

Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha Study Guide

Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha by Roddy Doyle

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Plot Summary

Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha is a story about an Irish lad, named Paddy Clarke, growing up in the 1960's. He runs around with a gang of friends who enjoy terrorizing the streets of Barrytown. He and his friends like to start fires, write their names in wet cement, harass elderly ladies, and wreak havoc on the neighborhood bushes.

In school, when Paddy applies himself to learn, he is very smart. In the beginning, he is more worried about keeping on the good side of his best friend Kevin, who is the leader of the pack. Kevin is the one who doles out punishments in their "games," and if you are on his bad side, you get whipped. Paddy often picks on Sinbad, his brother, when no other target is available to him.

Paddy is right beside Kevin in harassing the other boys until he realizes strange things are going on between his parents. He notices them arguing, and his first reaction is to fix it himself and make his parents happy. He works extra long and hard on his spelling so that he can remain in the kitchen between his parents. He believes his presence will end the fighting. If he can make them laugh right before he departs for bed, he believes the night will end happily.

When the fighting between his parents does not stop, Paddy pulls into himself. His pranks become fewer and farther between. He seeks out the comfort and emotional support of Sinbad. Sinbad has also heard the fighting at night, and has pulled into himself and won't let Paddy in. Sinbad chooses to try and dismiss the fighting as anything other than what it really is. Paddy resents his ability to dismiss it.

Paddy suddenly loses interest in picking on other kids and being Kevin's best friend. He wants to stick close to home and Sinbad. Mr. Hennessey, Paddy's teacher, brings Sinbad into his class one day and tells him to go home and report at once to his mother. Paddy can't see what is wrong, other than the fact that Sinbad had been crying. Paddy turns into the protector of Sinbad and does not report any trouble at school.

Paddy turns on Kevin and fights him after school one day. Paddy realizes this is a monumental change in the hierarchy, and comments that things will never be the same again. He loses his friends and is often teased. He gains better grades in the classroom and moves up to the front of the "smartest" row since he spends so much time in the kitchen studying.

Paddy resorts to various tactics such as staying up all night and listening at his parent's bedroom door to try to keep the peace. He realizes that his efforts are all for naught when he witnesses his da hitting his ma one night when he goes to get a drink of water in the kitchen. From that point on, he knows that they will live without their da, but things should be better around the house, or he can only hope.



Pages 1-42

Pages 1-42 Summary

Paddy, Sinbad, and their friends are making mischief. The setting is Barrytown, Ireland in the 1960's towards the beginning of a school year. The boys are at a building site stealing nails for a future adventure. They dream up a chase scene and create their own drama. We also find out that the boys like to light fires at building sites, create their own adventures, and write their names in wet cement around Barrytown.

They seem to have quite a reputation with neighbors and other citizens of the town. They make a regular sport of jumping hedges in a game of chase.

In the school shed, Paddy shows his cruel side. He pins Sinbad down and lights lighter fluid between his lips in front of the boys. Later in the section it is learned how much Sinbad screamed, and that he looked like he had no lips for two weeks.

Paddy also has a side that wants to remain a child. He is swimming and gets stung by a jellyfish. To get attention from his Ma, he holds where he got stung and squeezes it to make it much worse when she sees it. He doesn't cry until he gets outside their front gate. She offers to call an ambulance, but in the end, he waits for ointment until she is done feeding the baby.

Paddy and his da interact about politics and school issues. Paddy tries to impress his da with his knowledge of politics and the upcoming World War III or geography. Paddy answers hesitantly and at one point says on page 25, "He sometimes liked these questions, and sometimes he didn't. When he did he folded his legs if he was sitting down and leaned a bit to the side in his chair."

Tension between Paddy's ma and da is evident in their actions towards each other. There are often glares and silent treatments, which Paddy recognizes even though they don't think he does.

Pages 1-42 Analysis

We read on page 25 that Paddy knows a great deal about the body language of his da. If his da liked something then he would sit a certain way. This shows us Paddy has spent a great deal of time studying his da, and that temper outbursts were normal and had been going on for some time.

On page 33 Paddy says a line that foreshadows the rests of the actions in the book. He says, "Sometimes when nothing happened it was really getting ready to happen." This narrative can be applied to his ma's and da's fights or silent fights. It can also be applied to the changing relationship between Paddy and Sinbad, or Paddy and Kevin.



The first fight Paddy talks about between Ma and Da is shown on page 37. This same scene also shows a new side between the relationship of Paddy and Sinbad - one that is caring and protective. The fight between Ma and Da is over Sinbad and his refusal to eat. It is a small argument, but it foreshadows the escalating violence. Da has a tendency to blame ma for anything the kids do that he does not agree with.

We also see a twist in the relationship between Paddy and Sinbad. "My ma went after my da to talk to him more. I helped Sinbad eat his dinner□He made Sinbad sit there for an hour until he was ready to inspect the plate. It was empty; in me and in the bin." This insight shows us that Paddy truly does care about Sinbad and what their Da might do to him for not eating. By helping him eat the food, Paddy is protecting him instead of hurting him.



