

Creature of the Night Study Guide

Creature of the Night by Kate Thompson (author)

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

Creature of the Night Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Chapters 1 - 10.....	4
Chapters 11 - 21.....	6
Chapters 22 - 30.....	8
Chapters 31 - 41.....	10
Chapters 42 - Epilogue.....	12
Characters.....	14
Objects/Places.....	19
Themes.....	22
Style.....	24
Quotes.....	26
Topics for Discussion.....	28



Plot Summary

Robert, or Bobby, is a fourteen-year-old Irish youth living with his unmarried mother and his brother Dennis, who is four-years-old. The family relocates from Dublin to a small rural area on the outskirts of Ennis in County Clare. Robert's mother moves for two primary reasons—she wants to get Robert away from his criminal gang, and in turn she hopes to elude numerous debt collectors who pester her for money. The family moves into a small house on the property of PJ and Margaret Dooley and they pay the deposit and first rent with borrowed money. Robert's mother does not work and lives on the dole, or public funds, supplemented with whatever she can borrow from anyone. Robert immediately decides he hates the country and plans to return to Dublin to spend more time with his friends pursuing criminal endeavors and having fun. Over the course of the next two weeks, Robert does manage to get himself back to Dublin a few times. On every trip he gets into criminal mischief and uses drugs and alcohol. On his first return he steals an automobile and subsequently is involved in a crash. When the police pick him up he rats out his older friend, Mick, and Mick is sent to prison while Robert is returned home. On subsequent trips Robert realizes that his remaining friends want nothing more to do with him because they feel he no longer is reliable in a pinch because he didn't remain silent with the police. Meanwhile, during his time near Ennis, Robert is befriended by Coleman Dooley, the son of PJ and Margaret. Coleman is a good humored and hard-working and teaches Robert about farm life, work, and morality.

As time passes, Dennis becomes obsessed with an imaginary nocturnal visitor and often leaves the rented house through the dog flap on the door. Robert and his mother also learn the previous tenant, Lars, has gone missing. They also hear many rumors about the house being haunted by fairies. Robert eventually discovers that Lars has not simply left but has been murdered. Robert's mother also realizes about this time that the bill collectors eventually will track her down—they already are pestering his sister Carmel in Dublin. Refusing to live in a 'haunted' house, Robert's mother moves the family back to Dublin where they stay with the disgruntled Carmel and her eighteen-year-old son Luke. Luke, previously one of Robert's closest friends, now rejects him completely for turning on Mick. Carmel demands that Robert must leave because she, too, does not trust him. Robert realizes that his meager savings will not secure housing and finally blows all his money on a drug binge with the Beetle, last person who will talk with him. Finally realizing he has no future, Robert leaves Dublin and returns to Ennis where he asks the estranged Dooley family to give him a second chance as a hired hand.



Chapters 1 - 10

Chapters 1 - 10 Summary

In June, Robert, his mother, and his little brother Dennis move from Dublin to a small rental house on a farm on the outskirts of Ennis. Robert states he has no plans to remain with the family. PJ Dooley, the landlord, picks them up in Ennis and transports them to the rental house. Dooley lives nearby. The house has two stories and three bedrooms upstairs. The previous tenant, Lars, was from Sweden and vanished under mysterious circumstances—literally simply vanishing one day. He left behind many things which have been packed into a large closet, and an automobile—a Skoda—that is left in the driveway. Robert immediately begins to scheme about stealing the Skoda so he can return to Dublin and be with his friends.

Robert looks around the area and secretly smokes a cigarette outside. Then he helps his mother locate and turn on the gas pipe. Later, Grandma Dooley visits and tells some tall tales about the house being located on a fairy line between two fairy mounds. She tells the new tenants to always leave out a dish of milk for the fairies and notes that Lars always did so. A dog named Bimbo comes with Grandma Dooley and stays behind when she leaves—it likes to sleep under the table in the kitchen.

Robert reminisces about his friends in Dublin—Beetle, Mick, and his cousin Fluke. Robert is fourteen, the three others eighteen. They form a sort of gang and commit numerous—nearly constant—criminal acts to get money for alcohol and drugs. Robert was recruited into the gang because he was younger—his age prevents some of the serious legal consequences that might be faced by the others. Because of this, they always assign him the riskiest parts of their activities. Later, Robert finds Lars' old jacket and discovers some cash and the keys to the Skoda, and he steals it all. Later he watches television with his mom and argues with her about various things. The first night in the house passes with Robert plotting on stealing the Skoda. Dennis announces that during the night he went downstairs and met "a little woman" (p. 29) looking in through the dog flap on the door. The second day ma takes Dennis and goes to Mass with the rest of the town. Robert refuses to go.

Chapters 1 - 10 Analysis

The introductory chapters of the novel introduce most of the characters in the narrative, including Robert, the narrator and the protagonist. Robert is characterized as a fourteen-year-old delinquent who enjoys criminal behavior and substance abuse. He lives with his mother, twenty-eight and unwed, and his little brother Dennis, four-years-old. The family has just moved from Dublin to Ennis, basically from the east coast to the west coast of Ireland. Robert surmises his mother has moved for two reasons—one, to part him from his hooligan friends, and two, to escape being harried by debt collectors. It quickly becomes evident that Robert's mother is a professional at juggling public



assistance funds, short term loans, and funds from anywhere she can get them—she has no intention of ever paying these loans off. The most-difficult aspect of the novel involves Robert's character—he is not a likable person and his continued narration throughout the novel makes him increasingly unlikable. Given this, it is not surprising that he is honest as a narrator and he is reliable as a narrator. He discloses his own thoughts and actions but does not have any special insight into other characters. In fact, he seems nearly deliberately obtuse about interpersonal relationships and insight. However, the reader must remember that Robert, while overly-mature in some areas, is only fourteen and can hardly be expected to be mature in social aspects. One of the first major turning points in the narrative opens the novel—the relocation from Dublin to Ennis. A second turning point comes when the landlord, PJ Dooley, does not demand deposit and rent prior to moving the family in—he 'trusts' them which leaves Robert and his mother flabbergasted at Dooley's presumed ignorance.

These chapters also introduce the principle aspects of the narrative plot—Robert's desire to return to Dublin on the one hand and the strange goings-on in the rental house prior to Robert's occupancy on the other hand. Robert will spend the remainder of the novel discovering he doesn't really want to go back to Dublin and trying to unravel the mystery behind the house that first is presented by Grandmother Dooley.



