Begin Your New Chapter

A selection of classic stories
adapted to shine a light on
age-related macular degeneration (AMD)

AMD
AWARENESS
WEEK

The piece I wrote shows the effect of one small change. The eyes are only one small part of the body, but a change to them can affect everything.

Jennifer Burke, Author

Begin Your New Chapter

A selection of classic stories
adapted to shine a light on
age-related macular degeneration (AMD)

Contents page

Foreword 7

Understanding Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD) 9

Living with AMD 12

Jane Eyre 15
Sheila O'Flanagan

Little Women 21
Sinead Moriarty

The Great Gatsby 27
Andrew O'Connor

Pride and Prejudice 33
Jennifer Burke

Oliver Twist 39
Colm O'Regan

Contact information 47

Foreword

Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD) Awareness Week has been an enormously successful initiative, and over the past number of years we have used the occasion to raise awareness of AMD with the public, media and other stakeholders. By encouraging more conversation about AMD we hope to highlight the importance of regular eye testing, and the benefits of early diagnosis and treatment, in order to make a meaningful difference to the vision health of those at risk of AMD, and those living with AMD.

The '**Begin Your New Chapter**' campaign seeks to harness our love of reading whilst raising the profile of AMD. Reading is a favourite pastime for so many people yet it is a passion that can be negatively impacted by vision loss.

The literary theme for this year's AMD Awareness Week reflects the view that outcomes are not necessarily predetermined and new beginnings are possible – if some of the most well-known endings in literature can be changed, so can someone's future.

We are delighted to have such highly-regarded, popular authors supporting this important health initiative and are grateful for their help in highlighting AMD Awareness Week. Each author chose a well-known classic book to adapt, and in each case a new and exciting outcome has been created, emphasising that everyone can 'Begin Your New Chapter'. We hope this booklet inspires people to connect their love of reading with protecting their eyesight and encourages them to take control of their vision health.

We would urge anyone who has concerns about their eyesight to speak to a healthcare professional and get their eyes tested. For more information on AMD please visit **www.amd.ie**.

We hope you enjoy reading this collection of specially adapted classic stories.

Thank you.

NCBI Working for People with Sight Loss

FIGHTING BLINDNESS Cure. Support. Empower.

Irish College of Ophthalmologists Eye Doctors of Ireland Protecting your Vision

Association of Optometrists Ireland

NOVARTIS PHARMACEUTICALS

Understanding AMD

Age-Related Macular Degeneration

What is AMD?
Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD) is the leading cause of blindness in Ireland; there are over 7,000 new cases of AMD in the over 50 population each year (1). As the symptoms of AMD can often go unrecognised, it is crucial that people over 50 get their eyes tested regularly so that if there are any signs of AMD it can be diagnosed and treated as early as possible. NCBI - the national sight loss organisation, Fighting Blindness, the Irish College of Ophthalmologists (ICO), the Association of Optometrists in Ireland (AOI) and Novartis Ireland are working together to increase public awareness of the symptoms of AMD, increase understanding of the condition and highlight the importance of early detection and treatment.

Normal vision

Vision distortion due to wet AMD

Late-stage vision due to wet AMD

AMD affects the macula at the back of the eye, which is responsible for central vision and allows you to see detail. People living with the condition will often notice a blank patch or dark spot in the centre of their sight. This makes activities like reading, writing and recognising small objects or faces very difficult. AMD usually starts in one eye and is likely to affect the other eye at a later stage.

What early symptoms should I be aware of?
The most common symptom of AMD is slightly blurred vision. Wavy lines or a blind spot in the centre of the field of vision are other symptoms. Although you might not notice any changes in your vision,

an eye exam will assess not only your need for glasses but also what is going on at the back of your eye. If you notice any change in your vision, see an eye care professional immediately, especially if there is a history of glaucoma, AMD or diabetes in your family.

Dry and wet AMD
There are two types of AMD: dry and wet. Dry AMD is the most common form of the condition and develops slowly, eventually leading to loss of central vision; there are currently no proven treatments for dry AMD. Wet AMD is caused by leaky blood vessels inside the eye. It is less common than dry AMD but it can cause more rapid loss of vision. It is responsible for 90% of cases of severe vision loss (2). It results in new, weak blood vessels growing behind the retina (3). The good news is that while wet AMD can develop quickly, in the majority of cases, if diagnosed and treated early, as much sight as possible can be saved and some people may even see an improvement in their eyesight (4).

What can I do to protect my vision?
While wet AMD cannot necessarily be prevented, there is treatment available and its onset can be delayed by making some lifestyle changes and by ensuring you have your eyes examined regularly.

- **Stop smoking straight away to decrease your chances of developing AMD**
- **Eat a healthy diet, rich in fruit and vegetables**
- **See an eye doctor or an optician if you notice any changes in your vision**
- **Have a thorough eye exam every two years**

AMD is a progressive disease, and it is also painless. While AMD may affect your detailed central vision, most people still retain side (or peripheral) vision (3). However, if left untreated, 17% of people will progress to advanced AMD within five years (5).

Living with AMD

We know that AMD is the most common cause of sight loss in people over the age of 50. This is evident in the demand for services from people with the condition. So what does it mean for people living with AMD?

Those who contact NCBI and Fighting Blindness are dealing with both the emotional and practical aspects of sight loss. Some of the daily challenges people with sight loss encounter are reading print, such as newspapers, books, food labels and letters that arrive in the post. Seeing prices or finding products in shops can also be difficult, as well as telling the time, cooking, cleaning, laundry and of course getting out and about independently. Many people with AMD find it very difficult to recognise people and pass by a friend on the street, which can be hard for others to understand, especially when the person doesn't look any different.

All of these changes can be difficult to come to terms with, both for the individual experiencing sight loss and their families, so counselling and emotional support are very important. NCBI and Fighting Blindness also offer opportunities for people with sight loss to come together to benefit from the support and advice of their peers and to share knowledge and experiences. It is often necessary for a person to deal with the emotional impact of sight loss before they can start to think about addressing any practical problems they are having.

People with AMD will retain some vision and so our organisations help them to maximize their remaining vision in various different ways, including through the use of magnification and technical aids, as well as by providing advice on lighting and other adaptations that can be made to reduce the impact of loss of vision. Independent living and rehabilitation training can assist people in developing their skills in mobility and independent living.

Finding out what services are out there gives people who are living with AMD hope for the future, as well as choices and options to

ensure they can achieve their goals and, above all, independence. Thank you for supporting AMD Awareness Week 2014.