Pages 43-90

Pages 43-90 Summary

Facts are tossed in that seem to have very little relevance to the story. Paddy picks up these facts while he is reading things to impress his da. Later on, the facts are usually used in an adventure that Paddy or Sinbad are involved in. In this section he spits out this fact on page 44 - "The life expectancy of a rat is 18 months." Then the story skips over it and they go to school. Later in the book, the boys discover a dead rat and give it a proper Viking burial.

Paddy wants to be like Father Damien, who is a great and respected religious leader. He even goes so far as to make Sinbad pretend to be a leper in a colony, which Paddy will save. His da gets angry over this, and tension builds between ma and da again.

We learn more about Paddy and what he likes. He enjoys reading American history and one of his favorite heroes is Geronimo. He also likes Daniel Boone. A discussion comes up about wearing jeans and da immediately blames ma. She smoothes it over and says they do not wear them, ease up. Da's outbursts are often about American influences, which have crept into Ireland, and he does not like it.

The first sixty or so pages show the antics Paddy and his friends do to other kids and animals. At times, the reader is repulsed or shocked by the cruelty he seems capable of. On page 65, we again see a glimpse of the softer side of Paddy. He is in his bed in the room he shares with Sinbad, who is crying. Paddy decides to 'get him,' so he goes down to tattle to their ma and da. After he gets back upstairs, he admits that he is glad it is ma who came up to talk to Sinbad. He changed his mind and did not want to get Sinbad after all. Ma only hugged Sinbad and made him feel better.

The Three Stooges are also a favorite of Paddy and Kevin's. At least until the day Kevin tries the eye poke on Paddy and he realizes it hurts. Maybe comedy isn't so funny.

Paddy returns to terrorizing the neighborhood and running the Grand National across the hedges. He gets into trouble with Mrs. Quigley, but shrugs it off. Mr. Hanley catches them and they finally quit for the day.

The first escapade of shoplifting is in this section. Paddy and his friends take turns daring each other as to how many magazines they can steal. It's not about reading the magazines either, since it's usually a woman's magazine.

Da teaches Paddy some Irish drinking songs. When he comes home and hears Hank Williams playing, he is not happy. He forces Paddy into trying to sing it, even though Paddy doesn't know the words. Paddy earns a wallop for this deed.



Pages 43-90 Analysis

This section shows how much American influence affects the youngsters from the country of Ireland. Paddy's da does not like it, and seems to be rebelling against it. He blames ma for letting it reach Paddy's eyes and ears, even though she really has no control over it.

This sets the beginning of the fights up between his ma and da, with him yelling at her. The tension between ma and da is perceived by Sinbad and Paddy, and it progressively builds so we know that disaster is going to happen at some point in the house.

We also start to empathize with Paddy, and see that he may have a more caring side to him. Being friends with Kevin is what he thinks is most important at this point, but there are a couple of times when he decides he doesn't want to get Sinbad in trouble.

The ordeal over the Hank Williams song shows that their da can be unreasonable. It is the first time we see his threats of violence carried through. Paddy shows a bit of antagonism towards him after it.



Pages 91-132

Pages 91-132 Summary

Da is learning how to drive a car with the whole family inside of it. He won't take suggestions, and the family is tense. Da ends up with a minor fender bender and growls at them. Paddy then remembers another family outing where they took pictures. Sinbad wouldn't smile, and da got mad at him then too. The perfect family outing wasn't perfect, even back then.

On one drive, they stop to eat and a silent fight between ma and da ensues. Paddy senses it, but doesn't know what has happened even after ma jumps out of the car in the rain with the baby. After a few minutes, she gets back into the car, soaking wet. Her only explanation for returning was that it was too wet for the baby.

Polio is still a minor threat in this era, and one day the boys have to visit the nurses in school. They are devastated to learn that they have to drop their drawers and be inspected to see the polio immunization marks, because they are old enough to be sensitive to the fact of showing their privates to women.

They play the pipe game. A new water pipe is being installed for the new corporation houses being built. The boys climb down a ladder and take turns going in the pipe and running out. They wait inside the dark pipe to make the others believe they are brave.

This game brings another recollection to Paddy where his da had to clean out the sewer pipes at home. Ma sent Paddy to help, but da just got mad and yelled at him after he asked so many questions. Da blames ma for the pipes being plugged up since she had the longest hair.

The corporation houses are being built and Paddy doesn't like them. He imitates his da, calls it "corpo slum," and gets a smack on the head by his ma. They used to play in the empty field behind them, but they no longer can and are resentful of that. As punishment, he and his friends exclude the boys that live in the corporation houses.

One of the pranks they play is tormenting bugs in the road tar. They look for sticks and play in the bubbles that form on hot days. Paddy wonders at the pain the bug may be feeling as he dies.

