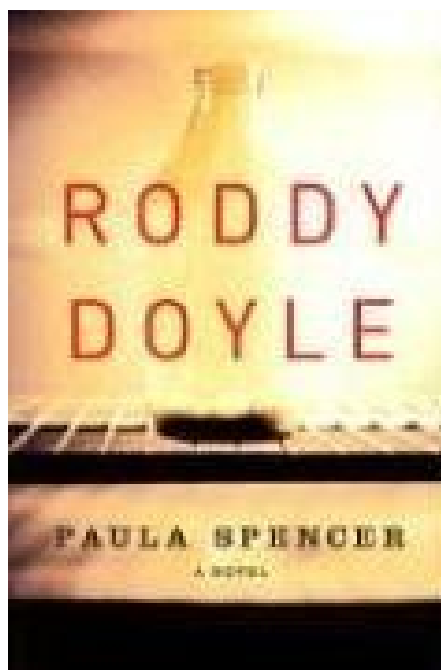




Paula Spencer

Roddy Doyle

Download now

Read Online ➔

Paula Spencer

Roddy Doyle

Paula Spencer Roddy Doyle

One of Ireland's most popular novelists and the author of the Booker Prize-winning Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha movingly depicts a woman, both strong and fragile, who is fighting back and finally equipped to be a mother to her children. But now that they're mostly grown up, is it too late?

Paula Spencer Details

Date : Published January 1st 2007 by Viking Books (first published 2006)

ISBN : 9780670038169

Author : Roddy Doyle

Format : Hardcover 281 pages

Genre : Fiction, Cultural, Ireland, European Literature, Irish Literature, Contemporary, Literary Fiction

 [Download Paula Spencer ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Paula Spencer ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Paula Spencer Roddy Doyle

From Reader Review Paula Spencer for online ebook

Amy says

Shameful that it took me so long to read this book. I don't know how Doyle does it, but he consistently handles difficult topics with such humor and precision and brevity and grace. Paula's struggle to "recover" from alcoholism not only involves staying away from it despite a crazy strong urge to get it, it also includes her determination to educate herself and to face her fear of her own ignorance. Doyle unflinchingly presents scenes in which Paula dives under her daughter's bed (and she's in currently in it), where she is sure she will find some old booze to get a fix. With courage and honesty, Paula faces the broken relationship she has with each of her four children, and smartly and briefly expresses how she feels and what she's trying to accomplish, then lets them come to her. She is constantly amazed at her kids' knowledge of geography and their internet savvy ways, which is testament to her own past dismissal of curiosity, and her pride in her children, as she knows they didn't pick up what they know from her.

This passage comes toward the end of the book, which means we will leave Paula to her everlasting struggle, and things won't be tidy for her:

"The smell, the stale drink--the dead air is around her. She'd climb in. She'd lick every broken piece and bleed happily to death. Especially the green glass. She'd bleed green and lie down." (at the recycle center)

However, there are such wonderful, small rays of hope (and it's dead-on right that they'd be small--so real!) throughout the entire book, that you know Paula Spencer is going to be just fine.

Anton Segers says

Doyle heeft een immense liefde voor de 'kleine man', in dit geval 'de kleine vrouw.'

Hij geeft de gedachten weer van Paula, kuisvrouw en weduwe, toont met veel inleving en respect haar zware strijd tegen wat haar geluk in de weg staat, en dat is niet min. Als je dit leest zal je niet meteen je vakantie naar Ierland boeken, Paula en haar kinderen vechten een ongelijke strijd met alcoholisme, familiaal geweld, sociaal isolement, heroïneverslaving, en dat in een rauwe, grauwe omgeving.

Ze is een tragische figuur, haar vechtlust is taai, haar hoop aandoenlijk.

Doyle's droge, telegramachtig realistische stijl maakt het nog harder, maar ook wel kaal en eentonig.

Rob says

Because I've never been an addict myself, or had to deal with anyone else's addiction in any meaningful way, it's always been sort of an abstract concept. I've viewed addiction in much the same way I viewed cancer before my mom was diagnosed with it in 1995 – as a horrible problem that must be terrible to live with but whose various indignities and anxieties never seemed all that real. But then someone you care about is

diagnosed with it, and all the little details that you never had to think about previously (scheduling events as mundane as errands in the "good" window after chemotherapy appointments; adjusting to a bland diet; being embarrassed by and helping others not be embarrassed by wigs and head wraps) suddenly become all too real. Addiction is, I imagine, much the same in this regard, and it's to Roddy Doyle's credit that *Paula Spencer* helped me see that in a way I never have before. The book tackles both addiction and cancer (although much more the former than the latter), but it does it in a way that strikes a pretty even balance between humor and pathos, ensuring it's not just a relentless slog through misery.