Chapters 11 - 21

Chapters 11 - 21 Summary

While his mother is away at church, Robert inspects the Skoda and changes one tire that is low on pressure for the spare. After church, Robert tries his hand at chopping wood and is watched by Coleman Dooley, the son of the landlord. Coleman explains the axe is dull so he takes Robert up to his grandfather's house to get the axe sharpened. After, Grandma Dooley tells Robert about the original owners of the house he has just rented. They had a daughter with some peculiar, but unknown, developmental issue. The daughter lived in the house for sixteen years but never was seen by anyone. However, the daughter always shrieked and moaned, sounding something like a cat, and most of the neighbors heard the eerie sounds all the time. Peggy, the mother, often claimed the girl was not a daughter but was a changeling, or fairy. When the daughter disappeared at fifteen, the parents, Joe and Peggy, served prison time for murder. Peggy died in prison but Joe returned and lived in the house until his death at an advanced age. Then, Coleman borrows his father's chainsaw. With the chainsaw and the sharpened axe, Coleman and Robert cut quite a bit of wood. That night Robert's imagination runs wild and he speculates about the young strange girl and thinks he hears various creepy noises. He stays up until his mother falls asleep and then he steals the Skoda and drives to Dublin. He calls Fluke but gets the brushoff. He can't get hold of Beetle, so finally he calls Mick and then picks him up. Mick insists on driving and starts speeding through red lights until he deliberately causes an accident. Mick then viciously attacks the man he ran into as Robert runs away. In the accident Robert is injured in the face and shoulder and spends the night sleeping under a bridge. He tries to sneak onto a bus back into town but gets ejected so he walks. He calls Fluke and then gets picked up by the police. During the police interview he claims that Mick has been controlling him, threatening to murder his mother and Dennis, if he does not do what Mick says. He claims he stole the car and returned to Dublin on Mick's orders. After the police promise his testimony will not be revealed, he then tells several incriminating things about Mick. The police take him home to Ennis.

Chapters 11 - 21 Analysis

These chapters describe Robert's first disastrous return to Dublin (he will make the trip several times during the novel). He steals a car that has been left by the previous tenant. PJ Dooley feels responsible for the monetary value of the car and plans to end the money to Lars, the previous tenant, once he can be tracked down. Thus, from PJ's perspective, Robert has stolen a car for which PJ is responsible. Robert not only steals the car but wrecks it. This is not far from what he planned to do with it anyway, having previously considered sinking it into the ocean or burning it for fun. Robert is injured in the wreck but recovers after a few days. More seriously, however, the driver during the wreck—one of Robert's friends—seriously beats the driver of the other vehicle. Robert runs away but later gets picked up by police. His subsequent action in the police station



seems to him canny at the time but in fact has far-reaching influence in his life. Basically, he plays the victimized child and throws all the blame for everything onto Mick, his friend. The police promise that his ratting-out of Mick will be utterly private but of course police lie all the time—in fact, within a day Mick and other associates of Robert already know that he has played the stool pigeon. This rather serious breach of trust precludes Robert from ever again forming bonds with his prior associates—they view him as a rat. Of course it takes several days for Robert to realize this so when the police return him home he feels rather proud of his own dissimulation. Having said that, it is still not altogether untrue that he has been taken advantage of by Mick, Luke, and Beetle—but he has knowingly been taken advantage of and has never particularly minded it. These chapters also introduce the remaining characters in the novel, completing the introductory portions of the narrative.



Chapters 22 - 30

Chapters 22 - 30 Summary

The next day Coleman visits, he scolds Robert for stealing a car, and shows him two fairy forts—large regular hills with depressions in the top. One of the forts has a tunnel that is small—it is rumored to go down into a series of caves below the hill. Robert realizes his rented house does indeed sit on a line between the two fairy forts. Incidentally, one of the fairy forts sits on land owned by Kevin Talty, an older curmudgeonly resident. That afternoon, PJ Dooley comes by and attempts to evict the family from the rental but Robert's mother secures another chance. PJ then announces he will file police charges to recuperate the cost of the stolen vehicle but again Robert's mother intercedes and PJ accepts to take Robert on as a manual laborer on the farm to pay off the debt—it will take several months of daily work. That night Dennis sleeps with his mother and wets the bed causing a row. In the morning, Coleman calls for Robert and they spend the day cutting and hauling wood. Robert eats meals with the Dooley family and is amazed at the quality and quantity of food. His injured shoulder bothers him during the day. That evening Robert vituperates his mother for not keeping house. During the night Robert wakes up to sounds in the kitchen—Dennis is downstairs moving about and whispering. Robert goes downstairs and Dennis claims to have been talking with a tiny woman who has run away.

The next day Robert and PJ work together; Coleman works at his part-time job in an Ennis grocery store. Robert gathers and hauls hay, and eats big meals at the Dooley home. The next day Robert's mother attends a funeral because everyone else is going. Robert and Coleman spend the day gathering hay. That night Dennis again tells Robert about the little woman—he says she has no parents and no family. Robert connives bus fare from his mother and permission to return to Dublin for the weekend. He plans to stay with his cousin Luke but when he arrives Luke tells him he's not welcome. Instead, Robert calls Beetle and they buy and take drugs—probably heroin. When he wakes up he goes to his old home, realizes he doesn't live there anymore, and then goes to Carmel's apartment and crashes in Luke's bed because Luke has moved out. Luke wakes him up when he returns to pick up belongings. Carmel gives Robert money for a return bus ticket but he buys cigarettes. Later, the police pick him up and take him to the bus station where he tries to scam a ticket until an older man buys him one. The bus drops him off miles from home so he takes a cab and then tells his mother to pay for the fare.

Chapters 22 - 30 Analysis

These chapters introduce the concept of responsible work to Robert; his transition from juvenile delinquent to responsible adult begins here, though it begins with fits and starts. He first works to pay off the ruined automobile but eventually he comes to value work for its own sake. The characterization of Robert's family continues and his mother



appears less and less sympathetic as the narrative develops. The second major narrative development features Dennis' fascination with nighttime excursions and seeing a little woman who, he claims, creeps into the house at night through the dog flap. Note that Dennis claims to see the woman but there is no other physical evidence of her reality. True, there is substantial circumstantial evidence but nothing that is not easily explained by something more probably than a malevolent fairy. However, Robert is fairly accepting of the idea and over the next week or so will come to believe that Dennis is perhaps really in danger from an evil fairy who visits the house at night. Dennis of course has other imaginary friends—Jimjam Bunny, for one. Dennis also is afraid of wetting the bed and on several occasions he is sent away from bed by his mother or Robert. Given that Dennis spends all day doing nothing in the house it hardly is surprising that he might not be asleep all night long. That he wanders downstairs and gets out food, and sometimes goes outside, is hardly surprising. His insistence on seeing a little woman is somewhat peculiar; although he makes this claim several times it is only over the course of a week and ten years later he does not recall it at all. That no one else sees the little woman fairly conclusively establishes her non-existence. Probably.



