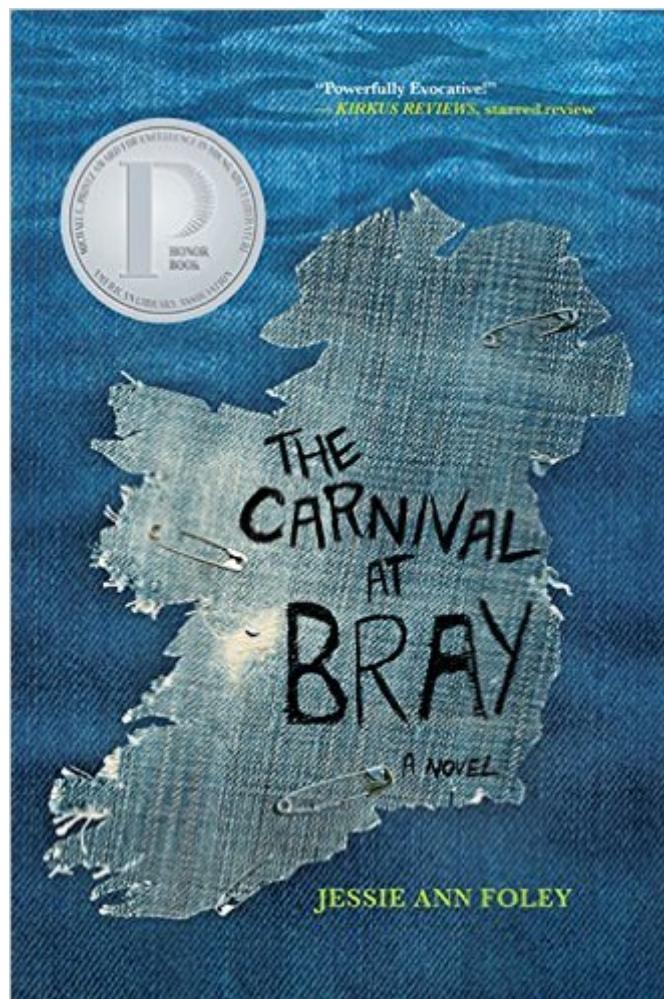


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# The Carnival At Bray



## Synopsis

ALA 2015 Top Ten Best Fiction for Young Adults Chicago Weekly Best Books of 2014 A Michael L. Printz Honor Award Winner Winner, 2014 Helen Sheehan YA Book Prize Kirkus Reviews Best Books of 2014 Finalist, William C. Morris Award It's 1993, and Generation X pulses to the beat of Kurt Cobain and the grunge movement. Sixteen-year-old Maggie Lynch is uprooted from big-city Chicago to a windswept town on the Irish Sea. Surviving on care packages of Spin magazine and Twizzlers from her rocker uncle Kevin, she wonders if she'll ever find her place in this new world. When first love and sudden death simultaneously strike, a naive but determined Maggie embarks on a forbidden pilgrimage that will take her to a seedy part of Dublin and on to a life-altering night in Rome to fulfill a dying wish. Through it all, Maggie discovers an untapped inner strength to do the most difficult but rewarding thing of all, live. The Carnival at Bray is an evocative ode to the Smells Like Teen Spirit Generation and a heartfelt exploration of tragedy, first love, and the transformative power of music. The book won the 2014 Helen Sheehan YA Book Prize.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (51 customer reviews)

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## Customer Reviews

Elevator pitch: It's 1993 and Maggie Lynch leaves her home in Chicago because her mother's new husband is taking them to his hometown of Bray, Ireland. We follow Maggie's journey in a new country as she has her first sexual experiences, loses someone she loves, falls in love, and pulls her first big teenage stunt. The tale is set in the backdrop of the grunge movement and its most culturally iconic group - Nirvana. This is as honest a telling of the teenage experience - the good, the bad and the impulsive that you'll ever read. Where to read: On the DART starting in Dublin and

arriving at Wicklow. Good if: You're ready to relive what it was like to be 16 and think you're ready for everything, but in actuality have experienced nothing. Not Good if: The rough cuts of being a kid raised by a single mom and losing someone you love hits a bit close for you at the moment. You Might Also Like: Norwegian Wood by Haruki Murakami What to Drink: Old-fashioned Coca Cola What to Eat: Chicago deep dish pizza Thickness Rating: Medium