Da and Ma's fighting continues to escalate in violence and volume. Ma keeps silent occasionally when the boys are present. Sinbad likes to believe that since it is quiet, that means it's over. Paddy knew that it was only the beginning of things to come later in the evening.

Friday evening comes and the boys hold their circle. Kevin is the leader and calls himself Zentoga. Each boy takes a turn and has to come up with an impressive curse word to shout. He then gets a whip with the stick. If the word isn't a unique or cool one,



they get more than one whipping. They chant the words after it is said. Liam gets away with not having a word again and no whipping. They have been letting him "get away" with things since the death of his ma earlier in the year. They fear him and the fact that he has no ma. They hold him at arms distance on many occasions; for fear that losing your mother is contagious.

Pages 91-132 Analysis

The recollections of Paddy in this section show that the family unit has been tense for some time. Sinbad wouldn't even smile for a picture the year before. The arguing escalates between ma and da, as well as the level of inquisition of Paddy. Conversely, Paddy stops to wonder what the bee feels like as he sticks it in hot tar for a certain death. He still goes through with the action, but he pauses to think about its feelings.

Paddy understands the sequencing of the fights, but not why ma and da are fighting. They may just be quiet, but he recognizes that it is still a fight. Just because words aren't being hurled out or things thrown, the body language still suggests the dispute.

Paddy and his friends are experimenting with swear words, and Paddy gets the best one of all, the f word. He knew that it was bold and daring, and it earned him respect from all of the boys. He still got a wallop from Kevin, but he thought it was worth it. He looked back on it with fond memories after the fact, even though it would be the last one.



Pages 133-176

Pages 133-176 Summary

The next Friday night ritual does not happen. The boys were all tired of being walloped by Kevin, especially since he wouldn't take his fair turn. Kevin was still leader of the pack, but there were times he wasn't liked.

George Best is Paddy's soccer hero. His da gave him a book about him and Paddy reads it and discovers a signature inside the cover. Paddy thinks it is real and asks his da about it. Da doesn't pay much attention to him at first. He takes the book and looks at the signature. Paddy asks him if he was at the store when da bought the book. Da hesitates but says yes. Paddy tries to ask him more questions about what went on, but da is vague. Paddy knows at that point that his da is a liar. The autograph is a stamp of George Best.

Paddy tells the readers that he used to like visiting the zoo. He really liked seeing all of animals, but didn't want to visit the zoo again because he didn't like to see the animals 'that' way.

Kevin gets a bright idea and they head over to Ian's house. Kevin wants to hurt the dog. Paddy goes along with him and kicks the dog, but he is sick afterwards.

We learn it is summer, and Paddy has a bike. He is scared of riding it, but da forces him into a lesson. Paddy tries and falls off. His da helps him up again and goes back into the house after Paddy falls off again because he is tired of trying to help Paddy learn. Paddy calls his da lazy then.

The boys shoplift some more magazines. After they had taken a bunch, they noticed Paddy's ma as they are running away from the scene of the crime. They knew they were in trouble and when they got home, they each got the belt. Sinbad climbed in bed with Paddy. They both agreed then that they didn't like their da very much, even though they had done something bad.

The boys are out playing soccer. Sinbad gets to play too. The bigger boys usually wait for the ball to come to them, but Sinbad goes after it. Paddy says he hates him, but he also admits he was brilliant.

Sinbad gets to pick the name of the next team. The McEvoy's boys da is outside and he agrees with Sinbad's pick, so the older boys go along with it.

Pages 133-176 Analysis

Paddy realizes his da has flaws. He has enough wisdom to tell when his da is lying. He is resentful of his da's mood swings, and the way that they affect the mood of the house.



He is full of mischief with the friends, and the pranks to steal magazines are just to see what they can get away with. They don't even read them. They are looking for a challenge and are bored.

This is probably the first time Paddy sees Sinbad as a person. They are playing soccer and Paddy realizes Sinbad is actually good. He has some moves the older boys don't use and is faster. He admits he is a brilliant soccer player and wonders when this happened. His snot nosed brother with a black eye patch was actually a good athlete.



Pages 177-221

Pages 177-221 Summary

Paddy woke up in the morning and his routine was interrupted. The house wasn't clean like it usually was. Paddy questions his ma and admonishes her that she will have more work to do now. She just laughs, but doesn't give him a reason for the mess. Paddy knows whatever she says is a lie too. It was because of the fight that his parents had.

School starts again and it is the second time Paddy has Mr. Hennessey, also known as Henno, for a teacher, but this time it's for fourth grade. Liam is chosen by Kevin to be picked on. Paddy admits he liked Liam, but you had to hate many people in order to remain best friends with Kevin.