Part of that description, though, is a little disingenuous of me. You hear "addiction story" and most likely think of *Trainspotting* or *Less Than Zero* or *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* or any number of memoirs written by personalities famous and not-famous alike, detailing the way they got hooked and (usually) eventually kicked their habit. Paula Spencer, by contrast, is very much a victory narrative, albeit a halting, tentative one. The title character is a 48-year-old recovering alcoholic, four months dry at the start of the book. She's also a survivor of spousal abuse (see this book's predecessor, 1996's *The Woman Who Walked Into Doors*, for all the details), a housecleaner with four children whose husband Charlo was gunned down by the police after robbing a bank and taking a hostage. At the beginning she's barely hanging on, still counting the months since her last drink:

"The drink is only part of it. She's coped well with the drink. She wants a drink. She doesn't want a drink. She doesn't want a drink. She fights it. She wins. She's proud of that. She's pleased. She'll keep going. She knows she will."

Two of her children, Leanne (20) and Jack (16), live with her. Jack is the good kid, quiet and awkward, whose biggest problem is getting suspended for calling a teacher "useless" on ratemyteachers.com; Leanne, she fears (probably rightfully), is joining her in alcoholism. Her other two children, grown and with children of their own, are Nicola and John Paul. The heart of the book is watching Paula negotiate her relationships with these four, especially the three oldest, all whom remember her at her worst. And that's one thing Doyle does remarkably well, something I'd never actually considered when it comes to addiction: How the recovering addict is essentially split in two to the people who care about him or her. There's the "new" person who is trying to set each foot right on the road to recovery, but there's also the "old" person who was duplicitous or manipulative or cruel or, in Paula's case, occasionally violent herself. So while Paula's family is happy to see her doing better, there's also the memory of who she was, and the fear that she'll return to that state. It's a constant state of living in two places – two different times, really – at once, which has to be one of the unsettling things to do.

Paula also has two sisters, neither of whom she has ever been close to: Denise, who's married and having an affair with a married man, and Carmela, around whom the cancer subplot revolves. The book captures a year in Paula's life with these people as she struggles to get her life back on track. It isn't a story that deals in melodrama or huge, cathartic sequences. Like life, Paula's progress is charted hesitantly, in the way her relationship with her sisters improves, in an invitation to visit John Paul's house, in her buying a stereo and the new U2 album. In contrast to one of my recent reviews, where I wrote that a bunch of stuff happens and none of it matters, *Paula Spencer* is a book where not much happens but it's all important. And, crucially, sometimes it's in the not happening that some of the biggest growth happens. You likely know those moments: the not-so-awkward silences with someone you care about; a meaningful glance; a conversation about music or the weather that carries the subtext of an epic poem.

It's really just a lovely little book. It doesn't have the impact of Doyle's *The Commitments* or *A Star Called Henry*, but as a modest tale of a woman struggling to be good and make things right with the people she loves, *Paula Spencer* is as real, and as revelatory, as literature gets.

Read all my reviews at goldstarforrobotboy.net

CM Lodge says

I adore Roddy Doyle. From reading the Barrytown Trilogy in my late teens to now as a 40-something, he can do no wrong in my eyes. Harsh, gritty, almost humdrum in the relentlessness of Paula's life and of course within it, her battle with addiction, it's still somehow unputdownable. Anyone who read the woman who walked into doors will still care about Paula, and I loved checking back in with her and her family.

Laura says

This is another great book by Roddy Doyle. It is a follow up to The Woman Who Walked into Doors and a vivid description of the recovery process. Roddy is a master at creating characters and describing family dynamics.

Hollie says

Like most of Doyle's work this makes for a very quick and easy read. Not my favourite of his works, would only really recommend it if you've read 'The Woman Who Walked into Doors' and are still curious about how Paula's life has turned out.

Catriona says

A sequel to The Woman Who Walked into Doors. An excellent read. It came out probably 10 years after the first one so I went back and read the first one again and enjoyed it just as much the second time around and I've gone back and read them both back to back a couple more times. Roddy Doyle never disappoints but these two are my favourites of his.

