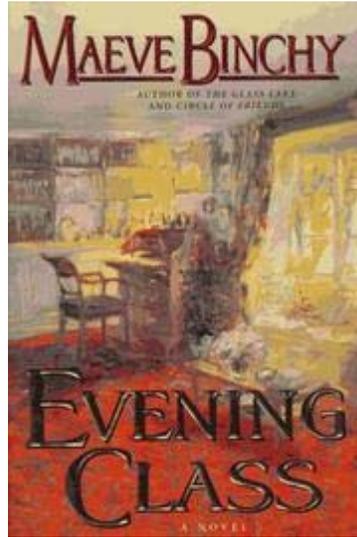


Evening Class

By Maeve Binchy



Discussion Questions

1. Compare Signora's perception of Aidan Dunne with his family's.
2. What changes did you notice in Bill and Lizzie's relationship over the course of the evening class?
3. Did Bill Burke's father have a grip on reality? How would you interpret his attitude?

4. How did Fran and Kathy's relationship change while they attended the evening class?
5. In what ways does Lou differ from a typical petty criminal?
6. Did Connie Kane see herself as a strong woman?
7. Where is the author's attitude toward the status of religion, class, women and law in Ireland reflected in this novel?
8. Was Harry Kane ever presented as a sympathetic character? What about Nora Dunne?
9. Does Laddy's story of his life as a fulfillment of the fortune teller's predictions seem tongue-in-cheek or mystical in its presentation?
10. How would you describe Fiona's family? Was it her parents or her lack of experience that caused her indecision and lack of confidence? Did Suzi's family contribute to her sense of self-assurance?
11. Do you agree with Brigid Dunne's proclamation that "If more people had the guts to go after what they want, the world would be a better place?"
12. In a novel that seems to highlight the differences in generations, where does Tony O'Brien fit in?
13. When Fiona orchestrated the breakup of Dan Healy's and Nora Dunne's affair, what effect did it have on the story?
14. What do you think about the author's device of connecting characters through coincidence?

15. How would you characterize the ending of the this novel?

Why I Write: Maeve Binchy

- Interview by [Sarah Kinson guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk), Monday 25 June 2007 07.24 EDT

What was your favourite book as a child?

Undoubtedly it was Winnie the Pooh. My parents would read it to me endlessly. I loved Kanga and Eeyore and thought of them as my friends. I used to ask where was I in the Hundred Acre Wood and my parents indulged me by saying I was on a tree or on a gate, then I felt part of it all.

When you were growing up did you have books in your home?

Yes, books were everywhere. Floor to ceiling were shelves of books. My father went to work by train every day. It was half an hour's journey each way and he would read a paperback in four journeys. After supper we all sat down to read - it was long before TV, remember!

Was there someone who you interested in reading?

Because I saw my parents relaxing in armchairs and reading and liking it, I thought it was a peaceful grown-up thing to do, and I still think that.

What made you want to write when you were starting out?

I never wanted to write. I just wrote letters home from a kibbutz in Israel to reassure my parents that I was still alive and well fed and having a great time. They thought these letters were brilliant and sent them to a newspaper. So I became a writer by accident.

Do you find writing easy?

It is easy in a way because I write just as if I were talking to you or writing a letter to a friend, but there is a danger of course that I could ramble all over the place and repeat myself, as we do in conversations with friends. So the hard bit is watching out for that!

What makes you write now?

Because my head is full of stories and I love to tell them. I have a story in my head now about a woman who thought she was being invited in by the boss to discuss promotion but in fact she as being fired. And I want to tell how she recovered from it all. I am dying to write it.

How do you write (do you have a daily routine?)

I am married to a writer, Gordon Snell, who writes children's books and we TRY to be upstairs in our big light-filled airy study by 8.30 in the morning, followed by an elderly cat who tells us when its time to go down again for lunch. I try to get in four and a half hours at the laptop every day, five days a week.

How do you survive being alone in your work so much of the time?

I'm only alone two mornings a week when Gordon plays golf but the main problem is getting distracted when you have nobody there to monitor you!

What good advice was given to you when you were starting out?

An English journalist called Michael Viney told me when I was 25, that I would write well if I cared a lot what I was writing about. That worked. I went home that day and wrote about parents not understanding their children as well as we teachers did, and it was published the very next week.

What advice would you give to new writers?

Always write as if you are talking to someone. It works. Don't put on any fancy phrases or accents or things you wouldn't say in real life. Say someone cried - don't say: "tears coursed down her face". Take it nice and easy, don't try to impress.

What are you working on at the moment?

I am busy with the publicity for a movie called How About You, which I wrote the story for. It will be in cinemas in November and stars Vanessa Redgrave and Imelda Staunton. I am also planning out my next book, which is called Heart and Soul.