Chapters 31 - 41

Chapters 31 - 41 Summary

Robert again helps PJ and Coleman loading baled hay from the field, hauling it to the storage area, and stacking it there. That night Robert mother complains that there is no cable for the DVD player—PJ has said he will bring one but he's forgotten; he also said the old cable is in storage behind all of Lars' things but she doesn't want to move that much stuff looking for it. That night Robert wakes up and hears whispering and movement in the kitchen. He goes downstairs and finds Dennis who says the little woman has just left. Milk and cake are on the table. Robert cleans up and sends Dennis to bed. The next day Robert and Coleman dig out an old barn and lay drainage pipe. Coleman and PJ gives Robert and old bicycle. He is very fond of his bike. That night a noise wakes Robert and he runs downstairs to find the dog coming through the dog flap. The next day Robert cuts hay and meets Kevin Talty, the curmudgeonly neighbor. The next day Robert helps grandpa Dooley cut silage and tries, unsuccessfully, to use a scythe. Frustrated and angry, he abandons the tool in the field. He rides his bike into Ennis and tries to buy alcohol but is carded. So he steals alcohol from a woman who has just purchased it. He then rides out of town, gets drunk, and feels sick. He meets PJ on the road, going home, and catches a ride. The next day Robert decides to find the DVD cable so he unloads the closet. Instead of finding the cable he finds Lars' diary. The diary is in Swedish but is had several drawings, one shows a little elfin woman, or fairy, coming in through the dog flap on the door. In the drawing the woman's hair is caught in the flap and several strands of what appears to be hair are stuck between the pages. Robert looks through the diary and then puts it back. Robert decides to start leaving milk out for the little woman. The next day Robert works for PJ again, this time burning stubble in a field and clearing it—PJ has just bought the field. Robert does a good job and in the evening PJ is surprised and pleased. That night Robert and his mother fight about everything and when Dennis spills milk that he is getting for the little woman, his mother thrashes him.

Chapters 31 - 41 Analysis

These chapters move the narrative along at a slow pace, maintaining the brooding developmental pace of the narrative. For the most part nothing major happens. Coleman is characterized and set up as a narrative counterweight to Robert: where Robert is flighty, unreliable, and immoral, Coleman is dependable, reliable, and moral. Fortunately Coleman influence Robert but Robert does not influence Coleman. This segment of the novel also contrasts Robert's family with Coleman's family. Robert's mother was only fourteen when she had her first child; she has never been married and has never been employed. She has no extended family and no social connections. Coleman's family is traditional, centered, and focused on family values and neighborly support. As Robert continues to work, Dennis continues to comment on his nocturnal visitor. By this point in the narrative the essential dynamics have all been established



and the narrative plot and characterizations are fully developed. Robert's character is established and must choose between a future of criminality or a future of responsibility.

Meanwhile Kevin Talty is introduced; somewhat curmudgeonly but apparently harmless, he becomes the police's principle focus of attention in Lars' developing murder case—though he never is charged.



Chapters 42 - Epilogue

Chapters 42 - Epilogue Summary

Robert tells his mother he thinks the house is haunted and she gets angry. The next day Robert works with Mattie, helping him rebuild an engine. Robert learns how to use a torque wrench and thinks it's very interesting. That afternoon Robert and his mother visit with Margaret Dooley and look through a photograph album that shows the history of the rental house. When the subject of the original owner's daughter comes up Robert exclaims that grandma Dooley said she was murdered. Margaret says that was merely rumor. When Dennis sees a photograph of Lars he says that Lars is wearing a dress—apparently conflating the dress on his little woman with Lars' shirt. After lunch Robert helps Mattie clean the garage and has a good time. That night Robert thinks about being fourteen and thinks about his mother being fourteen when she had him and became responsible as a parent. In the morning Dennis tells Robert he has been thinking he might marry the little woman because she wants to be a family and doesn't want to be alone. Robert goes into town and buys his own torque wrench and feels good about owning a tool. That afternoon Robert and his mother fight again; he accuses her of not caring whether Dennis is cared for in the new house, supposedly haunted. He decides to show her Lars' journal and digs it out again, this discovering Lars' passport, identifications, papers, and a lot of money stuck in the back—he takes all these things, planning to sell them for money. Soon enough Robert takes off for Dublin, reasoning he can get apartment with all the money he has found. On the bus, however, he realizes that Lars has not left capriciously, as suspected, because he couldn't go anywhere without his passport and identification. He gets off the bus and returns home, taking the passport, identification, and papers to the Margaret Dooley—he keeps the money. Margaret calls the police and a burst of police activity resumes. The police search the rental house and surrounding area and then dig down into one of the fairy forts where they find some evidence. Later they tape off a huge area of Kevin Talty's property and locate the corpse of Lars, dismembered and cut into small pieces. They find the knife used in the fairy fort and they fingerprint Dennis because the bloody fingerprints on the knife are child-sized. They also find Lars' shirt that Dennis instantly claims is the dress worn by the little woman. Robert's mother furiously demands her deposit and rent be returned but PJ refuses, instead saying he will use them to partially pay off the stolen Skoda. Robert and his mother move to Dublin and live with Carmel—she insists that Robert can't stay for long because of his bad character. Robert plans to live alone by using the money he took from Lars' diary—but it's not enough to find a room. After a few days Robert telephones Coleman and explains his theory of the murder—the young daughter murdered him for snooping. Coleman laughs it off as ridiculous. Later, Robert and Luke get into a fistfight. Frustrated and, as always, angry, Robert then meets with Beetle and they spend all of the money Robert has on a two-day drug and alcohol binge. When he returns to Carmel's place she won't let him in. Robert returns to the Dooley house and asks for a second chance to pay off the money he owes for stealing and wrecking the Skoda—PJ lets him in. In the Epilogue, Robert and Dennis return to Ennis ten years later. They look over the area and note how some things have changed



and some things haven't. Dennis does not remember anything about any little woman or the house—after all he had lived there only two weeks when he was four years old. Robert muses that the murderer was never identified—Kevin Talty was questioned several times but never charged. Robert appears to have become a working man—a mechanic, like Mattie.