Sean Whelan and Charles Leavy are two boys from the "corpo houses." Paddy immediately pegs Sean as someone that he may be able to bully. After school, Kevin pushes Paddy into Sean to force a fight. It's too late when Paddy realizes this will be more than a scuffle with Sinbad, who he can easily overpower. Charles Leavy steps in and aids Sean, but Kevin does not step in to aid Paddy. Paddy realizes the best friend status with Kevin isn't a true friendship.

Sinbad is in the suitcase under ma and da's bed. He wants Paddy to lock him in so he does. Sinbad won't come out, so Paddy goes and tattles on him. Da comes up and is angry. Paddy immediately reverses the situation by singing an Irish drinking song. It again deflects the anger from Sinbad.

Paddy hears physical hitting during an argument while he is lying in bed. The next day he begins to do more homework in order to spend more time studying in the kitchen. When he is in the kitchen where ma is working, he can keep an eye on her and the situation with da. He also is placed into the first desk in class for having the best grades.

Another child in the neighborhood drowns. Paddy sees his ma crying and doesn't understand it. He tells the other kids that they were cousins. In his mind he rationalizes, it must have been family or else why would she cry?

Sinbad and Paddy try to steal some sawdust to save Ian's guinea pig. It lives outside and needs some for its cage that night, so the three boys head to the butcher's to take some. They fill their pockets but are caught. The butcher threatens them and they have to empty their pockets of all the sawdust. Ian's guinea pig freezes the next morning.

Paddy wins a medal at school and races home to tell da about it. He runs into the room and da yells at him for interrupting. After he asks a question, and then Paddy explains what he had to show him, da takes the medal. He says "good man." Later, Paddy admits it is unfair that he has to gauge his da's mood to determine if he can run to him with good news or not. He blames the newspaper and what it contains as influencing his da's moods.



Paddy stays in the living room and tries to keep the mood light between ma and da. They are laughing as he goes up the stairs to bed, so he thinks he has made it nice for them.

Henno has to watch Sinbad's class one day. He brings him over to Paddy and tells him to make sure he tells his ma what is going on. Paddy is confused, but doesn't say anything to Henno, he just agrees. The only thing Paddy can figure out is that Sinbad had been crying during class. Paddy ends up not telling ma anything, since Henno was only picking on Sinbad that day.

Ma doesn't get up one morning and the routine is off. Da is there, trying to take care of things but just can't. Paddy wants to know what is going on, but da is vague with his answers and is busy trying to care for the babies. The house is a mess again. Da gives money to Sinbad and Paddy to buy lunches at school.

Paddy stays awake as long as he can that night. He thinks that by him staying awake, he is protecting his ma from da and any fighting. One time when they were fighting, ma realized both Sinbad and Paddy were listening and she stopped. Sinbad thought it was over and that da had won. Paddy knew better, that it was only beginning.

Pages 177-221 Analysis

Sinbad gets into trouble on his own without Paddy's assistance. He poured sugar in one of the neighbor's fuel oil tanks, and that is why he hid in the suitcase.

Paddy spends less and less time playing jokes with his friends, and gives more attention to his homework. He believes his presence in the kitchen diffuses any problems before they happen. His spelling ability impresses da, and he is often rewarded with a "good man" by da. Paddy believes he has distracted him from ma and the arguing, if only for a little while.

Paddy realizes adults can be mean. Paddy, Ian, and Sinbad are threatened by the butcher when they steal sawdust. They believed it to be worthless, and it was needed to save Ian's guinea pig. And when Henno picks on Sinbad, Paddy can't think of any other reason to bring him across the hall except to be mean.

Paddy also makes the switch from antagonist to protector. He wants to help save the guinea pig. He protects Sinbad from Henno. He distracts da's anger towards Sinbad when he refuses to eat again. He likes there to be peace in the house, so he has to be the person to keep it that way.

The day usually starts out OK when the routine by ma is followed. When Paddy wakes up to a mess one morning, he is thrown off all day. He is bothered by the fact that ma didn't clean, and won't tell him the reason why.



Pages 222-242

Pages 222-242 Summary

Paddy asks Sinbad if he likes his name, Sinbad. Sinbad, Francis, is suspicious of Paddy's actions. He doesn't really answer him whether he wants to be called Francis or Sinbad, so he calls him Francis. He also helps him get dressed that morning.

Paddy notices Charles Leavy at school more, and notices Kevin less and less. He watches his actions and imitates him. He talks like him.

Paddy is alone with Kevin and he asks him if his parents fight. Kevin replies that of course they fight. All parents fight. Paddy isn't sure if this relieves him or not. He doesn't want to ask any more questions though. He feels he has already pressed his luck with the personal question.

At home, objects are being thrown and smashed. The violence escalates. Paddy keeps a vigil outside their bedroom all night. He falls asleep in school the next day and Henno catches him. Instead of a wallop to the side of the head like usual, he takes him to the headmaster's office. They pull two chairs together and Paddy wakes up several hours later. The headmaster asks him why he was asleep, but Paddy never answers.

