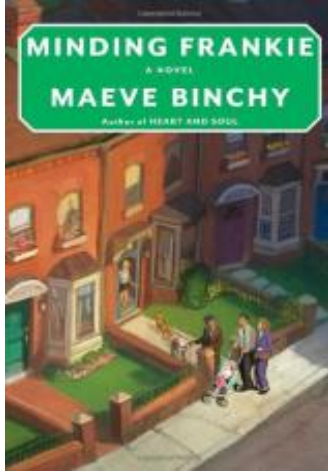


Minding Frankie

by Maeve Binchy



About the Book

Maeve Binchy is back with a tale of joy, heartbreak and hope, about a motherless girl collectively raised by a close-knit Dublin community.

When Noel learns that his terminally ill former flame is pregnant with his child, he agrees to take guardianship of the baby girl once she's born. But as a single father battling demons of his own, Noel can't do it alone.

Fortunately, he has a competent, caring network of friends, family and neighbors: Lisa, his unlucky-in-love classmate, who moves in with him to help him care for little Frankie around the clock; his American cousin, Emily, always there with a pep talk; the newly retired Dr. Hat, with more time on his hands than he knows what to do with; Dr. Declan and Fiona and their baby son, Frankie's first friend; and many eager babysitters, including old friends Signora and Aidan and Frankie's doting grandparents, Josie and Charles.

But not everyone is pleased with the unconventional arrangement, especially a nosy social worker, Moira, who is convinced that Frankie would be better off in a foster home. Now it's up to Noel to persuade her that everyone in town has something special to offer when it comes to minding Frankie.

Discussion Guide

1. Have you read any of Maeve Binchy's other novels? How does this one compare?
2. If you've read other Binchy books, which characters did you recognize? Are there any you'd like to see in a future novel?

3. There are many parents in the book. Who would you say does the best job, and why?
4. There are a number of recent retirees, voluntary and otherwise, who become an important part of Frankie's life. What kind of roles do her grandparents, Josie and Charles, take on? What about Dr. Hat and Muttie? More generally, what do the very young and the very mature have to offer each other? Which generation do you think needs the other more?
5. Emily told herself that she must not try to change the world... But there were some irresistible forces that could never be fought with logic and practicality. Emily Lynch knew this for certain? (page 22). What "irresistible forces" does she mean? How does she fight them?
6. It's clear what Noel gets from his relationship with Emily, but what does she get? How does the effect of alcoholism bond them?
7. Discuss Lisa's relationship with Anton. Why is she so oblivious to his less attractive qualities? What is her turning point?
8. Why is Moira so obsessed with Frankie's fate? Is it just fear, or is there something more going on?
9. How does Moira define "family"? How does Emily?
10. Lisa says to Moira, "I have a lot of worries and considerations in my life, but minding Frankie sort of grounds me. It gives it all some purpose, if you know what I mean" (page 239). Among Frankie's caretakers, who else might say this?
11. Discuss the ethics of Moira's dealings with Eddie Kennedy. Should she have told him about her father?
12. Anton says to Lisa, "I'm not the villain here, you know," and she responds, "I know. That's why I'm angry. I got it so wrong . . ." (page 314) What does she mean?
13. What did you think of Di Kelly's reason for staying with her husband? What would you have done?
14. What is your opinion of Noel's decision to get a DNA test? How would you have handled the results he received?
15. Many of the characters go through major upheavals in their lives. Who responds best, and why? Whose attitude changes the most?
16. What did you think of Stella's letter to Frankie? What did we learn from it?

Author Bio

Maeve Binchy was the author of *MINDING FRANKIE*, *HEART AND SOUL*, *NIGHT OF RAIN AND STARS*, *SCARLET FEATHER*, *QUENTINS*, *LIGHT A PENNY CANDLE*, *CIRCLE OF FRIENDS*, and *TARA ROAD* (An Oprah Book Club Selection), and many other bestselling books. She wrote for *Gourmet*; *O, The Oprah Magazine*; *Modern Maturity*; and *Good Housekeeping*; among other publications.

Binchy passed away on July 30, 2012 at the age of 72, following a brief illness. Considered a national treasure in her native country of Ireland, she died in Dublin near her childhood home, where she lived with her beloved husband, Gordon.

Critical Praise

"Binchy is a national treasure in her homeland of Ireland, and her latest novel is a perfect illustration of why. Your heart will have no trouble recognizing the landscape [of this] touching saga."

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