Chapters 42 - Epilogue Analysis

The last few chapters of "Creature of the Night" present the climax and the falling action of the narrative. The climax begins with a visit between Robert's mother and Margaret Dooley when a photograph album is passed around. At this point, Robert claims that the original tenants murdered their own child and served prison time for it. This is basically the final straw for his mother—she will not live in a house with such a history. Meanwhile Robert also discovers critical documents—passport, identification, bank cards, cash—that essentially prove Lars has not run off on a wild goose chase but has actually vanished. The police are summoned and perform a wide search (why this was not performed before is not clear). They find various suspicious things, including the presumed murder weapon, and then the corpse of Lars, dismembered and mutilated. And buried on Kevin Talty's property. Kevin is questioned multiple times but never arrested. In essence, Lars investigates a local tunnel, is murdered in the tunnel, then cut up into pieces and buried on Kevin's property. No motive or suspect is identified and the case never is solved. Based on Lars' diary, local hearsay, and especially Dennis' nighttime little woman, Robert fully concludes that the little woman is either an abandoned and developmentally abnormal woman of about forty years of age, or a malevolent fairy. The reader must make their own conclusion because the narrative provides no resolution on this point. Note, however, that Robert does infer that he, himself, is the creature of the night that informs the novel's title. When Robert's mother leaves for Dublin he goes with her. His stay there is pointless and involves spending a huge sum of money on a prolonged drug binge. When he wakes up he concludes his life in Dublin is going nowhere fast. He returns to Ennis and asks for a second chance; to his credit, PJ extends an offer.

The brief epilogue happens ten years after the narrative. Robert and Dennis return to Ennis. Dennis is now the same age, fourteen, as was Robert during the primary narrative. Their mother, not appearing, would be a ripe old forty-two. Dennis flatly states he remembers nothing about Ennis at all. Robert of course does. Though the epilogue does not state it explicitly, symbolically we learn that Robert has become a mechanic (the reference to greasy prints left on white bread is a reference to an earlier scene involving Mattie the mechanic). Robert finally has grown up and 'made good' on PJ's second-chance offer. In this respect, at least, the novel has a happy ending and offers a constructive message.



Characters

Robert

Robert, or Bobby, is the narrator of "Creature of the Night" and is the central protagonist of the narrative. He is fourteen years old when the novel opens. His mother, only twenty-eight years old, and his little half-brother, Dennis, four, comprise his family. Robert does not consider Dennis a 'real' brother, and Robert's mother will not tell him anything about his real father. The relationships between Robert and his mother, and between Robert and his brother, are strained and dysfunctional, and often become somewhat physically violent. He often swears at his mother and frequently calls her vituperative names. Robert uses profanity regularly and smokes as often as he can steal cigarettes. He binge drinks as often as he can obtain alcohol and he uses drugs as frequently as he can obtain them. Robert's behavior typically is criminal. During the novel he steals and wrecks an automobile, shoplifts several items of food on several occasions, steals unattended money as often as he can, and performs snatch-and-run thefts of several costly items. Robert considers himself superior and intelligent for engaging in criminal activities and by contrasts views those who work for a living as stupid or misguided.

Robert's primary focus throughout the novel appears to be to have good times with his friends. However, his friends clearly view him only as a source of income and—because of his age—a person who can get away with doing criminal acts without serious consequences. In fact he gains nothing from associating with those he considers his friends. They take his money and in exchange give him cigarettes, alcohol, and illegal drugs—after they take their large cut off the top. Robert accepts this as simply the way things operate. He also spends much time practicing on how to escape the police or other pursuers and believes himself nearly incapable of being apprehended. In general, his self-narrated self-characterization leaves very little sympathy in a typical reader. At the conclusion of the novel, however, Robert appears to have made some insightful decisions regarding his potential future. And in the Epilogue of the novel Robert reveals that, ten years later, he has become a working mechanic and something of an older brother to Dennis.

Dennis

Dennis is a four-year-old Irish boy, the second of two children to an unwed mother. His mother, only twenty-eight years old, and his older half-brother, Robert, fourteen, comprise his family. Dennis' father had lived with his mother for at least some time around his birth, prior to abandoning the family. Dennis does not remember his father but Robert recalls some details about the man; mostly negative details. For most of the novel Dennis struggles to gain his mother's affection or at least attention and generally is not particularly successful in doing so. Dennis looks to his older brother Robert on several occasions as a sort of paternal figure, but generally is rebuffed. He often wets



the bed which enrages his mother. Dennis relies on an apparently imaginary friend called Jimjam Bunny to awaken him from sleep and remind him to use the toilet—Jimjam Bunny often is not successful. Dennis befriends a local stray dog named Bimbo and spends much time playing with the dog. He otherwise spends his day making messes, watching television, and playing in the yard. During nighttime Dennis frequently wakes up and spends time in the kitchen or in the yard interacting with a tiny woman who wears a man's blue shirt as a dress. Dennis often feeds her milk, cake, or occasionally chocolate. Whether this tiny woman is real or imaginary cannot be determined within the narrative structure but at least Robert comes to believe that Dennis' imaginary tiny woman is in fact a malevolent fairy. On one occasion Dennis considers marrying the tiny woman so he can stay with her and be a family so she will not be alone all the time. Several other aspects of the tiny woman, as described by Dennis, are peculiar and atypical of a four-year-old boy's imagination. During the Epilogue of the novel Dennis is presented as a fourteen-year-old boy with absolutely no recollection of the tiny woman. He is also presented as dreamy and introverted.

Ma

Ma is the unnamed mother of Robert, the narrator and protagonist, and Dennis. Her two sons each have different fathers and Ma has never been married. She was raised in a family of several children though few biographical details about her life are offered. She has an older sister named Carmel with whom she maintains a stormy relationship. Ma had her first child, Robert, when she was only fourteen years old. At the time of the novel Robert is fourteen years old and Ma is twenty-eight years old. Ma has consistently refused to provide any information to Robert about his father or the nature of his conception; he resents her silence, but he resents nearly everything. Ma has spent her life living on the dole, or public funds assistance, and borrows money from anyone willing to lend it. She has been to a service called DebtBusters on two occasions, presumably a form of debt consolidation with partial forgiveness. One of her principle reasons for moving from Dublin to the outskirts of Ennis is to escape constant harassment from many debt collectors. She apparently borrows money for the move, the deposit, and the rent. She demonstrates exceptionally poor skills of money management and when her public assistance funds become available she spends them all more or less immediately.

