it's short and there's so much dialogue that only about 60% of each page is covered in actual text. It's funny and entertaining and positive without being anything close to sappy. I've been reading straightfaced serious literature for school for so long I almost forgot book could be funny. Recommended.

John Martin says

Ask anyone? I'm tough.

So when I tell you this book caused me to cry, it surely carries some weight.

They were real tears too, albeit of laughter. Salty streams of mirth coursing down my cheeks every few pages and causing me great embarrassment and endangering my manly image.

The first Roddy Doyle book I read annoyed me. With his absence of quotation marks I couldn't work out what was dialogue and what was merely thought. Plus, it wasn't a very happy book.

That style continues with this book, but as long as you have some compassion, a bit of life experience and a healthy sense of humour, it is well worth sticking with on this one.

Portia S says

Not bad. The only issue I have is that at the very end, yes, the baby is born, but the Mother was drunk and getting smashed every weekend, so how was this baby even there? alive and existent? I know this is part of the Barrytown collection, but that mean in another book we find out the baby was deformed or mentally challenged? I don't know. What I do know is that I liked the father character. Jimmy Sr is interesting, and I spent a lot of the book trying to figure him out.

but I'm sick and sleepy so good night guys.

Dee says

I think for a lot of Roddy Doyle's work you have to be Irish to fully appreciate the dialogue and slang. He has a habit of slipping in colloquialisms that only make sense to the Irish. I lived in Dublin city for three years and let me tell you, there are a lot of Jimmy Snrs about!

The Snapper's pace is good, the characters are hilarious and true to life. I loved the bit with the racing bikes myself. It's a story that is uplifting, because although there are very few happy moments, people seem satisfied with their lot.

I will admit my only major problem with the book was the drinking while pregnant aspect. I know this is what happened back in the '80's but knowing the damage that it causes made it uncomfortable reading.

Emer Martin says

I loved this book. I think it is the strongest of the three books that compile the fascinating Barrytown Trilogy. The narrative never gets bogged down, it sweeps along with a pace and vigor I would love to emulate in my own fiction. There is not a spare scene or extra word in the whole book and that is quite a feat for an Irish writer.

I get tired of the constant father son relationships in so much of our fiction, it was truly refreshing to show a father daughter relationship in such a tender, humorous way. In fact the humor of this book belies the very seriousness of the issues that Doyle tackles. Teenage pregnancy, rape, social exclusion. A generation previously Sharon might have been put into a laundry. Now her dad can be proud and step up to the plate and

show his support for his beloved daughter. Society as a whole is much better off as a result. This illustrates how all the social changes, largely brought about by the women's movement and the loosening of the grip of the Catholic Church on Irish society, has improved the lives of both men and women.

The only reason I don't give it the full five stars is this: My only small cavil is that when Sharon has the baby she names her daughter, Georgina, after the Rapist, George. I don't buy that and it upset me the first time I read it and upset me again this time. I once asked Roddy Doyle at a reading why he did that and he said that she was doing it to annoy her father. It is something I didn't think plausible. Sharon was raped by an older man when she was drunk in the parking lot of a disco. Her father supports her decision to have the child - and she calls it after the rapist?

This, as I said, is the only false note in an otherwise perfect read.

Sarah F says

Picked this one up at Epilogue Books in their final days of business. I'd seen the movie years before and had enjoyed it, so I figured what the hell. It's the story of a working class Irish family, and what happens to them after their eldest daughter, 20-year-old Sharon, becomes pregnant and refuses to tell who the father is. Despite the subject matter, it's actually a light-hearted, comedic tale.

I found it a bit hard to get into, for it is full of Irish slang and accents, but after about 50 pages, it just sunk in and I was able to go with the flow. Also difficult was the fact that most of the book is actually dialogue -- it's very play-like. The linear progression is lacking at times. Doyle jumps from scene to scene, which are at least in order, but they do not come with much background or explanation as to where you are or what has transpired between the scenes. This has a strange effect of making it both hard to follow and distancing the reader from the action, while at the same time making the characters seem more human in a way, thereby allowing the reader to feel almost a familial connection with them, as if one were just switching on a camera and taking a peek into their home for a few minutes.

I feel the movie is a better medium for Doyle's story, however, and is able to grant it clarity where the novel does not. I don't say this often at all, but I think the book has little to offer than cannot be found in the movie.

Dannii Elle says

Actual rating 3.5 stars.

This is the second instalment in Doyle's The Barrytown trilogy, following on from The Commitments. The focus has shifted to the former protagonist's father and elder sister, and details another generation of life inside suburban Ireland.

Sharon Rabbitte is pregnant. But the juicy gossip around town isn't her unwed status but concerns over who the father is. Is it her best friend's balding, overweight father like is rumoured? Or the one-night-stand Sharon claims it is? And why does it matter either way? For Sharon it matters little. For her father, it is the world.

Despite dealing with quite a dense subject matter, the tone of this book managed to remain light-hearted. As before, there was a hilarious use of dialogue that made this both a fast-paced and entertaining read. This was used to ease the darker subject matter in to the narrative, and the reader remains unaware in the shift of tone

until it has actually occurred.

There were some truly tender moments, as the father/daughter relationship was explored, with an additional insight to 1980's urban life, where societal opinion was markedly different from today. This made it a markedly more complex novel than the former trilogy's instalment and gave it the emotional depth I was desiring from this series. I can't wait to see where The Van takes us, next.