Ian Wood says

I am a huge fan of Roddy Doyle and 'The Woman Who Walked into Doors' so I couldn't wait to get hold of its sequel 'Paula Spencer'. To say I was disappointed would be a huge understatement.

First off Roddy had abandoned the first person telling of the story which made Paula Spencer's initial book so believable and the emotions so convincing. Also the third person story telling is chronological rather than the switching from the past to the present so that the story was not showing us the course and effect of someone's conditioning, which was so successful in the first novel.

Also the themes were less dramatic, whilst 'The Woman Who Walked into Doors' takes us through the emotional ringer of abuse and domestic violence, 'Paula Spencer' is more the story of a baby boomer coming to terms with the mobile phone and Starbucks coffee houses. Whilst I appreciate that these are things our best writers should be criticising in print I can't help but think a character of Paula's backlog of emotional

baggage could be better served.

It is generally excepted that sequels very rarely live up to the initial story but I was hoping this would be an exception to the rule as indeed most of Roddy Doyle's writing has been.

Jackie says

Terrific book. Doyle is the master of capturing the dignity of characters who might otherwise seem off-putting. He gets all the little details of life and human interaction right--plus he's so funny! The main character here, Paula Spencer, is a former alcoholic who only recently stopped drinking. Her former husband (now dead) abused her for years. She is the mother of four mostly-grown kids, all of whom were damaged in some way. Sounds rather dreary, right? It's not at all. The book shows Paula making slow but steady progress as a mom and as a person. Paula is a great character. She's funny, caring, crabby, anxious, and hopeful. I love her relationship with her sisters and her children. Great read. Note that this book is a sequel of sorts. Doyle's earlier book *The Woman Who Walked Into Doors* was about Paula, while she was married. I haven't read that one and didn't need to to enjoy this book. I think I will go back and read it now.

Rob says

A fascinating look into the mind of an alcoholic woman who is dealing with the wreckage of her past. The apple never falls far from the tree. Two of her three kids are also battling addiction. One , a recovering heroin addict the other, a practicing alcoholic.

Her thoughts consist of regret for the live she has provided for her children and what if anything she can do to win back their love and respect. She deals with everyday life through a new pair of glasses and yet it's sometimes hard to clear the grimy film off of the old lenses. She discovers gratitude and learns to appreciate the small everyday things in life. her abstinence from alcohol does not take away the toils of day to day life. She experiences hardships with her family, including her two sisters and struggles to convince her daughter that alcohol is not the path to take to deal with life.

Roddy Doyle does an incredible job putting you inside Paula's head. Coming of age in your late 40's is never easy, especially when you clean houses and live pay check to pay check in order to make ends meet and provide for your family.

This book is an incredible look inside the mind of an alcoholic trying to put their life back in order. You will admire and adore our heroine and still feel her pain as she trudges along towards the path to happy destiny.

Marco says

Read for college. I didn't really have high expectations for *Paula Spencer* so it didn't really disappoint me. I don't think I've ever read a book whose storyline focuses on an alcoholic's recovery and its implications for herself and her family. And, in fact, it was interesting to get an insight into an alcoholic's mind. However, I really didn't like the writing style and the storyline, in general, didn't really excite me – I only read it because I had to, otherwise I wouldn't be reading it. It was not a bad reading experience and the most

positive aspect about it is that it's really easy (maybe even a bit too easy) to read and you can quickly get through it.

Thady says

What a great writer Roddy Doyle is and yet, strangely, i haven't read many of his books. Paula Spencer, the heroine of the book follows on from her misadventures in "The Woman Who Walked into Doors", a book i own but haven't read yet. Things being as they are and Doyle's writing ability being so awesome, i needed to read the happier ending before dealing with the tougher times. If only real life could be so arranged.

By all means read it yourself and enjoy - life as it is lived.

Michael Malone says

Fun and fast novel from Doyle about Paula, star of The Woman Who Walked Into Doors. I did not read that one, but still enjoyed Paula Spencer quite a bit. Spencer is a recovering alcoholic who was abused by her husband, who's now dead. She's got two grown kids out of the house, and two still at home. Paula is barely keeping it together, fighting off the urge to drink and hustling off to her job cleaning offices and homes all over Dublin. Doyle also offers an interesting perspective on changing Dublin, where people from poorer countries are settling, and taking on a bunch of the service industry jobs, and some of the locals have grown quite well to do.

Paula is funny and likable and easy to root for. I wish Doyle had put her through a bit more of a struggle, maybe having her fail in her effort to stay off alcohol. As it is, Paula gets by OK, but a slip-up or two by Doyle's crafty hand would've revealed more of her character.