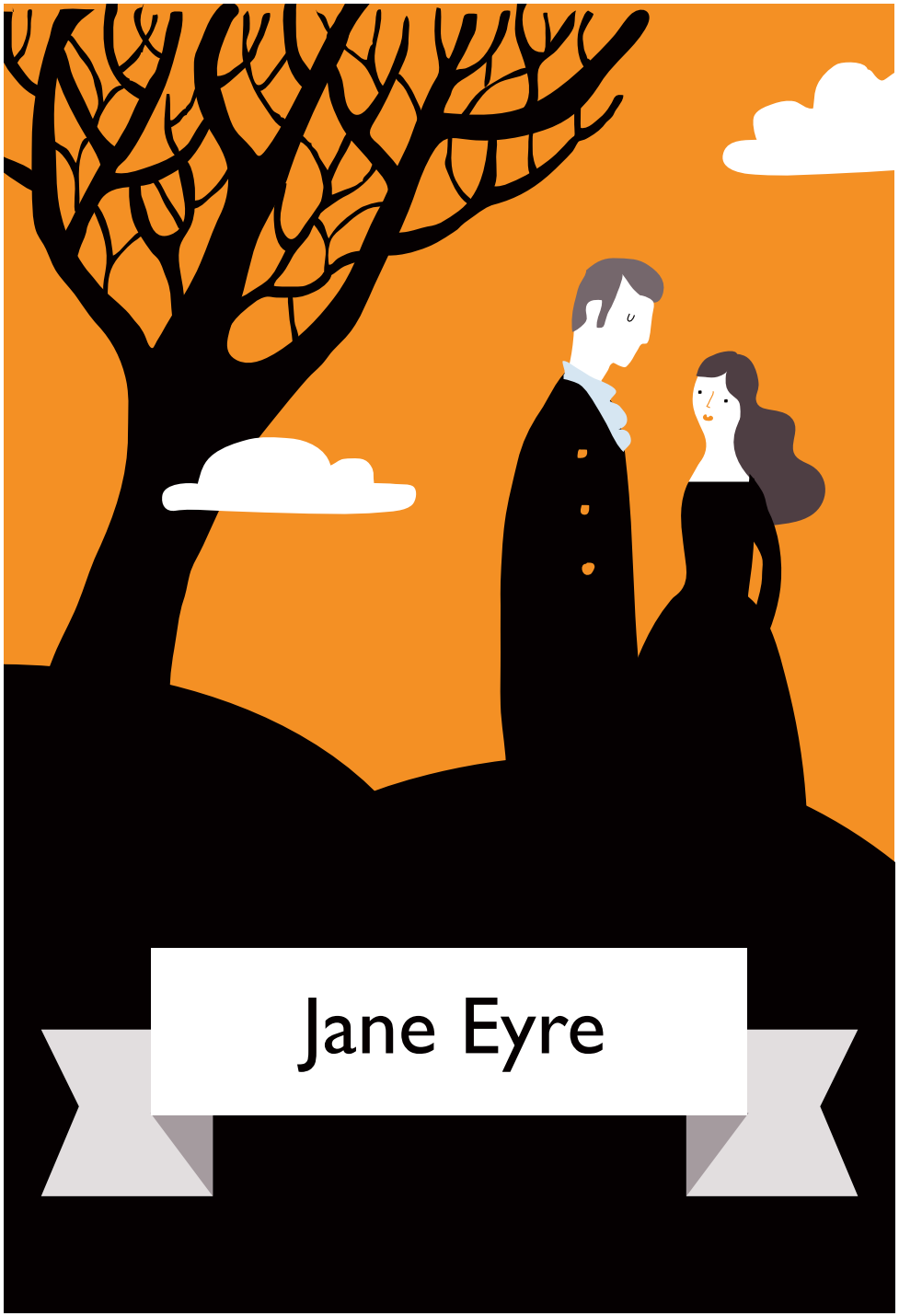
Avril Daly, CEO of Fighting Blindness
Elaine Howley, CEO of NCBI Services

Living with AMD – Meet Joe O'Callaghan

Age-Related Macular Degeneration is a much talked about eye condition in the present day, but eighteen years ago when I retired, the condition was unknown to me. I now had more time to indulge my hobbies, which included an interest in music and an occasional game of golf. I did some choral singing and performed as a soloist also. My general health was excellent and is so today.

In 2003, I became concerned about my sight. There was notable deterioration. Night driving, in particular, became difficult. Oncoming lights, road markings and white lines became a problem. At this stage I went to my optician who recommended I take it further and see a specialist eye doctor. He diagnosed AMD and explained the condition to me. Understandably, I was shocked, but he did assure me I would not go blind. I was advised to visit the NCBI, who cater for not only the blind but people with any degree of visual impairment. I received invaluable help in selecting low-vision aids. I visit occasionally to keep in touch with developments in that field. This equipment enables me to keep up my reading needs but at a slower pace. I have also discovered the enjoyment of audio books from my local library. Having been an avid reader, this has opened another door. I continue to walk regularly, usually with my wife, Eileen.

I am a member of Fighting Blindness, and through their meetings and newsletters, I learn of the progress being made in the quest for suitable treatments and for the various stages of AMD. As a result, I remain optimistic, even at my age, that some degree of improvement in my situation may soon be possible. Since my diagnosis, new doors have opened and I have made new friends. I have learned to adjust my life to with AMD and today, I am glad to say, I lead a happy and contented life.


Jane Eyre

About the author

Sheila O'Flanagan is from Dublin and has lived there all her life. Her family owned a grocery shop in the Liberties, so you could say city blood runs through her veins. As a young bookworm everyone thought her future career would be in literature, but her work life took a turn towards financial services where she became a bond trader.

Her love of reading and telling stories never left her, and despite success in her career, she felt that something was lacking in her life. When she was in her thirties she sat down, wrote chapter 1 on a page, and started writing. It was another two years before her first book was published, but she hasn't looked back! She eventually realised her dream of being a full-time writer.

Now with over 19 worldwide bestsellers, it is a good thing Sheila followed her dream.

Why I chose this story

For as long as I can remember I've been a bookworm and, after my mum would turn off the light in my bedroom, I'd continue to read under the covers with the light of my bicycle lamp. My mother knew this, of course, and she would often tell me that I was ruining my eyes. Although I ignored her, I was always conscious of looking after my sight, as the idea of not being able to read was too awful for me to contemplate. Having regular eye-checks has been a part of my life, and when my mum started to complain about her own vision I nagged her to get her eyes examined.

Unfortunately she was diagnosed with AMD, which had advanced very rapidly in one eye. However, treatment was recommended for

her other eye, which has had a very positive effect in stabilising the condition. As a result, my mum is still able to live on her own and read, albeit more slowly than before.

When I was asked to become involved in raising awareness of AMD I didn't hesitate because I've seen how devastating it can be to someone, but also how it can be treated to delay or even reverse damage. I'm very pleased to be able to do something to alert other people to the condition - and my mum is delighted I'm doing it too.

When I first read Jane Eyre I remember disliking the character of Mr Rochester intensely and hoping – despite Jane's obvious feelings for him – that she'd come to her senses and get over him. He's vain, arrogant and self-centred (as well as being the kind of man who shut his mad wife away in an attic!) and definitely not good enough for Jane. On re-reading it recently I took a slightly less belligerent view towards him, but I still thought Jane was far too clever and smart to have spent the rest of her life with him, and I liked having the opportunity to change her story.

Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte

Set in England during the early nineteenth century, Jane is an orphan who is raised by a cruel, unloving aunt. After being sent away to school, she becomes a governess to Adele, the ward of the gruff and mysterious Mr Rochester who lives in Thornfield Hall, a magnificent house. Jane and Mr Rochester fall madly in love and decide to marry; however, at the altar, Jane discovers that Mr Rochester does in fact have a wife who is still alive – a lunatic who is locked away in the tower of Thornfield Hall. Jane flees and throws herself on the charity of strangers; she becomes a teacher in a small school and discovers that she has a wealthy uncle who has died leaving her a great fortune. Jane returns to Thornfield Hall to find it burned to the ground in a fire where Mr Rochester's lunatic wife died and he lost his sight. They renew their vows of love to each other and marry.