The gang of boys is off and playing and Paddy realizes he doesn't want to be with them anymore. He wants to be with Sinbad.

He wants physical comfort from Sinbad and forces him into a hug. Sinbad doesn't respond and it angers Paddy. He does not like the way he can seem to shut others out, including him.

Pages 222-242 Analysis

Paddy realizes the difference between blood and friends. The fight with Sean isn't a blood relative, but it draws blood. Kevin isn't blood, and he doesn't stick up for Paddy. Sinbad is a blood relative and is in the same boat as Paddy, therefore he understands. Sinbad will always be there, and Paddy starts to yearn for his presence.

Paddy is more interested in watching Charles and Sean than in Kevin. He admired the way they are true friends and help each other out. Paddy has distanced himself from Kevin and social activities with school. His teacher seems to recognize this and that something may be up at home. Instead of hitting Paddy, he takes him to the office when he has fallen asleep.

The emotional wear and tear is taking a toll on Paddy. He yearns for comfort from somebody, and turns to Sinbad. Sinbad shuts Paddy out, and prefers to keep to himself.



Pages 243-282

Pages 243-282 Summary

The arguing between ma and da has escalated. Paddy doesn't understand why his parents don't like each other, since his ma is lovely and his da is nice . Things change when da comes home obviously drunk one night, and Paddy knows it. Paddy realizes his mother has gotten thinner, and his da looks mean.

Paddy thinks running away will make things better. Everyday in his head he makes a list of things he will pack - where he might go, what money he might use, and what food to take along . Getting away from the fighting is all he can think about.

Paddy feels like a referee in a boxing match. He knows that he is "the ref they didn't know about. Deaf and Dumb." He knows one of them will fall first, but he doesn't want it to be either one. He loves his parents, but not what they are doing to him and each other.

The end is a constant tirade of fights, whether they are little ones, loud ones, continuous ones, or silent ones. They are fighting in the kitchen and Paddy goes in to update his da on the score of the soccer game. Instead, he sees his da "thump" ma on the shoulder.

Not many words are spoken and da leaves the house quietly. He gets teased at school for not having a da. He doesn't care and sticks to himself. Paddy does not see his da again until Christmas Eve, when he brings packages over for them. He asks Paddy how he is and Paddy responds, "Very well, thank you."

Pages 243-282 Analysis

Paddy is seeking an escape from the pain he suffers emotionally. Sinbad won't connect with him as much as he needs it, physically or emotionally. To solve the problem, he plans on running away. He is consumed with what he needs to take. Does he pack clothes, food, or money? Before he can get away though, he is witness to the physical abuse of his mother. Whether he goes in to the kitchen for a drink of water on purpose or by accident to see what is going on, it changes their lives. The train has been tunneling toward this end since the beginning, so it does not come as a surprise that da left. Paddy seems almost relieved afterwards, even though he is teased by his schoolmates and former friends . When his da does come back to visit at Christmas, they talk as if nothing happened in the meantime.



Characters

Patrick "Paddy" Clarke

Patrick Clarke is ten years old and somewhat of a bully. He, his best friend Kevin, and a gang of boys are constantly getting into things around their town, neighborhood, and school. He is the instigator in pranks and inflicting pain, until he realizes first hand what it can feel like.

He likes to think he is smarter than his teacher Mr. Hennessey is. His classmates often pull tricks or make noises when he steps out of the room.

Paddy likes to steal items from the town stores just to see if he can get away with it. It is often items of no need to him, like women's magazines . The pranks are that of young boys who are bored, and trying to find a place where they fit in with society. The pranks can turn cruel though, such as when they lit Sinbad's mouth on fire.

Paddy picks on Sinbad until the fighting between his ma and his da cannot be ignored. He then turns to his brother, who also hears the fighting at night, for support. Paddy is bothered when Sinbad does not feel the same way, and shuts him out. Sinbad has a way of closing himself off that Paddy is jealous of.

Paddy likes to pretend things are fine when he wakes up every morning for breakfast. His routine is back to normal and the fighting has stopped once Da has gone off to work.

Paddy first tries to be funny to relieve the tension between his parents during the evenings. When they still fight after he has gone to bed, he then turns to academics. Paddy stays up later practicing his spelling and his math so he can act as a buffer between his parents. He spends extra time on his homework and recites his letters with his dad to make him proud of his abilities. He is usually rewarded with "good man" by his da and that is all.

Francis "Sinbad" Clarke

Sinbad is Paddy's younger brother. He is often the target for mean tricks by his brother and his friends. He likes to tag along on their escapades but being younger, sometimes he just cannot keep up. Usually Paddy will help him to some extent.

Sinbad has learned to keep quiet and internalize his fears and hurts so Paddy does not see them, and therefore leaves him alone more often.

Sinbad has little dialogue throughout the story, thus providing the example of how he keeps to himself to try to be invisible. If he is not seen or heard, he stops being the target, whether it is from Paddy or his Da.



