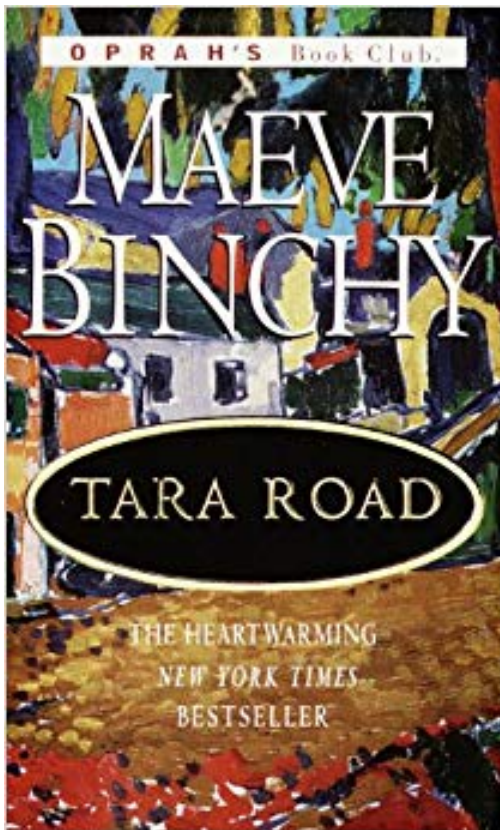


Tara Road (Turtleback School & Library Binding Edition) by Maeve Binchy



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Reviews of the Tara Road (Turtleback School & Library Binding Edition) by Maeve Binchy

Hono

I've only skimmed the reviews, but I saw references to what a...well, weak-willed un-liberated woman the main character is, and I suppose to some extent that's true, but I'm not sure that's the point: I think Binchy was writing to depict the Irish character in a time of unexpected prosperity and modernization of a country that took a long time to make the changes others did. Things like divorce, gay rights, adultery, money, politics, fashion...it's all in there, and in that way reads like typical "chick lit," although the author can spin a long, involved story better than most, and is generally worth reading. My point here, however, is that this is a story of modern Ireland, in a prosperous time--which is now over, apparently--and one of increasing freedoms for its citizens,

particularly women. But she makes it plain that there are still women like the ones I grew up with, the women who "stand by their man" no matter what. But she does have the art of depicting each one a little differently, and so they are interesting, each with different degrees of development. Some of the characters--the main character among them--are enough to make you want to scream, in the way they allow themselves to be treated, and others are quite inspirational. But all of them seem to be loyal helpmates, even the most independent of them, and one thing I notice about all Binchy's female characters is that they exhibit great self-control, excellent manners and supreme loyalty. Otherwise, she depicts the Irish love for community and the natural ability for friendship of the Irish, as compared to us more insular Americans: every event seems to be attended by "a cast of thousands," as she humorously terms it. We have a lot to learn from our neighbors about friendship.

Ffel

Ria and Danny Lynch seem to have it all. A gorgeous home, a wealthy lifestyle, 2 beautiful children, and a loving relationship (or so Ria thinks). Their home is the gathering place for family and friends, and Ria always has something cooking to share with anyone who wants to eat. She realizes her life is no where near as perfect as she thinks, her husband is a philanderer, and her life is falling apart. One day, the phone rings, and a woman named Marilyn calls looking for Danny. She met Danny, a real estate agent, many years ago, and wishes to ask him if he knows of anyone who will house swap with her. She lives in a gorgeous home in Connecticut and needs to get away and get her mind clear again. In chatting with her, Ria says that the plan sounds good to her and they agree to swap homes for a while. In making a fresh start, no matter how brief, the women get a chance to find themselves and figure out what their futures will look like. Marilyn, who tends to keep to herself at home, gets to know all the neighbors and uncovers secrets about them that directly affect Ria. While at first, Marilyn harbors a dislike of Ria (and vice versa) they soon realize that the other woman has suffering and trials and feel love and compassion for each other. Ria, whose home is an open door to all, finds Marilyn keeps to herself and even those closest to her have never been in the house. She gets to know everyone in Marilyn's life and invites them over to swim, party, eat and enjoy themselves. I won't give away the ending, but they do end up meeting and it's very satisfying. This book is about discovery of themselves and new beginnings. I really enjoyed how the women became so protective and loving of each other, despite only speaking on the phone.

Talrajas

Overall, I like this book by Maeve Binchy. It takes place in the 1980's-1990's in Dublin, Ireland and follows Ria Lynch through her 20's to late 30's. She marries, has kids, enjoys prosperity due to her handsome, successful husband, decorates her fantastic house (on Tara Road of course) and has many friends. Her mom stops by the house a lot. A guy plants a kitchen garden in her yard. Her chronically-abused friend comes and cleans her house for her husband's drinking money. Her other best friend also is successful (and beautiful) and buys a nice place next door to hers. Sometimes they eat at Quentins. Sometimes they eat at Colm's Restaurant. Ria also cooks a lot and lives a life of almost oblivious happiness.

Until her daughter reaches the age of 14, then things take a downturn for Ria. The daughter suddenly turns into a terrible, irritating caricature of a spoiled teenage princess. Her son (age 9) is a comic-relief goofball who always says the wrong thing at the wrong time (kind of funny actually). Her handsome, successful husband stays handsome but less successful and turns out to be not so faithful. Anyways, a lady calls from America and they decide to swap houses for a summer. Ria and the lady both confront personal issues during their times in each others homes and grow emotionally. By the end, the good people are rewarded with success, and the bad people have suffered losses. All is well in Ireland.

The plot is meandering and so is the story-telling, but it is an enjoyable Binchy novel. The beauty of her novels is that they go nowhere fast but are entertaining and a good distraction for the mind. She has a cozy, gossipy writing style that I enjoy. Many of the characters are not fully developed, and are

defined by one dominating characteristic (abused Gertie, Ruthless Rosemary, slutty Kitty, etc). If you like Binchy, you will probably like this novel and it is worth reading.

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