I just finished reading The Carnival at Bray and thoroughly enjoyed every page. Jessie's writing is lyrical at times and I found myself rereading passages just to enjoy the flow of her written words. This is a coming of age novel, but it can be enjoyed by readers of all ages. I am in my 60's and found myself lost in the story and wanted it to continue, but the way it ended was perfect.

This was my final read in the Morrison finalist award of The Hub Challenge and oh was it so, so GOOD! I rooted for Maggie as she traversed the many ups and downs of her sixteenth year. Uprooted from Chicago and jettisoned to Ireland, due to yet another one of her mother's marriages (failed relationship, results in another union), Maggie mourns leaving her grandmother, Ei, and her beloved godfather-uncle musician, Kevin. But life in Ireland holds surprises for Maggie—a constant friendship with nonagenarian, Dan Sean, falling deeply and truly in love with Eoin, questioning her relationship with her mother, and ultimately dealing with unbearable loss, all the while questioning who she really is. Maggie's voice was honest and full of contradictions. While she yearns for peace, a normal family, and acceptance—Maggie can't forget what her Uncle Kevin wrote: "Live and then Live some more." With Kurt Cobain tickets in hand from Uncle Kevin, Maggie embarks on a life changing adventure. I recommend this book for adults (adults will really get what Maggie (teens) wrestles with) and young adults will love the drama, angst, and romance of first love. Maggie is one rockin' protagonist, I will not forget!

Jessie Ann Foley has crafted a beautiful, deeply descriptive story with interesting and complex characters. This was a book that I could not put down. From page one I was immediately drawn into this tale of teenage Chicagoan Maggie and her displacement to Ireland due to her mother marrying an Irish native. Jessie is a talented author and I will eagerly await her next work.

This book was amazingly written. Between the development of characters, the mesmerizing prose and the story itself, it's clear that Jessie is going to be a writer that captivates audiences for a really long time. The cultural references of the time and the angst of the characters, I was brought back to

my own high school experience. This novel is a great read for teens figuring out who they are, and adults who enjoy a great read and reliving their youth. Five Stars!

I rarely post a book review on , but I felt I must for this book. First off, to hopefully lend some credibility to this review, I am a high school English teacher in Los Angeles who reads a ton of YA novels in order to recommend good books to my students. I even have a website of over 160 books I have reviewed, for students to access. Although I have come to enjoy YA novels, very few blow me away. I can name a few: "Paper Towns," "I Am The Messenger," "Every Day," "Incredibly Loud and Incredibly Close" and "Invisible" by Pete Hautman. I will now have to add, "The Carnival at Bray" to that list. Jessie Ann Foley writes lyrical prose that lolls you out to sea, immerses you in a world of its own, and then with gifted hands carries you to shore ready to exhale with the thought we all hope for after reading a good book or seeing a good movie: "My God, something just happened to me, and I'm still trying to make sense of it." She writes as though every sentence, every word matters. She also renders Ireland in a way that truly illustrates the beauty of the country--although I have visited and loved the country, I could never convey in words what was so special about it. Foley, throughout the novel, seems to have this gift for intimating the thoughts most of us have, but can't find the words for--what Nirvana, the grunge movement, and Kurt Cobain meant to a generation of teenagers; how serious young love is, even though adults treat it as trivial; how the right to be free to make our choices conflicts on so many levels with our responsibilities to society and to the ones we love. I promise you, when I make the following statement, I do not know Mrs. Foley and have no stake in this review: I have no idea why this novel isn't as well known and talked about as the previous novels I mentioned. "The Carnival at Bray" is a must read!

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