Since the story is told by Paddy, we can only guess at Sinbad's internal feelings. We gather that he does not like his nickname, and Paddy stops using it at the end when he has turned into protector. Sinbad cries at school, symbolizing he does understand that there are problems at home, even if he tries to ignore them. His character brings about the changes in Paddy, allowing us to sympathize with Paddy even though he did rotten things sometimes.

Ma

She is Paddy and Sinbad's ma. She stays home to care for the boys and their two little sisters, Deidre and Cathy. She is sympathetic to others and genuinely looks out for her boys. She tries to protect them from her reality a little with her explanations. For instance, she tells Paddy that Mister O'Connell, who recently lost his wife, howls at the moon because of a broken heart, not because he's drunk. She keeps her composure in front of the boys, but it is obvious through Paddy's ears that she is experiencing physical abuse behind closed doors.

Da

A cranky and hard working Irish father to Paddy and Sinbad. His moods make the Clarke household happy or walk on eggshells. He has a routine that he follows that Paddy takes great care not to disturb. He shows a temper, and through Paddy's ears, we hear verbal and physical abuse to ma, Paddy, and Sinbad.

Kevin

Paddy's best friend and cohort in the gang of boys. Kevin is top dog in the school and the gang and if you don't do what he says, usually pain to your person will follow. He influences much of what the other boys feel, and Paddy finds that to be very important, until the end of the story. Kevin always gets to dish out the "whippings" at the fire.

Mr. Hennessey

Paddy's teacher at school for both years. Mr. Hennessey has to use an iron fist to control his classroom of boys. He tends to have them put their heads down and "sleep" on occasion. He also leaves the room frequently, threatening he can hear them while he is gone. Little dares and pranks are carried out while he is gone though. Mr. Hennessey comes down hard on Paddy, but then seems to realize there is something going on at home- first when Sinbad is caught crying in the middle of the day and second when Paddy falls asleep in class.



Liam and Aidan O'Connell

The O'Connell brothers are without a mother. She has recently died, and the other boys somewhat fear and loathe them at the same time. Liam and Aidan sometimes get away without doing the pranks just because they don't have a ma at home. The boys have sympathy for them, even if they do not realize what the emotion is. They all fear ending up like them, without a ma, even if they won't admit it.

Ian McEvoy & James O'Keefe

Friends of Paddy Clarke. Ian probably would be on the straight and narrow more often, but he follows Paddy and Kevin's not so good influence often. James would like to be the leader, but isn't smart enough.



Objects/Places

Paddy Clarke's house

Paddy's house is where he and Sinbad hear all of the fighting going on between their ma and da. The sounds travel up the stairs and they hear the yelling, the hitting, and the doors slamming almost every night.

Paddy's School

A place where he meets up with his friends and a place of security. The playground is where the fight between Paddy and Kevin occurs, ultimately changing their friendship.

Schoolyard Shed

Where Paddy hides on occasion and where Sinbad's lips are set afire.

Paddy's bedroom

Paddy and Sinbad share a bedroom. The fights their parents have can be heard in their bedroom almost every night. Paddy tries to figure out what is happening and why. Sinbad tries to ignore it and pretend nothing is happening.

Barrytown

The town they lived in, in Ireland.

Barrytown Grove

Where they play soccer and use their jumpers as goals.

The building site

Where Paddy and his friends would go to get into trouble, even though they had been told not to.



Jumpers

The coveralls the boys wore over their clothes to protect them from dirt. Paddy often removed his jumper when he returned home so it would not smell like smoke or mud when he was doing something he was not supposed to.

The pipe

The sewer pipe where the boys liked to hide and prove their bravery.

Grand National

The game Paddy and his friends played that was a race over the neighbors hedges and out through a gate.

Corporation houses

There were six houses built by the Corporation on the corporation road. Paddy's da did not like them, therefore Paddy did not either, or the kids who lived in them.

The fire

Where the boys sat in a circle and chanted naughty words under Kevin's direction. If it wasn't a "cuss" word good enough, you got a "belt of the poker."

Manchester United

Paddy's favorite soccer team which he followed closely.

Themes

Abuse

The book starts out hinting about problems between the parents. It appears only to be verbal abuse until mid-story, when the ma doesn't get up one morning. Readers are left to assume that she was hiding a bruise or evidence of a physical fight the night before. Paddy realizes it is serious, but hopes she will be up after school so everything can appear normal. When he comes home, she is up and he likes to think the day will be ok now.

Paddy begins to take on the role of protector. He wants to believe in his da, but at the same time, he doesn't like him. He knows that he was lied to about the autograph in the book, and he doesn't like the way he is treated. He doesn't feel like he can run to him anytime, he has to feel out his mood and approach carefully. Paddy resents that, and tries to blame the newspaper that his da reads, saying it is what affects his moods.