Ma desires a close relationship with her sons and wishes her sons were closer to each other; she does not demonstrate particularly good parenting skills, however. She is verbally abusive toward Dennis when he wets the bed or disobeys her instructions. She does not view Robert's criminal activities as particularly serious but is concerned about him. She frequently yells, shouts, and throws things about. Robert states that she is sometimes physically abusive though this is not demonstrated in the novel. She does not keep house by washing laundry, making beds, or doing the dishes. She appears to spend her considerable free time watching television or traveling in search of funds. In the novel, Ma is something of a pathetic figure but her dire circumstances do foster a sympathetic presentation in the narrative.



Luke

Luke is eighteen years old and is the cousin of Robert, the son of Robert's aunt Carmel. Throughout the novel Robert refers to Luke by the nickname 'Fluke'. Luke is a devoted criminal who routinely steals anything that he perceives has value. He is involved in various scams, too, and sells documentation such as driver licenses and other identification. Luke befriends his younger cousin Robert to carry out the particularly risky parts of crime, knowing that Robert is stupid enough to do them and also that Robert is young enough to avoid most of the consequences if caught. Luke's specialty skill appears to be knowing how to fence, or sell, stolen goods of all kinds. Robert seriously misjudges Luke's personal feelings, however, and at the start of the novel genuinely believes that he has a good, meaningful relationship with his cousin. As the narrative develops it becomes apparent that Robert is nothing more than a consumable resource to Luke. Their final parting involves a fistfight and Robert smashing Luke's face with a hard object. Luke claims that his sudden dislike of Robert stems from Robert's ratting out Michael Kilroy; this may partially be true. At one point in the novel Luke moves out of his mother's apartment and moves in with a single mother with two children. He lives with her about a week, enjoying having ready access to sex, but leaves when he realizes that she expects him to contribute money for the apartment.

Michael

Michael Kilroy is about eighteen years old. He is a hardened criminal who often steals cars, joyrides, and then burns the vehicle. His friends call him Mick, and Robert occasionally refers to him as 'Psycho' Mick because of his ready temper and tendency toward violence. Mick frequently uses drugs and alcohol and during his brief actual appearance in the narrative he is high on stimulants, probably crystal meth. After Robert steals a car and drives to Dublin, he meets Mick. Mick then takes over driving and deliberately causes a major accident by running a red light through an intersection. Mick then violently assaults the other driver, nearly killing him. Mick is then arrested and sent to prison—he has been incarcerated several times before. During Robert's detainment and questioning he blames Mick for dominating him and forcing him into a life of crime. Although Robert rats out Mick to save himself, the truth appears to be not too far from the statement. Mick remains an unlikable and minor character; an example of the worst that poverty and criminality can generate in a person.

Beetle

Beetle is eighteen years old. He is a dedicated criminal who routinely steals anything that he perceives has value. He is involved in any scam or activity that may generate money. Like Luke and Michael Kilroy, Beetle is one of the gang that Robert wants to hang out with at the opening of the novel. Beetle's specialty skill appears to be knowing where and how to buy any sort of illegal drug. During the novel Beetle provides Robert with drugs on several occasions, but always only in exchange for money. Beetle always buys enough drugs to share them. Robert notes that Beetle is a heavy drinker, too, who



always drinks until he passes out. His putative friends leave Beetle on the street when he passes out. Robert notes also that almost every time Beetle uses drugs he passes out and sleeps it off. Robert views Beetle as the most-reliable and accessible of his friends; however, Beetle often is simply unreachable. During one part of the novel Beetle takes Robert along on a major drug buy and shows Robert the dealer's apartment, teaches Robert the password, and shows Robert how to utilize a young child as a money-and-drug runner, or mule. The pair later spends five hundred euros buying drugs for a two-day binge. Based on Robert's description of use, Beetle apparently purchases heroin for them, though drug is not named specifically.

PJ Dooley & Margaret Dooley

PJ and Margaret Dooley are a married couple that live on a farm in the rural areas around Ennis in County Clare, Ireland. They are the parents of seven children, only two of which—Matty and Coleman—appear in the narrative. Matty and Coleman apparently are the youngest two children because the other children have jobs, some live abroad, and some are parents themselves; Margaret notes that she has a four-year-old grandchild. The Dooleys are salt-of-the-earth type people who are fond of hard work and hold high standards. Margaret keeps a very clean house, cooks big meals, and is presented as a successful homemaker and person of stature in the community. Margaret eschews gossip, tries to ignore bad behavior in others, and focuses on the positive. She has raised her children to work hard, earn a living, and respect others. PJ is a hard-working man who holds a business job that is not named; his job allows him to spend much time at home by doing business on the telephone. PJ also runs the family farm. He obviously is doing quite well financially as he owns several fields that he has purchased from neighbors. Early in the narrative PJ realizes that Robert is a delinquent and a criminal, but he chooses to look past this and give Robert instruction and frequent chances to better himself. In this respect, PJ becomes a genuine father figure that Robert comes to respect. At the end of the novel when Robert has burned all his bridges he returns to the Dooley home and asks for yet another change. Margaret is dubious but after a brief internal struggle, PJ asks Robert inside and extends another chance. Within the narrative, the Dooley family is the only functional family presented and PJ and Margaret are the only adult characters that serve as genuine role models. They also are the only married couple presented in the narrative.

Coleman

Coleman Dooley generally is known as Coley to everyone but his mother. He is approximately fourteen years old but quite large and strong for his age. Coleman is, in nearly all respects, the opposite of Robert. Coleman is always smiling and laughing, very easy going, very approachable, and very open. He values things like hard work, clean living, respecting others. Coleman attends church with his parents. On several occasions in the narrative he lightly scolds Robert for breaking the law or, particularly, for theft. Coleman has a part-time job in Ennis, working in a grocery store three nights a week. He spends the remainder of his time working on the family farm doing hard



physical labor. Coleman has saved a substantial amount of money by raising livestock for sale and he plans to continue making money this way. Robert likes Coleman almost immediately but in the early portions of the novel tends to view him as something of a rube. As Robert's life collapses and Coleman persists as the same, solid person, Robert eventually comes to realize that Coleman's established values and eagerness to earn money by working are in fact desirable elements of stability. By the end of the novel Robert changes himself to conform more to Coleman's view of the world. Coleman is by far the most-positive role model for children and young adults in the novel, and is one of the very few constructive characters discussed in the narrative.