Still, a fun story, offering astute observations on the human psyche, and a bit of rock 'n roll, as you can expect from Roddy Doyle.

Corey says

Poor Paula Spencer. Doyle is the poet of the struggling class. The music of his sentences, the cadence of his dialog--he's masterful--and this is one of his best.

Guy says

Als ik geen tekstjes voor goddeau bedenken, geen dakpannen vervang, geen sollicitatiebrieven en cv's in elkaar knutsel, geen al te luidruchtige lalflaminganten inmetstel in m'n kolossale, van vocht en alle andere ongemakken voorziene kelder (iemand trouwens al gemerkt dat er sinds het escaleren van "het Vlaamse hoofdstuk" haast geen kwaad woord meer te horen valt over onze allochtone medemens? de Vloaming is mits enig gepor en genoeg herhaling à la A Clockwork Orange werkelijk voor elke kar te spannen; lang leve d(i)e Vlaamse identiteit! Patatten en sosissen! Volgende week: "Nee" tegen 70-plussers!) en niet bezig ben met het ontwijken van het alomtegenwoordige geleuter, gemor en gekrakeel (comeback van het jaar, dat woord) over cruciale blog- en siteverkiezingen die het belang van de klimaatswijzigingen in de schaduw stellen, dan wil ik wel eens een boek ter hand nemen. Soms ga ik zelfs verder en lees ik het. Old school, weet

u wel. Deze maand weer heel even het slachtoffer van dwangneurose #117: lees alles van een auteur als je introductie bevredigend was.

Roddy Doyle dus, de Ier die de wereld *The Commitments* (1987) schonk, een hilarische, onweerstaanbare farce die bedacht werd met een al even geslaagde film over een troep aanmodderende lads uit een arbeidersmilieu die hun innerlijke neger aan het woord laten en vastbesloten zijn om het meest funky soulorkest ten oosten van Memphis uit de grond te stampen. Samen met *The Snapper* (1990) en *The Van* (1991) vormde het boek *The Barrytown Trilogy*, een brok “uit het leven gegrepen” (niet op te vatten in de duffe kleinkunstinterpretatie van de term, graag) schrijverij die, zoals ik eerder al eens verkondigde n.a.v. *The Woman Who Walked Into Doors*, een bijzonder geslaagde combinatie van de lach en de traan biedt. Doyles boeken kunnen ingedeeld worden bij het sociaal-realisme, maar ze zijn geen mistroostige inblik in de wereld van arbeiders- en/of marginalenellende, maar vaak hilarische brokken vitaliteit die schipperen tussen *Shameless* en het beste van Mike Leigh. Het iets serieuzere *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* (1993), beloond met de prestigieuze Booker Prize, was zo mogelijk nog beter.

Paula Spencer (2006) is het vervolg op *The Woman Who Walked Into Doors* (1996), een van de beste boeken die ik dit jaar in handen kreeg. Het ene boek volgde een decennium na het andere en die tijdssprong is ook het geval voor Paula Spencer. Tien jaar zijn er verstreken sinds de dag dat Charlo, de echtgenoot die haar jarenlang bont en blauw timmerde en opzadelde met een half verdwenen gebit en knoert van een minderwaardigheidscomplex, omkwam bij een uit de hand gelopen roofoverval. Tien jaar van aanmodderen, afrekenen met een alcoholverslaving en zien hoe niet al je kinderen er het beste van maken. De ene mag dan wel van de harddrugs af zijn, de andere bewandelt het pad van binge drinking dat de nu achtenveertigjarige moeder al te goed kent. Opnieuw gaat Doyle zonder pardon tewerk: Spencer slaagt er niet echt in voldoening schenkende relaties met kinderen op te bouwen, moet aan het einde van de maand nog steeds op zoek naar eten in de uithoeken van de diepvries, moet elke dag nog weerstaan aan de verlokkingen van alcohol, en viert haar verjaardag alleen, maar het boek zorgt niet voor een behoefte aan antidepressiva en serotonine. Het is geen *Jude The Obscure*.