Sinbad likes to pretend everything is fine when it is quiet at night, but he does realize his parents fight. It affects his eating habits and it affects his schoolwork. Paddy comes to protect him instead of bullying him. He shields Sinbad from the reprimands of the teacher for crying in school. He starts to want to be with him just for the sake of being. He even asks if he wants to be called by his real name, Francis.

The Clarke's operate as a typical family in a household of abuse. The fighting, whether it is verbal or physical abuse, happens after the kids are supposed to be asleep, and the parents don't think they are heard. What they don't know is that Paddy stays up all night to listen, and to make sure the fighting has stopped. Both boys listen at night, and sometimes climb into bed together to comfort each other.

Paddy gets up to update his da on the soccer game and get a drink of water. Whether it was intentional to disrupt his yelling parents or not, he witnessed his da hit his ma. After that point, relief takes over for Paddy and Sinbad. Da moves out and the gloom cloud lifts from the household.

Paddy doesn't have a da, and he is picked on at school. The kids tease him and try to pick fights, but he ignores it and just heads home. His life at home appears easier, even with the responsibility of his situation on his shoulders. He remains in the protector role, for his ma and his sisters, and even Sinbad.

Da comes for a visit at Christmas, and it seems he may have changed, but we don't find out for sure, as the story ends there. The boys seem happy to see him, yet keep their cautious distance at first.



Growing Up

Growing up is hard to do no matter what country you live in or what generation. There are hurdles to be faced in growing up, and Paddy has the normal hurdles of fitting in and wanting to be popular. To complicate his situation, he has the family struggles that pressure him and his actions.

Paddy and his friends try to impress each other using curse words. They even have rituals and make a big deal of using foul words in front of each other. Coming up with a weak word gets punishment at the fire by Kevin, who is the leader of the pack. All of the other boys want to be his friend. Paddy is his best friend, and has to do more and be more in order to remain so.

Paddy hurts animals, kills bugs, and terrorizes his brother all in the name of staying friends with Kevin. As a group, they create adventures, which sometimes damage property. They even set a barn on fire one time. When they run the Grand National, they jump hedges and ruin landscaping.

Paddy becomes more mature throughout the story as the events unfold with his parents. He becomes more aware of his actions and how they hurt others. He actually gets sick when they hurt his friends' dog. He becomes a protector of Sinbad, and wants to be around him for comforts sake.

As Paddy gains maturity, he also gains responsibility. He wants to shield his ma from his da and their verbal sparing. He stays up later to study his words and math. He becomes a better student because of his studies, even though that wasn't his main goal. If he was in the presence of his parents, they didn't fight. He tried to make them proud, or he tried to make them laugh.

American Influence

There is a battle by Paddy's da to keep American influences out of their home. On the occasion when he comes home from work and hears Hank Williams music, he is upset. He tries to force Paddy to sing the song again, but Paddy doesn't want to. He knew it was a hard song, but he liked the music. Paddy doesn't seem to understand what sets his da off at times. He was just singing a song, but he gets yelled at for it. He doesn't put an American or Irish label on music; he just sings it.

There is a mention of the kids wanting to wear jeans, and Da gets mad at ma. He believes she lets them have too much American influence and it is her fault that they are talking about American things in their house. Even after she reassures him that Paddy and Sinbad don't wear denim, he is still angry.

Another American influence is American history. Paddy likes to read about Geronimo and Daniel Boone and other historical action heroes because they are exciting. Paddy



also likes to watch the Three Stooges on television. He thinks they are funny until he actually gets his eyes poked at by Kevin.

Paddy believes the newspaper that tells his da about the war is what makes him angry, not the American influences. Paddy has studied hard and learned the history of previous wars to impress his da. Da will sit and read the newspaper for long periods of time and occasionally stop to quiz Paddy. Paddy always tries to know the answers.

Paddy's da is happy and praises him when he hears him singing an Irish song. He is also happy that Paddy follows soccer, which is a European sport . He likes it when he uses Irish slang words, like Bloody Ijit, to name call. His father is content with how things are in Ireland and doesn't appear to like change.



Style

Point of View

Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha is told in the first person, with Paddy Clarke narrating. Since the story is told from his point of view, we see his thoughts in their innocence. He only speaks once of his insecurities to Kevin, the rest is internalized.

Most of the story is dialogue and the action of the characters. There are also memories Paddy has which blend in among present day activities, because they are also told in first person and not usually separated from the rest of the text. The story is loosely connected events that detail the life of Paddy.

First person allows us into the mind of the narrator, so we can see what they are thinking even if they don't ever voice it. The internal thoughts of the other characters are limited, however, unless the narrator changes.

Setting

Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha is set in Ireland in the 1960's in a suburban town of Barrytown, Ireland. The story focuses on the life of an eight-year-old boy, his brother, and their friends as they grow into adolescence.

As the story begins, they have few cares in the world besides what their next adventure will be. As the story unfolds, they pay more attention to their surroundings and what life is in the world around them. Paddy spends less and less time out with his friends around town and more time at home studying in the kitchen. Ultimately, the story ends around what is going on inside the house.