Grandma Dooley

Joe and Peggy do not appear in the narrative directly though they are referenced numerous times. They were a married couple who owned the home that Robert's mother rents from the Dooley family. They had a young daughter who appears to have had developmental problems. Several neighbors of Joe and Peggy recall hearing their daughter's constant and awful screaming voice, sounding something like a shrieking person blended with a caterwauling cat. The local legends essentially say that the parents eventually murdered the daughter, or perhaps the daughter the mother, though no criminal charges ever materialized. Joe appears to have outlived his wife and daughter though alternate theories are presented. Robert theorizes that the strange daughter somehow became a malevolent fairy, perhaps through a form of brood parasitism or infant swap. He further theorizes that she is the murderer of Lars, the Swedish renter of the same house that disappeared under mysterious circumstances. In reality, the facts presented in the narrative do not support any of the local legends particularly well.



Objects/Places

Dublin

Dublin is the capital and largest city of Ireland. Robert and his family live in Dublin for about fourteen years before moving to the country. Robert, at fourteen, feels that Dublin is his home and the only place worth living. He describes the city as having numerous narrow, twisting back streets. He also describes the city as being riddled with criminal behavior, particularly theft and drug trafficking. Like any large city, Dublin in reality presents a complex mixture of environments and Robert is describing the poverty-stricken inner city.

Ennis

Ennis is a smallish city or large town nearly on the west-coast of Ireland. It is a population center for the surrounding area of largely rural farming communities. Robert and his family move into a rural home in a farming region several miles outside of Ennis. The town is described as having a single street of commercial establishments that, shockingly, recently have started opening on Sundays. Robert spends most of the narrative trying to get away from Ennis but comes to view it, eventually, as a nice place to live.

The Rental House

The novel opens with Robert and his family moving into a rental house on the outskirts of Ennis. The house is described in some detail, being originally of one story and quite small. Later on, an extension and a second story were added to the house. It has a kitchen, a sitting room, and three bedrooms. The house also features at least one quite large hallway closet. The house's rear door has a dog flap which putatively permits fairies to enter and exit at will. The Rental House is the setting for much of the novel.

Bimbo

Bimbo is a lazy dog that belongs to the Dooley family, but prefers to spend its time under the table in the kitchen of the rental house that Robert lives in. Bimbo is befriended by Dennis and on a few occasions eats a lot of food that wasn't intended for him. Bimbo's movements in the house make noises that Robert occasionally mistakes for some other animal or thing. The dog of indeterminate breed appears to be quite good tempered.



Skoda

The house that Robert's mother rents has an abandoned Skoda (automobile) parked in the driveway. Robert finds the keys to the Skoda in the house. After changing a flat tire, Robert steals the Skoda and drives it across Ireland to Dublin. There, Robert turns the Skoda over to 'Psycho' Mick who deliberately causes an accident, wrecking the car. PJ Dooley demands that Robert work toward paying off the Skoda's value and by the end of the novel Robert has decided he will make restitution for the lost value.

Fairy Forts

The two so-called Fairy Forts are huge mounds of dirt, the size of small hills, that are ringed with trees. The mounds have central depressions that don't have anything growing in them. One of the mounds—and possibly both of them—have small tunnels that lead down to subterranean rooms. Robert speculates that one of the fairy forts was the site of the murder of Lars. The home that Robert's mother rents lies on a line directly between the two fairy forts.

The Little Woman

On several occasions Dennis reports having seen a little woman or a tiny woman. Dennis says she comes in through the dog flap at night, that she is very shy of grownups, and that she likes to milk, cake, and other sweets. He says that she is all alone and that she wants to marry him so they can be a family. Assuming the little woman is real, Bimbo the dog is not bothered by her presence. Aside from Dennis, no other character claims to have seen the little woman. The most compelling evidence that perhaps the little woman is real is Dennis' insistence that she wears a man's blue shirt as a dress. Robert theorizes that the little woman is either a malevolent spirit or the developmentally challenged daughter of Joe and Peggy. Within the narrative, there are no facts that establish the little woman's existence.

Lars' Diary

Lars, the tenant of the rental house prior to Robert's family, kept a diary. The diary is mostly written in Swedish but has occasional paragraphs in English. The diary also has several good drawings of various things, including one drawing of a little fairy woman coming in through a dog flap. Lars' passport, identification, and money also are stuck into the back of the diary. Robert's discovery of the diary—and especially the passport—convinces the police that Lars' disappearance is criminally suspicious.



Lars' Blue Shirt

Margaret Dooley has a photograph of Lars wearing a particular blue shirt. Later, the police find the shirt underground in a tunnel in one of the fairy forts. Upon seeing the shirt, Dennis announces it is not a shirt but instead is the dress of the little woman that he says he has seen. The shirt is a concrete piece of physical evidence found by the police that convince them Lars has been murdered.

Robert's Bike

After Robert has worked for PJ Dooley a few days, Coleman and PJ give Robert an old ten-speed bike. It is the first time Robert has ever been given anything of particular value and he immediately develops a great love of the bike. He notes that owning a bike in Ennis is possible whereas owing a bike in Dublin is impossible because it will be stolen. Later, Matty Dooley helps Robert repair and improve the bike and teaches him the basics of bicycle mechanics. The bike is a physical object that marks a major turning point in Robert's development.

Torque Wrench

On one occasion, Robert helps Matty Dooley repair an engine and uses a torque wrench. When the wrench 'breaks', Robert believes he has ruined the tool. Matty then explains the use of the tool and why it works the way it does. Robert views this as his first real epiphany of technical knowledge and becomes very interested in mechanical work. Later he buys his own torque wrench just to have. Symbolically, the torque wrench represents Robert's subconscious career choice to give up delinquency and pursue being a mechanic.



Themes

Perception

Much of the novel's secondary plot revolves around perception; what people perceive to be the truth becomes the truth. At several points in the narrative, Robert assesses facts and concludes that, factually, he has absolutely no evidence that any malevolent fairies or miniature woman exist. There are a few hills with tunnels. He hears nocturnal noises. Something eats some chocolates. He sees an animal scoot under a hedge. He finds a strange journal. Those are the facts. Robert's perception, however, leads him to believe that a malevolent fairy, perhaps a human girl with some type of developmental deformity, lives in the area and is capable of grotesque acts such as murder and dismemberment. Robert's perception is aligned with the perception of Dennis, a four-year-old, who claims to see a tiny woman at night; she is friendly to Dennis but afraid of adults. She wants to marry Dennis so they can be a family and she will not be alone. Robert does not consider that Dennis has other imaginary friends, like Jimjam Bunny; that Dennis longs for familial love and attention that he does not receive; and that Dennis is up all night because he sleeps all day and wets the bed. Indeed, the narrative is carefully crafted so that the reader's perception of events will define the novel—is it a novel about evil fairies that murder? Or is it a novel about a young delinquent coming of age and maturing into a better person? This question of perception will inform the reader's opinion of the narrative and is reflected in the very title of the book—what is the creature of the night: a young criminal or a wicked fairy?