Jane Eyre

The dramatic love story reimagined by Sheila O'Flanagan

Reader, I did not marry him. I had said yes when he asked me but my assent had been based on a surfeit of emotion brought on by our conversation. I knew that I had been mistaken in yielding to him. My regard for him remained warm, but I was a very different woman from the Jane who had slipped out of Thornfield Hall on what should have been my wedding night, penniless and bereft.

Then I had nothing except the excessive embarrassment that Mr Rochester had caused me for asking me to be his wife when he had another still living, although quite mad. But he had not seen fit to share that information with me and he had allowed me to think that we would have a happy and lawful life together. And although I forgave him, because the heart behaves differently to the head and because his circumstances had changed by the actions of that same wife in nearly burning him to death, I had changed too.

When I left, I had neither family nor money. And although I had some fortitude borne from a life first with Aunt Reed and then at Lowood School, such fortitude was only augmented by having to sleep in the open air and go without food, but still survive.

And, God giving me reward for such fortitude, also rewarded me by bringing me to my family; there can be no luckier person in her cousins than I. My Maker rewarded me too with my fortune, which every woman knows will make her free.

And so, Reader, I was a free woman with means of her own who had survived an ill-fated start to life and the trials and tribulations visited to me. Notwithstanding my feelings for Mr Rochester, I did not look up to him as I had once done, and I could not help but compare how I had dealt with my trials to how he had dealt with

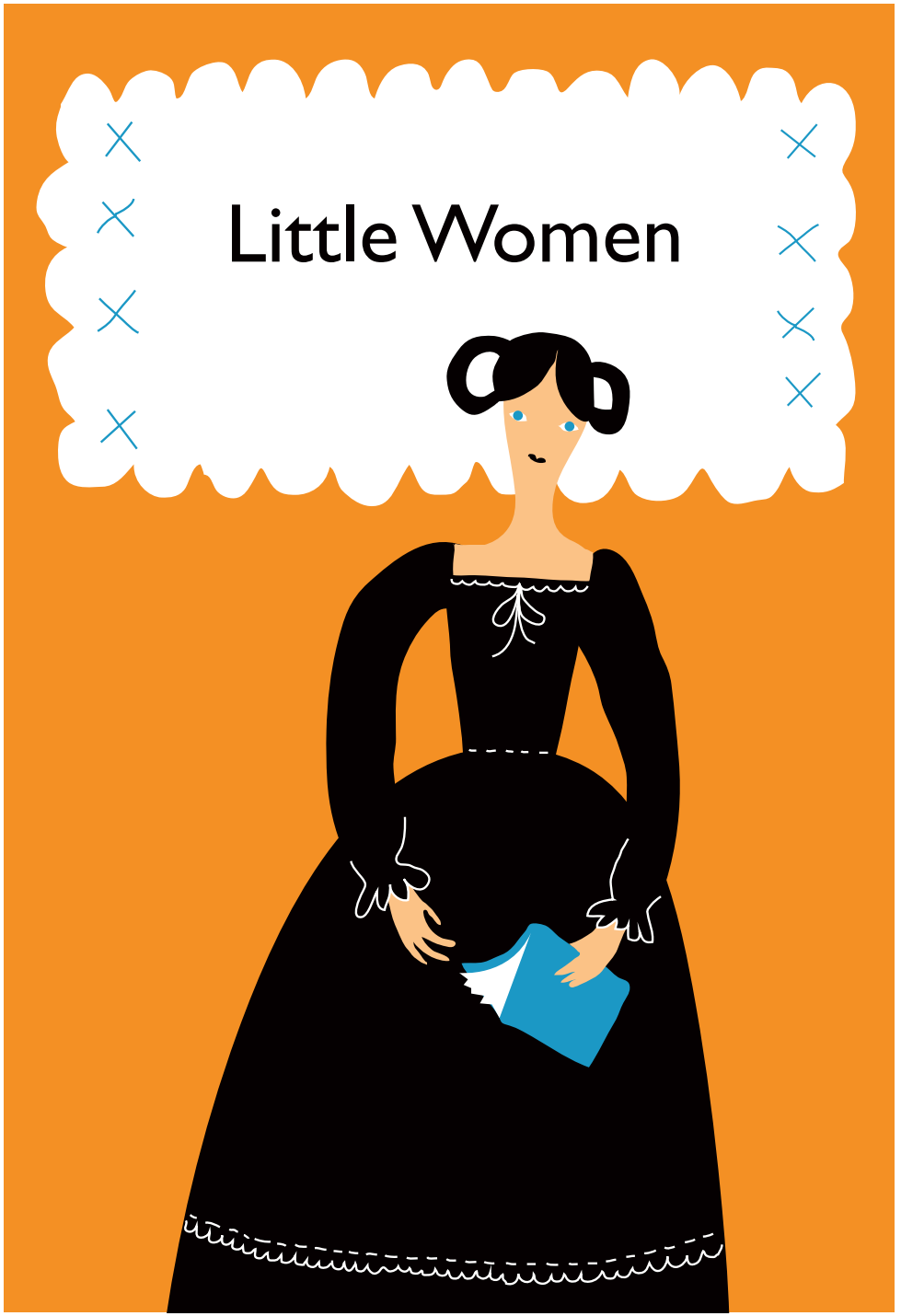
his. I had found work by my own hand and I had made a good life for myself. I had not the time or the money to travel overseas and hide my sorrows in a social round of easy virtue. It is strange, Reader, how a man may do these things without judgement, but a woman, especially a plain woman, may not. And were she to try, she would ever be judged and ever be found wanting by men such as St John Rivers, or indeed Mr Rochester himself.

Mr Rochester was discommoded by my refusal of him, but he accepted it. And, for I must always credit him too, when I told him of my plans for the future he supported them. The result of which was that I opened a school for foundling girls, one in which each was cherished and her talents encouraged.

The school accepted girls who were blind or had problems with their sight. Mr Rochester had attended an eminent oculist following his injuries, and this man, Sir Seymour Foxe, came to the school and treated our girls so that some, like Mr Rochester himself, regained partial sight in their young eyes. Pride may be sinful, but I am proud when I think of my girls and how they have gone into the world equipped to care for themselves.

As for romance, dear Reader, should that be the only thing that a woman, plain or not, concerns herself with? I had no time for romance and, when he finally succumbed to the injuries that had befallen him and passed from us, I thought my hopes and dreams of such a state had been buried with Mr Rochester. Yet this was not entirely so. Sir Seymour Fox visited Thornfield School with increasing regularity and it must be confessed that my feelings for him grew to an extent that I could not help thinking of a future with him in it.

But that, Reader, would be a different story.


Little Women

About the author

Sinead Moriarty was born and raised in Dublin where she grew up surrounded by books. Her mother is an author of children's books. To date, Sinead has had ten novels published by Penguin. Her ninth book, **Mad About You** was chosen as a Richard & Judy book club read. Her latest book **The Secrets Sisters Keep** is out now.

Why I chose this book

Little Women is probably my favourite childhood book. I think Jo March was the first character that I really, genuinely, desperately wanted to be. She was a hero to me. She was brave, fearless, gutsy, kind, generous and a writer!