Language and Meaning

The language used by the characters is true to the slang and dialect of the Irish. The dialogue captures how children talk to each other and how it differs when they talk to adults. The slang used is spelled true to sound, and not necessarily how it is really spelled, making some sections harder to read than others.

There are many slang and curse words used throughout the story as the boys are experimenting and trying to appear older and more sophisticated by using them to impress each other.

The purpose of the story is to show how difficult life is for adolescents. They think they understand things, yet they really don't. This story can cross boundaries of countries - it happens in families in whatever country they live in or what language they speak. Abuse happens in every country, too.



Structure

Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha is mainly dialogue between characters or by recollection of Paddy Clarke. Roddy Doyle does not use any chapter separations throughout his entire novel. There are no quotation marks used around dialogue of the characters. The story flows in a mostly chronological list of important events in the life of Paddy Clarke. He has memories thrown in among the present day adventures, but mostly it is present day.

The story starts in the beginning of a school year and progresses over that year and into a second school year. The beginning scenes are outside and begin with the antics of the boys. It shows how they terrorize the neighborhood and everyone in it. It starts off showing how outgoing and full of mischief Paddy is. The middle of the book spends more time in school, and in the home of Paddy and Sinbad. Paddy is trying to please his da and is spending more time in the kitchen studying to guard his ma. The end of the book is mainly in the house with a little time being in school.

The dialogue and action builds to an ending we are expecting. The plot is building with the transformation of Paddy, as this is a character driven story and not action driven. The tale is a list of actions and events, but displayed to show how Paddy has changed. There isn't a surprise or twist in the ending.



Quotes

"She went out of the kitchen, beginning to run. She tried to undo the knot of her apron. He went after her. He looked different, like he'd been caught doing something. They left me alone. I didn't know what had happened. I didn't know what I'd done. They came back. They didn't say anything." Page 53.

"I couldn't do it. I didn't even know what Hank Williams was singing. Da hit me. On the shoulder; I was looking at him, about to tell him that I didn't want to sing this one; it was too hard." Page 88.

"Running through the pipe was the most frightening brilliant thing I'd ever done." Page 106.

"I knew what Paddy meant, what she meant the way she'd said Paddy. So did Sinbad. So did Catherine, the way she stared up at my ma and then, sometimes, my da. He stopped. He took two breaths. He sat down. He looked at us, like he used to know us, then properly. ..Sinbad laughed, and made himself laugh more□I knew why Sinbad had laughed but he was too late. He thought it was over□He'd learn." Page 126.

"There wasn't another Friday. We were all sick of being hit on the back with a poker by Kevin. He wouldn't take his turn. He had to be the high priest all the time." Page 133

"Sinbad didn't notice the way I did. There had to be shouts and screams and big gaps between them before he knew anything. When it was quiet it was fine; that was the way he thought. He wouldn't agree with me, even when I got him on the ground." Page 153.

"I looked at Sinbad. He was just my little brother. I hated him. He never wiped his nose. He cried. He wet the bed. He got away with not eating his dinner. He had to wear specs with one black lens. He ran to get the ball. No one else did that. They all waited for it to come to them. He went through them all, no bother. He was brilliant." Page 167.

"I liked Liam. It seemed important though. If you were going to be best friends with anyone - Kevin - you had to hate a lot of other people, the two of you, together. It made you better friends." Page 182.

"It wasn't fair the way he made you nearly cry before he changed and did what you wanted him to. It didn't always happen that way but it happened enough for him to have parts of the rooms to himself, for the house to be different at the weekends. I could never run to him; I had to check first." Page 205.

"She stopped. We were listening; she saw us. He thought he'd won; I thought he did." Page 222.

"I just said it in a normal voice. He kept doing what he'd been doing. The radio downstairs sounded nice; the voices. Francis, I said. He had to look at me. I was going



to look after him. Francis. He held the two sides of the front of his trousers. Why are you calling me Francis? He said. Cos Francis is your name, I said." Page 224.

"I realized something funny; I wanted to be with Sinbad." Page 239.

"The crowd was quiet. They'd never seen this before. They wanted to see Kevin's face and were scared to. It would never go back to the same again." Page 273.

"Paddy Clarke - Paddy Clarke - has no da. Ha ha ha! I didn't listen to them. They were only kids." Page 281.



Topics for Discussion

How do Paddy and Sinbad each react to their parent's fights?

What role does Charles Leavy play in changing Paddy's view about life?

How does Ma make the household tension ease?

Does the Clarke household function as a typical house that hides abuse? How so?

At what point do we feel sympathy instead of horror toward Paddy and his cruel actions?

How does Sinbad get his nickname?

How does Paddy's Da seem to feel about American influences such as music and clothing?

Does the lack of structure in this story make it more difficult to grasp what is a recollection versus current activity?