Family

Robert, the narrator and protagonist, is fourteen years old. He has a younger brother and a single mother, herself only twenty-eight. Robert believes himself to be self-sufficient and probably would be offended at the suggestion that he couldn't take care of himself. However, the narrative—related from the first-person, limited perspective in Robert's own voice—makes it clear that he is indeed incapable of being self-sufficient. Even when he has a huge stash of stolen money he can't find an apartment. Whenever he needs to eat he steals food. Whenever he has pocket money he buys cigarettes and alcohol, or drugs. He has no reliable friends and he has alienated his extended family. Robert doesn't realize it, but he relies very heavily upon his mother for both emotional and, especially, physical support. Dennis relies even more heavily upon his mother and older brother. Robert's mom needs, and seeks, her children's love and approval. The dysfunctional family stumbles along through the narrative seeking positive experiences but finding only bleak prospects. Robert's family provides a sort of negative look into how families work if devoid of respect and nurture.

In stark contrast, the Dooley family is a traditional unit with a father and mother, many children, and even some grandchildren. They have lived in one locale for many, many years. They own the house and lots of land. The father is employed; the children are



hard-working. Family members show genuine love, respect, and trust in each other. Neighbors form a supportive and reliable network. The family enjoys a surplus of wealth, eats good food on a regular basis, lives in a clean house, wears clean clothes, and communicates effectively. The Dooley family provides a positive look into a solid, functional family unit full of respect and nurturing.

Crime

Most of the novel finds Robert, the narrator and protagonist, committing crimes. When not actively engaged in criminal activity Robert typically is planning criminal activity or reminiscing fondly about past criminal exploits. Robert routinely steals money and cigarettes from his mother, even after receiving money from her. What he can't steal from her he wheedles out of her. Whenever possible, he sneaks onto busses to avoid buying tickets. He routinely steals money from his friends and relatives. He engages in shoplifting and petty theft on an almost continuous basis. His speed and dexterity allow him to master the snatch-and-run tactic of petty theft, allowing him to steal iPods, cell phones, purses, wallets, groceries, and occasionally food or drink out of people's hands. He frequently steals cars, joyrides until they are out of fuel, and then sends them into the ocean or burns them. Robert's friends, older, rougher, perform the same actions but add a heavy dose of violence to them, often beating victims. Robert not only approves of this criminality but believes people who are not so engaged are stupid or ignorant or both. Robert uses all of his ill-gotten money to purchase cigarettes, alcohol, and illegal drugs. At fourteen years old he already is a heavy smoker, a binge drinker, and a committed drug abuser. His friends join him in these types of behaviors. Most of the novel, in fact, finds Robert performing some type of criminal act.



Style

Point of View

"Creature of the Night" is related from the first-person, limited, point of view. Robert, the narrator and principle protagonist, is present in all scenes of the novel; indeed, he is the central focus of the novel. He relates his life events over the course of about two weeks in modern Ireland as he travels back and forth between Ennis and Dublin. The novel's Epilogue finds Robert ten years older, returning to Ennis with his brother Dennis. The narrative makes extensive use of the first-person voice of Robert. The narrative is full of his observations about life, most of which are fairly offensive, ignorant, or both. Robert realizes he has no future but instead of trying to create something he instead gets angry and frustrated about it and falls into a destructive pattern of crime, drug abuse, and delinquency. Robert, at fourteen years of age, is quite precocious in his outlook in some respects while in other areas he demonstrates a complete lack of insight. For example, he knows how his friends act and can generally predict their reactions but he is completely ignorant of the fact that they place no value in his friendship. The point of view selected for the novel allows Robert to present himself in a harshly critical light yet retain some sympathy that would be very difficult to maintain from a third-person perspective.

Setting

The novel has two principle settings, one diffuse and one specific. The diffuse setting is that of Dublin's inner city area where government housing, crime, and poverty are the norm. The characters that live in the Dublin setting generally are unsympathetic, mostly unemployed, uneducated, and live by accepting public assistance monies, borrowing at high interest, living in rent-reduced housing allotments, and engaging in criminal behavior. Teenage boys shoplift, steal, and rob people for money to buy cigarettes, alcohol, and drugs. Usually they live with their single mothers, and usually their mothers accept their children's behavior. This setting finds the worst in people and the crushing poverty and lack of available, viable alternatives leave most people despairing for change of any kind. The segments of the novel set in Dublin are quite depressing and offer little positive message.

The specific setting is that of a small rural community on the outskirts of Ennis in County Clare. Ennis is located almost directly across Ireland from Dublin, nearly on the west coast. The two settings are easily reached from each other by regular bus lines or by traditional highways. In Ennis, the characters presented live in nuclear, traditional families where education is available, hard work for personal remuneration is the order of the day, and crime is viewed as abhorrent and immoral. Smoking and moderate drinking by adults is accepted but underage drinking, binge drinking, and drug use all are scorned. Teenage boys work hard at home, go to school, have part-time jobs, and save their money for the future. This setting finds the best in people and the working- to



middle-class economy and viable futures leave most people anxious to better themselves and their families. The segments of the novel set in Ennis are encouraging and positive.

Language and Meaning

The novel is published in modern English with occasional Irish words or phrases. Some English words are typographically presented to represent an Irish accent but they are quite scarce. In no place does any localization of English present any special barrier to comprehension. The novel is full of explicit profanity including several uses of racial or gender-specific slurs. Younger readers should be cautioned that the novel portrays underage tobacco use, underage binge drinking, and explicit use of illegal drugs on several occasions. The novel routinely presents criminal activity and lauds such activity as worthwhile—simultaneously vituperating hard work and morality. Minor physical altercations are fairly common and one vicious assault is described. The novel's ending involves a gruesome murder and subsequent dismemberment of the corpse. The novel also portrays poverty and disenfranchised neighborhoods in Dublin. All this makes the novel's typical library classification of "Youth Fiction" somewhat questionable.

Meaning in the novel is derived from traditional narrative techniques. The novel's resolution makes it fairly clear that Robert has changed his opinions about nearly everything—however this is implied and not explicitly stated. The narrative construction leaves a very large room in which the reader can construct meaning surrounding some events—in particular, the possible but unlikely presence of a malevolent fairy. Evidence can be found in the narrative to support either conclusion: the fairy is real, or Robert imagines it.