Reading Little Women made me want to be a writer. I loved the idea of sitting in an attic writing stories while the snow fell.

I also think Louisa May Alcott was very clever to show how difficult it was for Jo to get published initially. She showed how criticism – when constructive – can change the way you write and make it so much better.

It made me realise that writing and being published wasn't easy, but that if you were passionate about it and very tenacious, it was achievable.

Little Women by Louise May Alcott

In civil war America, the saintly March sisters befriend their wealthy neighbour Mr Laurence and his grandson Laurie. Jo March, a headstrong aspiring writer, becomes firm friends with Laurie. As the years roll on Laurie's friendship turns to love and he asks Jo to marry him, which she refuses, turning down a privileged and comfortable life with him. Instead she moves to New York to pursue her dreams of becoming a writer rather than a traditional wife. She meets a penniless German teacher whom she falls in love with. Meanwhile, Laurie meets Jo's younger, vainer sister Amy, while travelling in Europe. They bond over the death of Jo and Amy's sister Beth and marry.

Little Women

The well-loved classic retold by Sinead Moriarty

Laurie reached for Jo's hand as Beth's coffin was lowered to the ground. Jo pulled away. She turned and rushed off into the woods, sobbing. Laurie went to follow her, but Meg stopped him.

"Leave her Laurie, she needs to cry it out alone."

Laurie looked down at the small coffin and felt his heart break. Beth had been such a special person in all of their lives. Beside him, Laurie could see his grandfather wiping his eyes with a handkerchief.

Laurie wondered if his grandfather would be this upset if he died. He knew how much he had adored Beth and how close they had become.

Laurie wanted to lie down in the dirt and howl. Life was so unfair. Why did Beth have to die? Everything was awful. Suddenly he felt a hand cupping his. He looked to his right, Amy had moved over beside him and was reaching to hold his hand. Grateful for the affectionate gesture, Laurie held Amy's hand tightly. She snuggled against him and he held her close.

For the next few months Laurie couldn't get Jo to talk to him. He tried everything - climbing in her window, singing songs to her, writing her letters, following her when she went for walks…but she kept pushing him away.

"I don't want to talk about it!" she shouted when he asked her if she was OK for the millionth time.

Laurie knew Jo better than anyone. He knew how much she was hurting and he desperately wanted to help her. But she wouldn't let him in and he was hurting too. Strangely, it was Amy who was always glad to see him and offered to go for walks with him and

talk about Beth and how sad it was and how unfair life was. But Amy was also fun to be with. She made Laurie laugh with her funny stories and she was also really beautiful to look at.

Laurie knew it was a bit shallow to think like that, but Amy had turned into a very pretty young lady and Laurie couldn't help noticing. Amy made Laurie feel good about himself, she laughed at his jokes and was enthusiastic about everything he did, however small. She told him he was wonderful and kind and brave and clever.

Laurie knew, deep down, that Amy was a flatterer, but he enjoyed the attention. Then one day, Amy laid her hand on his arm and told him she loved him. In a way, Laurie knew it was coming; he had noticed the way she had gazed adoringly at him. He hadn't missed her fluttering eyelids and her hand brushing against his.

But when Amy said it, when she said, "Laurie I think I'm in love with you. We should be together, I'll make you the most wonderful wife," Laurie froze.

He looked down at Amy's lovely face and knew…he knew she'd never be able to replace the woman he loved. There was only one woman that Laurie wanted to marry.

"Oh Amy, I'm so sorry if you got the wrong idea. I love you like a sister. I'd do anything for you, you know I would. But the only person I'm ever going to marry is Jo. Even if I have to wait until I'm one hundred years old, I'll wait. You know it's always been Jo. Everyone knows how I feel about her."

Amy's face darkened. "But you've been spending so much time with me. We've been talking and laughing and getting so close, I thought…well… I thought your feelings had changed. I thought you'd realised that Jo wasn't the right person for you. You're so refined and she's so …well….wild. I'd never embarrass you in front of your friends. I'd always be the perfect wife."

"But I don't love you Amy. I love Jo. I love her wildness. I love her

carefree spirit. I love her clever mind and her courage and her compassion. She's the most incredible woman I've ever met. No-one can compare to my Jo."

"You're making a big mistake!" Amy shouted and stormed off down the lane. Damn. Laurie rubbed his eye. He had never meant to hurt Amy. It was all just a mess. He sat down on a rock and put his head in his hands.

"Did you mean it?"

Laurie's head snapped up, Jo was standing in front of him, hands on hips.

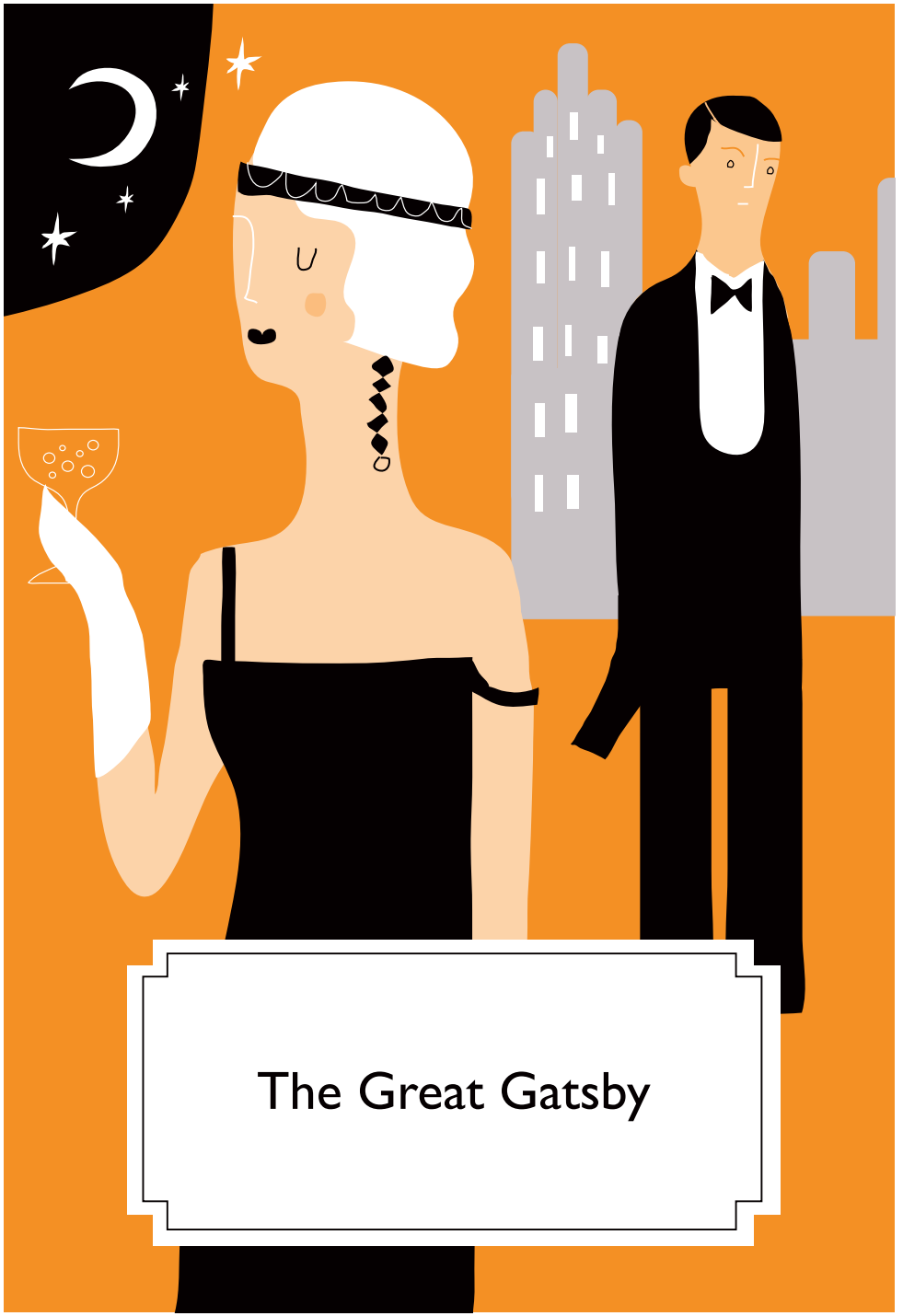
"Where the heck did you come from?" he asked.