Er zijn niet enkel de harde, maar vaak bij de kloten grijpende dialogen (het hardcore getater tijdens de onderonsjes van Paula en haar twee zussen is vooral memorabel), maar de personages zijn allemaal gefnuikte, van afgebroken kanten voorziene losers, misfits en moeilijkaards van vlees, bloed en vuilbekkerij, die er werkelijk alles aan deden om zich in een put te werken, Paula niet in het minst. Ze lijkt zichzelf niet eens een respectabel, zorgenvrij leven te gunnen, weet wat ze best kan doen om haar situatie en verhouding met anderen te verbeteren, maar komt er eenvoudigweg niet toe. Dat ze ondanks al die mislukkingen toch een zekere eigenwaarde weet te bewaren is Doyle's grootste triomf. Aan het einde van het boek is er geen opmerkelijke verbetering, geen zicht op een florissante toekomst, geen hartverwarmende familiereünie waarbij de geschillen worden bijgelegd. Wat wel: Paula leeft nog, trekt haar plan, kan nog steeds van de drank afblijven, leert werken met internet en GSM (geweldige passages!), werkt aan het contact met haar kleinkinderen, behoudt haar waardigheid. En dat allemaal gegoten in een taal en verhaal met een joekel van een hart. Dat het maar snel 2016 wordt. (****1/2)

Colin O'Grady says

Having just finished *Paula Spencer*, it's only natural to compare it back to *The Woman Who Walked Into Doors*. While I think the earlier book is superior in terms of its artistry--perhaps simply because the second book is more of the same--I enjoyed reading this one more. The tension in the first book comes from an obvious place: Paula's struggle with her alcoholism and her abusive marriage. In this book, Doyle gives us a

newly sober Paula fifteen years later and sets up a different tension. Now, instead of hoping against hope that she somehow pulls herself out of her dead-end life, we get to root for Paula as she tries to get through each day and each moment without falling back into drink.

Once again, Doyle blew me away with how authentically he creates Paula's voice. I'll go out on a limb and say that I've never come across another male writer who constructed a female identity as well as Doyle has with Paula. We get to see her anxieties as a mother, as a sister, and as a single woman; we also get to see how every once of these was and is still affected by her alcoholism. Because the entire narration comes from inside Paula's head, all of her fears and insecurities are laid bare. The fact that Doyle makes her so vulnerable to us is the biggest reason that she is so easy to connect to as a character. This is especially important because the book has no real running narrative; Paula is the story.

Ultimately, I liked *The Woman Who Walked Into Doors* more as a book, but it was in this book that I really came to love Paula herself. If you've got an inclination to read one, you really should read them both.

Rowan says

usually i love Roddy Doyle. this book depressed the hell out of me; i could not get past the sad minutiae of this woman's life. i have to call it quits.

Donna McCaul Thibodeau says

This one was also a quick read. I would say it's like revisiting a friend that you haven't seen in a good while and finding out that they aren't quite as interesting as you remembered. Perhaps it's the fact that there is no shock value, unlike *The Woman Who Walked Into Doors*. Still worth a read.

Nancynoreen says

So far, this bit is sticking with me.

"You can't leave things behind. They come with you. You can manage. That's the best you can expect. She manages." page 12

And as it happens, this remains the theme throughout. Not just for Paula, but her children, extended family, her neighborhood and beyond. To Ireland itself. The staccato writing style put me a bit off at first. But it is necessary in order to capture Paula herself. And her victories over her own life, which come haltingly at first.

This is a sequel of sorts to *The Woman who Walked into Doors*. I have not read that yet; this story stands well on it's own. But I would like to go back and see from whence this phoenix slowly rose.

Bertbarber says

This is a tough book to review. I didn't enjoy it but feel it's not a bad book. It's style is staccato, abrupt, quick scatter-gun dialogue interspersed with some astute social observation, though in a rather inaccessible way; to me anyway.

I found the lack of flow in it's structure disconcerting, unsure whether Doyle was attempting something very difficult, and falling short, or just attempting something that would never work.

Also the narrative for me was too dilute, shared between several family members with no 'major' story for me to grasp and keep me interested, apart from Paula meandering through it all.

Perhaps that is the point; it's a family, and the protagonists loyalties are split and spread wide. But what is 'real' may not always be good to read. Just too much 'spare' dialogue for me; rambling at times, repetition of words (lovely) may be real, but again it's too prominent and gets irritating.

Highlights well the problems and perils of parenthood (motherhood mainly) , and surviving it in today's complicated world; also keen observations on addiction. Deep felt and shocking in places too, but the main character, Paula, was never quite interesting enough in the end for me. Just a continuous flow of her feelings and her struggle.

If a book isn't fun to read, the author has to give me a better reason to keep going.
