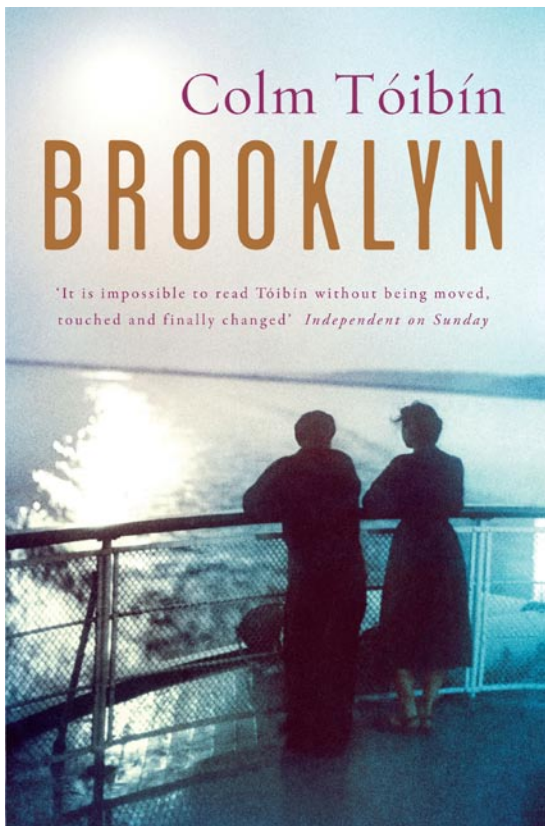


Reader's Guide



Other books by Colm Tóibín

The South (1990)
The Heather Blazing (1992)
The Story of the Night (1996)
The Blackwater Lightship (1999)
The Master (2004)
Mothers and Sons (2006)

Brooklyn Colm Tóibín

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About the author

Colm Tóibín was born in Enniscorthy, Co Wexford in 1955 and educated at University College Dublin. He is the author of five novels. *The Blackwater Lightship* (1999) was shortlisted for the Booker Prize and *The Master* was also shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2004 and was the winner of the Los Angeles Times Novel of the Year and the Prix du Meilleur Livre Etranger in France. Tóibín's books have been translated into twenty-five languages.

Brooklyn

In a small town in the south-east of Ireland in the 1950s, Eilis Lacey is one among many of her generation who cannot find work at home. So when a job is offered in America, it is clear that she must go. Leaving her family and home, Eilis sets off to forge a new life for herself in Brooklyn. Young, homesick and alone, she gradually buries the pain of parting beneath the rhythms of a new life – days at the till in a large department store, night classes in Brooklyn College and Friday evenings on the dance floor of the parish hall – until she realizes that she has found a sort of happiness. But when tragic news summons her back to Ireland, and the constrictions of her old life unexpectedly give way to new possibilities, she finds herself facing a terrible choice: between love and happiness in the land where she belongs and the promises she must keep on the far side of the ocean.

Brooklyn is a tender story of great love and loss, and of the heartbreaking choice between personal freedom and duty. In the character of Eilis Lacey Colm Tóibín has created a remarkable heroine and in *Brooklyn* a novel of devastating emotional power.

Discussion points

Colm Tóibín's writing is frequently described as 'understated' and 'economical', does this writing style appeal to you. What impact did it have on the narration of *Brooklyn*?

Eilis is frequently passive about her own destiny and rarely makes decisions; did this endear her to you or irritate you?

Some readers have described *Brooklyn* as predictable and straight forward, others as complex and multi-layered, what is your response?

At the end of the story which choice do you wish Eilis had made?

Did the novel end sooner than you wanted it to?

Themed reading

The Portrait of a Lady Henry James
Tess of the D'Urbervilles Thomas Hardy
Mary Lavelle Kate O'Brien

Useful links

www.themanbookerprize.com
www.penguin.co.uk
www.guardian.co.uk/books/2009/apr/26/colm-toibin-brooklyn