"Never mind, did you mean what you just said?"

Laurie stood up and walked towards Jo. Looking into her eyes he said, "Of course I did. You know I did. It's always been you, Jo."

Jo's eyes filled with tears. "I've been so sad and so lonely," she said. "I miss Beth so much and I miss you too. I'm sorry I pushed you away."

Laurie reached out and pulled her close. She didn't resist. She threw her arms around his neck and sobbed into his shoulder. "It's alright Jo. I'm here for you. I'll always be here for you. It's you and me Jo. You and me, forever."



About the author

Andrew O'Connor is the bestselling author of eight novels and is a graduate of NUI Maynooth and Trinity College. His new novel **The Left Handed Marriage**, a thriller set against the background of the First World War and the 1920s, will be released this autumn.

Why I chose The Great Gatsby

It strikes me as unfair that Gatsby was shot and killed in 1922. That was the year The Great Gatsby is set in. Gatsby, a by-word for the roaring twenties, the jazz age, the ultimate symbol of that era, to be killed so soon into the decade?

The party was really only getting started in 1922, and as Gatsby might have been the one responsible for starting the party, I think it would have been fitting that he was around for the rest of it as well. There's something magical about the 1920s, that period sandwiched between the horrors of the First World War and the grimness of the Great Depression, that resonates through to today. I was naturally drawn to The Great Gatsby for this project as my new novel The Left Handed Marriage is set in the same era. An era when people threw themselves into decadence in an attempt to escape the memories of the war just left behind. Here I see a different ending for Gatsby, if he only had the foresight.

The Great Gatsby by F Scott Fitzgerald

In the roaring twenties, mysterious figure Jay Gatsby throws incredible parties in East Egg, Long Island, America. No one knows where he came from but all are drawn to his incredible lifestyle and magnetic personality. It soon emerges that Daisy Buchanan, the narrator's cousin, has a history with the handsome Gatsby. They were madly in love but she married Tom, a brutish man who is now having an affair with Myrtle. We soon discover that Gatsby's lavish lifestyle and sumptuous parties are simply an attempt to impress Daisy. They meet again and their love is rekindled and they begin an affair. Tom discovers this and is outraged although he is also having an affair. At a lunch in their house with Gatsby he reveals that Gatsby's wealth is from illegal bootlegging and that he's a fraud. Daisy decides to stay with Tom. Tom contemptuously sends her back to East Egg with Gatsby, attempting to prove that Gatsby cannot hurt him. However, when Daisy is driving Gatsby's car back she hits and kills Myrtle, Tom's mistress. Tom tells Myrtle's husband George that Gatsby, not Daisy, is responsible. George jumps to the conclusion that Gatsby was Myrtle's lover and goes to his mansion and shoots him dead.

The Great Gatsby

The jazz-age tale respun by Andrew O'Connor

Seduced by Gatsby's glamour and the legend he had created around himself, Daisy Buchanan had embarked on a scintillating affair with him. An all-consuming affair that her own cheating husband Tom was unaware of. That was until Gatsby was invited to that lunch at the Buchanans. As the guests engaged in banal chatter and swapped antidotes, Tom was struck by the chemistry between his wife Daisy and this enigma, his neighbour Gatsby. It became obvious to Tom that this was beyond infatuation. His wife and Gatsby were in love, he realised. Becoming enraged, he watched as the two disappeared out the French window for a stroll in the extensive gardens out of the view of the others, leaving the rest of the party to engage in their idle gossip.

Tom kept one eye on the clock and one on the garden waiting for his wife and her lover to return. And when they did finally re-emerge, Daisy looked hassled and flushed, whereas Gatsby looked as cool as ever, except he was even more attentive to Daisy. Tom stood to his feet and surprised the guests by insisting they all should relocate the party to a suite in The Plaza. Daisy objected, saying she was tired, but this only made Tom insist even more. Suddenly Gatsby, Daisy and Tom, and also Nick Carraway and his girlfriend Jordan were making the journey to Manhattan. As Tom drove past George Wilson's garage, he looked out for his own mistress, Myrtle, George's wife, at the premises. But there was no sign of her.

In the suite at The Plaza, Gatsby fussed so much over Daisy, he didn't notice Tom's increasingly agitated and hostile state. Then with great pleasure, Tom unleashed his revenge on his cheating wife and Gatsby. In anger and in disgust Tom revealed that all these stories Gatsby had spun about himself were a lie. Gatsby wasn't the Kaiser's cousin, nor a spy in the war, not even an Oxford

man. Gatsby was a criminal. A bootlegger. A common crook. Tom took great pleasure in telling Daisy that she had been taken in and hoodwinked by a fraud. That the great Gatsby wasn't so great after all. Tom waited for his wife's reaction as Gatsby sat in silence. Tom knew the socially conscious and delicate Daisy would recoil in horror at these revelations. But instead, she sat calmly and reached out and took Gatsby's hand. Daisy declared she knew all this about Gatsby. Gatsby had revealed the truth about himself earlier that day when they took a walk in the garden. At first naturally shocked, Daisy then realised that for Gatsby, a man so addicted to image, to tell her these truths about himself confirmed his feelings for her were genuine. The fact that Gatsby had told her, confided in her his true self, had made her feelings for him even stronger. Daisy instructed Tom she wanted a divorce.