Structure

The 250-page novel is divided into fifty-five enumerated chapters and an Epilogue. Chapters are very short and typically focus on a single event or moment. The novel is related in a strictly chronological order though time pacing within the novel is uneven, with some sentences covering a few days while other moments are considered in great detail. The novel tightly focuses on Robert, the narrator and protagonist. Because of this, and although Robert travels around quite a bit, keeping track of what is going on and where it is occurring is quite easy. Indeed, the novel's simple and traditional structure aids materially in enabling meaning to be derived from the narrative.

The novel's structure allows a slow, building suspense to emerge about a possible imaginary aspect of the house that Robert and his family rent. The novel opens with the reality of Lars' disappearance though it is considered to be non-criminal, if odd. As the novel progresses, Robert begins to suspect that Lars was the victim of foul play and by the novel's conclusion Lars' mutilated and dismembered corpse is found. Much of the suspense involved in this development is derived from the piece-meal discovery of data and the novel's carefully controlled pacing and structure.



Quotes

I told my ma I wouldn't stay there. I told her when she first came up with the idea, and I told her again when she tried to bribe me with the new Xbox. I said it to her all the way down on the bus. Every time she opened her mouth to talk to me I said it: "I'm not staying down there. You can't make me." (p. 1)

"Aren't you lucky?" I said. I pushed him out of my way. "And listen, snotface. My room is out of bounds, OK? If I catch you in there you're dead meat."
I went into it, leaving him staring after me. My ma came out of his room.
"Don't talk to your brother like that!" she yelled at me.
"He's not my brother!" I yelled back, and slammed my door behind me. (pp 20-21)

The religion didn't cheer my ma up at all, not from what I could see, anyway. She was still mad at me and she wouldn't talk to me at all when she first came in. Except to say: "Everybody else for miles around was there. I don't see why you think you're so special." (p. 40)

I was scared shitless at first, watching for the guards, checking my speed, dipping my headlights religiously. But there were hardly any cars on the road, and once I was past Ennis I began to relax and enjoy myself. I turned on the radio and thought about Coley and the chainsaw. (p. 60)

"Why did you take it?" he said.
"I wanted it. Quickest way to get to Dublin."
"Where is it now?"
"In the garda pound probably. My friend crashed it."
"Did he?"
"Yeah," I said. "Then he kicked a fella half to death." (p. 80)

I turned on her. "I'm not a fucking farmer, all right? It's just slave labor, that's all. And it wasn't even his fucking car I took!" (p. 100)

Carmel opened the door.
"What are you doing here?" she said.
"My ma let me," I said, "She gave me the bus fare."
"Did she send money for me?"
"No."
"Then what're you doing here?"
I shrugged. "Where am I supposed to go?"
"Well you can't come in here," she said. (p. 121)



And then I did hear something downstairs. Something sliding on the table. Or maybe it was the dog, knocking against the leg of it or something. I held my breath. Was someone whispering? I couldn't tell with the rain on the roof, and the runoff in the gutters was sort of whispering as well. (p. 139)

Oh, that was brilliant. The whole town of Ennis brought to a standstill. I smiled to myself in the back, but then I caught sight of PJ's eyes in the mirror, watching me. I straightened my face and closed my eyes and prayed I wouldn't puke my ring up in his car. (p. 163)

"Where did you get the money for all this stuff?" I said.

"It's Friday," she said. "I got my dole yesterday."

"You must have spent it all, then," I said.

"I did," she said. "And this cost a small fortune."

She threw the iPod charger across at me. I looked at it and threw it back.

"That's the wrong kind, you stupid cow."

"How can it be the wrong kind?" she said.

"It's the one that goes into a computer," I shouted at her. "In case you haven't noticed, we haven't got a fucking computer. How am I supposed to use that?" (pp. 179-180)

Fourteen. My ma was fourteen when she had me. It was no secret, I'd know it for years. But I was younger then, and fourteen was no different to me than eighteen or twenty-one. But not now, it wasn't. I was fourteen myself, now. (p. 201)

The guards arrived about two hours later. There were two of them at first, and they wanted to know where I'd found the passport and stuff. I told them about the hole in the wall under the stairs and I showed them the cupboard with all Lars' things in it, but they didn't touch it. They asked me what I was doing in there and for a minute I couldn't think, and then I remembered.

"Looking for the DVD cable," I said. "Mr. Dooley said it might be in there." (p. 219)

I wanted to rob a car. I wanted the buzz of driving too fast, the pure adrenaline rush that was the best way in the world of forgetting your problems. But I didn't have the energy to go looking for keys on my own. Beetle could smell an open door or an unwatched jacket a mile away, but I never could. So I stayed out for the rest of the night, walking the streets around my own part of town, backward and forward. (p. 238)

"Show me your fingers again," I said to Dennis. He held them up, pink and soft and clean.

I showed him mine, and he looked close, at the black grease deeply ingrained in all the little lines. It made me laugh. If I had a nice ham sandwich now, I could probably leave a decent paw print on it. (p. 250)



Topics for Discussion

Is Robert ("Bobby"), the narrator and protagonist, a likable character? Would you want to hang out with him? What aspects of his life may contribute to the way he sees the world?

The novel, through the narrator, presents a particular view of gender relationships. How would you characterize the novel's portrayal of women? Do you think the narrative accurately captures the role and nature of women in today's society?

After reading the novel, would you like to live in Dublin? Why or why not? Would you like to live in Ennis? Why or why not? If you had to choose between Dublin or Ennis to grow up, which would you choose and why?

Have you ever driven a Skoda? Have you ever seen a Skoda? What are your impressions of the automobile manufacturer after reading the novel? Would you consider buying a new Skoda if you needed an automobile? Why or why not?

Robert describes the Dublin police force and distinguishes it from the Guards, a national Irish police force. Where you live, is there a national police force? Why do you think Robert is more careful avoiding the Guards than he is avoiding the local cops?

Is there a malevolent fairy living near Ennis? Or does Robert imagine the whole thing? What types of evidence suggest there may be a wicked fairy? What types of evidence suggest Robert has an overactive imagination? Discuss.

Who killed Lars? Do you think Kevin Talty did it? Why or why not? Do you think that Robert's imagined murder scenario essentially is correct? Why or why not?

Would you rather be friends with Robert or Coleman? Why? Or would you not be friends with either of them?

Compare the relationship between Matty and Robert when Robert was fourteen to the relationship between Robert and Dennis when Dennis was fourteen. Do you think that Robert can be a good older brother like Matty was a good older friend?