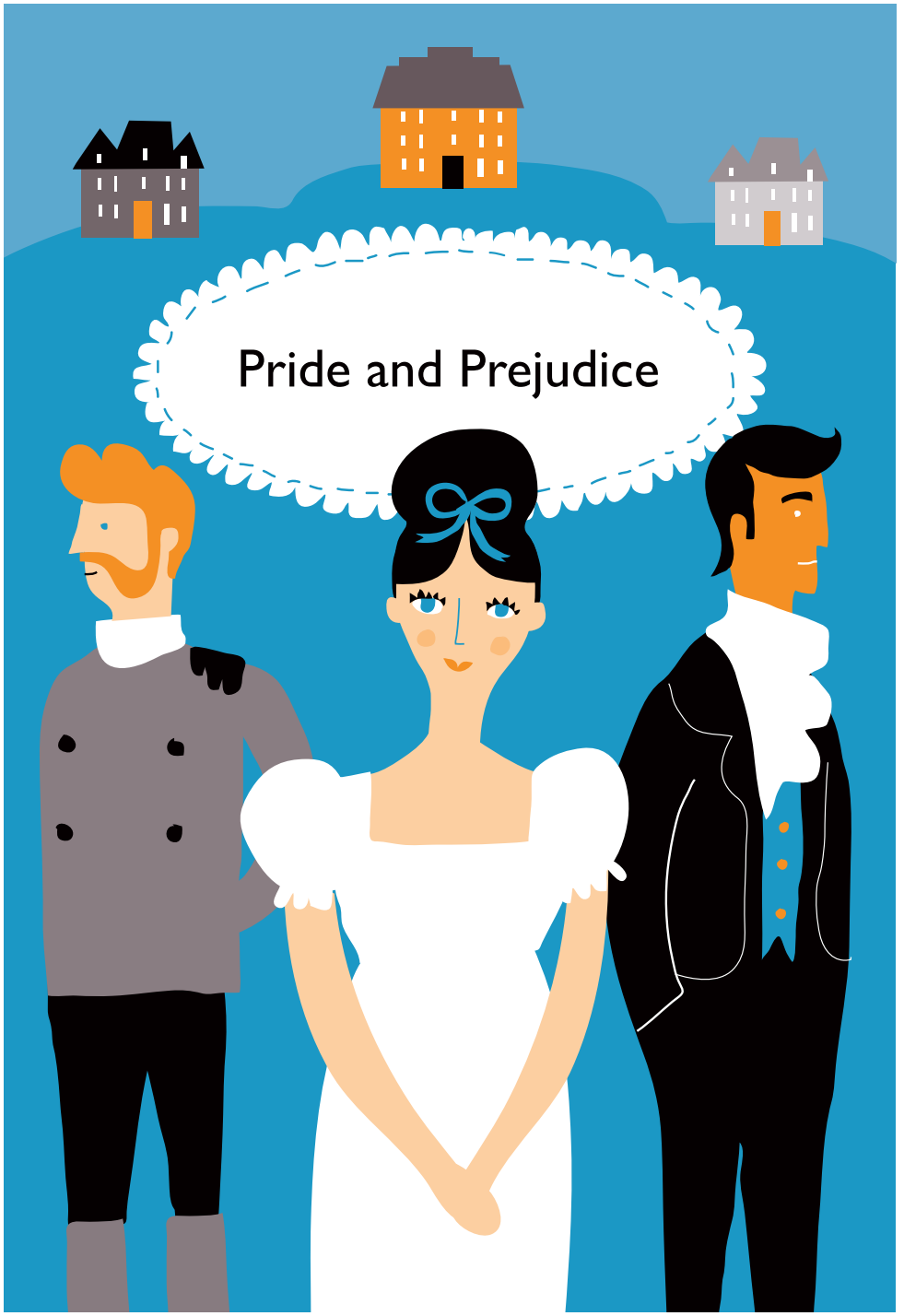
In a fit of rage Tom grabbed the car keys on the table and went storming out of The Plaza. It was only when he was outside that he realised he had taken the keys to Gatsby's yellow car. Too humiliated to go back to the suite, Tom jumped into the car and sped off back to Long Island, murder on his mind.

As Tom drove back erratically to Long Island, he didn't even slow down as he passed Wilson's garage. He didn't see Myrtle on the road until it was too late. He screeched the car to a halt to look back to see his mistress dead on the road. Tom pushed down the accelerator and sped on until he reached Gatsby's mansion and made his way to the pool area. Sitting down, Tom waited for Gatsby to return home, his revolver inside his jacket.

Realising Tom had taken the yellow car, Daisy drove herself and Gatsby back to his mansion on Long Island in Tom's automobile, excitedly discussing their future. As they pulled up outside Gatsby's mansion, they were concerned to see the yellow car parked there. Carefully they made their way through the house and out to the pool area calling for Tom. There, lying out in the pool, shot dead, was Tom. Nearby on the patio, a gun still in his hand, was George

Wilson's dead body. George had long suspected the driver of the yellow car had been having an affair with his wife Myrtle. He had seen Tom drive the car that day as it struck Myrtle. Following the car to Gatsby's mansion he found Tom sat by the pool and killed him before Tom had a chance to reach for his own revolver. Then George had turned the gun on himself.

To escape the tragedy and ensuing scandal, Daisy and Gatsby, mirrored the book's author F. Scott Fitzgerald and his wife Zelda and migrated to Paris and the Riveria where they spent the rest of the 1920s living life to the full. That was until Wall Street crashed. And hopefully Gatsby had the foresight to see that tragedy as well.



About the author

Jennifer Burke is a Dublin-based author and solicitor. In July 2013, her life changed forever when a TV3 camera crew burst into her office to announce that she had won their **Write A Bestseller** competition, and with it a three book deal with Poolbeg Press. Her first novel **The Secret Son** was published in September 2013 to critical acclaim. Its success in the bestsellers list prompted Poolbeg Press to establish a new imprint, Ward River Press, which focuses on accessible literary fiction. Jennifer also writes shorter fiction. Her short story, **Leaving the Cold Behind**, was published in the 2012 From the Well Anthology and she has been shortlisted for the past three consecutive years in the Fish Flash Fiction competition. Jennifer takes part in a monthly writing group in the Irish Writers Centre. Her second novel, **Levi's Gift**, will hit the bookshelves in September 2014.

Why I chose this story

As an author, reading is immensely important to me. It is easy to take the gift of sight for granted. I am delighted to be asked to take part in this important campaign to raise awareness of AMD and the great work done by the organisations involved.

I decided to re-work an integral part of Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen. The piece I wrote shows the effect on the story of one small change. Just like the eyes are only one small part of the body, a change to them can affect everything.

After Elizabeth Bennet rejected his proposal of marriage in Kent, Mr Darcy wrote her a letter that altered her perception of him. One small change – what if Elizabeth Bennet had not read that letter? The

letter in which he overcame his pride and revealed his true history to her. The letter which undid her prejudices against him and set them on course for a happy ending. This is my favourite book by Jane Austen, and indeed one of my all-time favourite novels. I hope she can forgive me for this!

Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen

Jane Austen's classic novel is set in Georgian England and follows the lives of the Bennet household; five sisters whose mother is desperate to see them all married. The lively and intelligent heroine Elizabeth Bennet and her family meet Mr Darcy, a haughty and proud man. Mr Darcy publicly snubs Elizabeth but over time he finds himself increasingly attracted to her. However, Elizabeth becomes enamoured with Wickham, a handsome young soldier who tells her how Darcy cruelly cheated him out of an inheritance. When Elizabeth later meets Mr Darcy he makes a shocking proposal of marriage, which Elizabeth quickly refuses and scolds him for disinheriting Wickham. Darcy leaves her but delivers a letter informing her that Wickham is a liar and that the real cause of their disagreement was Wickham's attempt to elope with his young sister. Elizabeth's feelings for Mr Darcy change and she turns against Wickham. Wickham then runs off with her youngest sister Lydia, bringing shame and potential disgrace to the Bennet family as it suggests that the couple are living together out of wedlock. The family searches for Lydia but to no avail. It seems all hope is lost but then they turn up and the Bennets are informed that Wickham has agreed to marry Lydia in exchange for an annual income. The Bennets assume the benefactor is a family friend, but Elizabeth later learns that the source of the money, and of her family's salvation, was none other than Darcy. Elizabeth and Darcy go out walking together and he tells her that his feelings have not altered. She accepts his proposal and they marry.

Pride and Prejudice

Austen's classic tale of love and misunderstanding
reimagined by Jennifer Burke

"Miss Bennet," Wickham said abruptly, halting their walk. "I must speak to you."

On seeing her startled look, his voice softened. "We have spent almost all of our time together since you returned from visiting Mr and Mrs Collins in Kent. Now, as you know, my regiment is bound for Brighton."

Despite his serious countenance, Elizabeth could not help but laugh. "Yes, with Kitty and Lydia as sisters who could forget the militia's impending departure."

He indulged her with a smile before continuing. "I am not for Brighton. That is to say, I am considering taking a commission in a northern regiment."

"My goodness!" Elizabeth could not conceal her amazement. "Have you told Colonel Forster? Forgive me, but why do you wish to leave your current post? Can you easily acquire a new one?"

Wickham stepped closer, the misty moonlight barely illuminating his face. "I will organise a new commission," he said with conviction, "but it may take some time – only weeks, I hope – before I am settled."

His eyes fixed on hers, and she felt her chest tighten in anticipation.

"Miss Bennet – Elizabeth, you cannot be ignorant of my feelings for you. There is only one place I want to go. Gretna Green."

"Wickham!" Her voice trembled as she struggled to regain composure. "You cannot think so little of me. Think what you are asking! I could never elope in such a way. The shame it would bring on my family. If we are to marry, it must be done properly."

He shook his head slowly, as though with regret. "I wish I could offer you that. But my circumstances – well, you know the outcome of my association with the Darcy family. You know most of the history there."

"Only most? What else could there be?"

"There is more, but I cannot reveal it now. All I can tell you is that I cannot stay with my regiment any longer. I want to marry you. Do you trust me, Elizabeth?"

To that question her answer was certain. Why, had she not burned the letter Mr Darcy gave her the morning after his doomed proposal, because the first few paragraphs had threatened to reveal a different history than that exposed by Wickham? She had been too proud to let that heinous man dispel her prejudice against him with what were sure to be vicious lies about her good friend Wickham. No, she trusted Wickham and so she had burnt the letter.

"Elizabeth, marry me. I will be sorry to take you from your family. I know it is not how you imagined your wedding day, but we will marry immediately. No one will be able to question our integrity. Say yes."

Elizabeth closed her eyes, inviting more darkness than already surrounded her by night. Her very morals were being tested, but this was about more than her grand notions. Wickham needed her.

She opened her eyes and, with only a slight hesitation, smiled her acceptance.

Oliver Twist

About the author

Comedian, bestselling author and broadcaster hailing from the small Co. Cork village of Dripsey, Colm O'Regan has stood up and made people laugh all over the world.

Colm's two books celebrating the Irish Mammy - **Isn't It Well For Ye** and **That's More of It Now** - are bestsellers and **Isn't It Well For Ye** was nominated for an Irish Book award. Its warm and funny observations are a hit with people of every gender, age and background. It sprang from the equally successful @irishmammies twitter account that Colm authors and which has nearly 150,000 followers.

His comedy festival appearances include the prestigious invite only Montreal Just For Laughs, the Kilkenny Cat Laughs, Electric Picnic and many, many more. He has played all over Ireland and the UK, Europe, South Africa, North America and even as far away as Tokyo and Osaka and appeared on The Late Late Show. He also writes a weekly column for the Irish Examiner and a weekly radio diary for the BBC World Service.

Why I chose this story

When I was small there were two books on the shelf that I looked at for years but never read. I was waiting to be clever enough to read them. The print was small, far smaller than Ann and Barry, Famous Five or Five Find Outers. They were Oliver Twist and RM Ballintyne's Coral Island. Eventually I took them up. And ate them. (After a bit of chewing. 19th century novels take a while to say something.) They were the first books I read where the 'bad fellas' in them were really bad. Oliver Twist had a large cast of characters of varying shades of good and bad, from the saintly residents of Mr Brownlow's house to the grimy, leering villains in the rookeries and Fagin's quarters. Bill Sikes was the most malevolent character I'd ever read. He exuded far more menace than any kidnapper on Kirrin Island or spy on Billycock Hill and certainly anything Ann and Barry faced, even on the farm.

The books also revealed how much it was possible for humans to suffer. Oliver Twist was about the misery of the poor in London. Dickens wasn't necessarily sympathetic to all of their travails but he was unstinting in his description of squalor. I think in order to understand history you have to read, not just history books or historical novels, but the books written at the time of the events.

Oliver Twist ends quite neatly. Good things happen to the good people. Bad things happen to the bad people and some who are a shade of grey are offered a chance at redemption. Apart from poor Nancy who is the novel's most tragic character. I'd like to propose an ending where some of the black and white characters are given a few shades of grey.

The story ends for Oliver as follows [in bold on page 43] and I pick up the baton straight after.

Oliver Twist by Charles Dickens

Oliver Twist begins in a workhouse in England in 1830. Oliver is an orphan who winds up with a gang of pickpockets led by the dastardly Fagin. Oliver is trained by the other boys to pickpocket but on his first attempt to rob an elderly gentleman, Mr Brownlow, is caught. However, Mr Brownlow takes pity on the feverish Oliver and takes him to his home. Oliver thrives but Bill Sikes and his lover Nancy, from Fagin's gang, capture Oliver and return him to Fagin. Fagin sends Oliver to assist Sikes in a burglary. Oliver is shot by a servant of the house and, after Sikes escapes, is taken in by the women who live there, Mrs. Maylie and her beautiful adopted niece Rose. They grow fond of Oliver, and he spends an idyllic summer with them in the countryside. But Fagin and a mysterious man named Monks are set on recapturing Oliver.

Mr. Brownlow, with whom the Maylies have reunited Oliver, confronts Monks and wrings the truth about Oliver's parentage from him. It is revealed that Monks is Oliver's half-brother. Their father, Mr. Leeford, was unhappily married to a wealthy woman and had an affair with Oliver's mother. Monks has been pursuing Oliver all along to ensure his half-brother is deprived of his share of the family inheritance. Mr. Brownlow forces Monks to sign over Oliver's share. Fagin is hung for his crimes. Mr. Brownlow adopts Oliver, and they and the Maylies retire to a blissful existence in the countryside.

Oliver Twist

Dickens' saga is given a new ending by
Colm O'Regan

Mr. Brownlow adopted Oliver as his son. Removing with him and the old housekeeper to within a mile of the parsonage-house, where his dear friends resided, he gratified the only remaining wish of Oliver's warm and earnest heart, and thus linked together a little society, whose condition approached as nearly to one of perfect happiness as can ever be known in this changing world.

But even an approach to perfect happiness can be an affront to the natural order of life and the tale of Oliver does not end in bucolic bliss and the loving bosom of a family. For you see, time is the rust that stiffens the machinery of happiness until eventually it seizes altogether.

The source of Mr Brownlow's wealth had been a mystery to Oliver. He had always been a curious boy, and one who had witnessed his old mentor Fagin's bookkeeping, so he knew well the ebbs and flows of income, expense, profit and loss. He dared not ask Mr Brownlow how he appeared to not do much work but still was able to keep two houses in London and the countryside. One day about five years after the death of Fagin and Bill Sikes, Mr Brownlow departed for London on business and implied he would not be back for a number of nights. Oliver Twist gained entry to Mr Brownlow's study. He remembered a long-forgotten lesson from Fagin - "On The Nature Of Locks And Their Secrets, My Dear" - and picked both the locks of Mr. Brownlow's study-door and the lock of his safe. Having passed the point of no return he settled down to read the yellowed pamphlets inside.

He became light-headed as he read.

The papers were manifests from the awful ships that plied the route from the Bight of Benin to the West Indies. It soon became

apparent to him that his sainted saviour had been, in a previous incarnation, a slave trader.

Oliver sat back against his master's desk and breathed deeply. It seemed to him that everyone in this world was merely using his fellow man for profit. Whoever was more powerful would be the victor.

And what had been so wrong if the Artful Dodger Jack Dawkins, who God knows where he was, had stolen a handkerchief from a man who had stolen men's lives. For Oliver had deep affinity with the African and had known a number of them in Fagin's employ. They were not pickpockets as they were too conspicuous but were kept busy with the tasks of the house. But, Oliver now remembered, Fagin had always treated them with more kindness than their paler colleagues. Perhaps he knew them to be as much on the outside as he was.

Now he felt that no one was as they seemed. For what purpose would it be to rest here and grow fat. It was all founded on other's misery. He resolved he would not be the leech. For the second time in his life he abused the trust placed in him by Mr Brownlow. He broke open the other safe, grabbed what guineas there were – for he was not so principled as to reject all the fruits of that evil trade - and found a horse in the stable that would take him the thirty miles to London.

For the first time in five years he felt afraid but also free. Could it be that the life of an itinerant was the natural one for him. That it did not matter how high-born he was, but that something ingrained in him in those first miserable, famished years in the orphanage had made him a free spirit never to be shackled again, even if the shackles were velvet?

He reached London by early evening. The streets had not changed from his last visit – if anything the smell and filth of the rookeries was worse but for Oliver they were like an eiderdown. He was home. After some inquiries he found his destination – Fagin's old

house. He stood regarding it for some time, unsure what to do next.

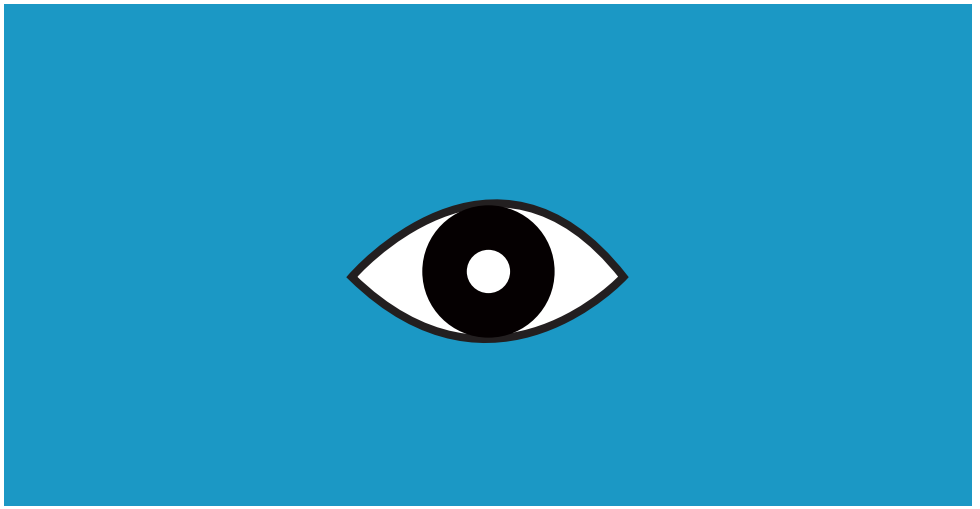
"Well ain't you the gen'lemen".

It was a familiar voice though it was a little huskier than he remember but still it was unmistakable. There he was. The Artful Dodger. His speech was more refined, he had filled out in the chest a little and his clothing fitted him – no longer was he wearing a coat with bottomless pockets.

"Hoping to start a little enterprise was ya?" The Dodger inquired.

"Maybe I am," said Oliver. His time in the country had at least served him well in one respect. Five years of good food meant he now towered over the Artful Dodger. Both parties acknowledged that there had been a shift in authority.

This time, they would do it – Oliver's way.



Contact information

Organisations involved with the treatment and awareness of AMD

NCBI – who we are:
NCBI is the national sight loss organisation, providing information, advice, support, rehabilitation services and other training designed to assist people who are living with sight loss to do so independently. Almost 18,000 people in all parts of Ireland are currently availing of some level of service and support from NCBI. NCBI also provides a range of services to public and private organisations to make sure that their services are accessible to people who are blind and vision impaired.

For more information visit
www.ncbi.ie

About Fighting Blindness:
Fighting Blindness is an Irish patient led organisation set up in 1983 by families affected by eye disease to provide support to each other and has now evolved into a charity funding and supporting world-leading research.

Fighting Blindness also provides a professional psychotherapy and support service for people and families affected by sight loss through its Insight Counselling Centre and is extremely active in the area of advocacy and patient empowerment. Our vision is to cure blindness, support those experiencing sight loss and empower patients.

For further information, visit
www.fightingblindness.ie

About the Irish College of Ophthalmologists:
The Irish College of Ophthalmologists (ICO) is the educational and professional body for eye doctors and the expert body on medical eye care in Ireland.

The ICO is dedicated to promoting excellence in eye care through the education of its members, trainees and the public. Its goal is to maintain standards of excellence for the restoration of vision and the preservation of sight. We do this by educating eye doctors in training, providing on-going education for eye doctors in practice, giving accurate medical advice to the public and policy guidance for the government.

For further information, visit
www.eyedoctors.ie

About The Association of Optometrists Ireland:
The Association of Optometrists Ireland is the professional representative body for the vast majority of practising optometrists in the country. Formerly known as ophthalmic opticians and commonly referred to as opticians, the official title in Irish law is now optometrist. The Association, in conjunction with the Opticians Board, who are the statutory regulatory authority, provides a supervisory and ethical environment for all members. The purpose of this is to ensure the highest possible standards in provision of clinical and dispensing services to the public. Subscription to the Association's Code of Ethics and Practice is mandatory for all members.

References:

1. The Cost of Sight Loss Report NCBI 2012
2. www.hse.ie/eng/health/az/A/AMD. Accessed Sept 2014
3. www.nei.nih.gov/health/maculardegen/nei_wysk_amd.pdf
4. Rosenfeld P et al. NEJM. 2006;355:1419-1431
5. AREDS Report No. 8 Arch Ophthalmol. 2001;119:1417-1436

Supported by:

NCBI
Working for People with Sight Loss

FIGHTING BLINDNESS
Cure. Support. Empower.

Irish College of Ophthalmologists
Eye Doctors of Ireland
Protecting your Vision

Association of Optometrists Ireland

NOVARTIS PHARMACEUTICALS

AMD AWARENESS WEEK

www.amd.ie

IE02/LUC14-CNF109b
Date of Preparation: September 2014