

## APPENDICES

### Synopsis of Down by the River

The conflicts in the novel are illustrated through the main character, Mary MacNamara, a fourteen-year old Irish girl. The novel begins with the tragic rape of Mary by her father, James, during a walk near the river. This event marks the beginning of a series of terrible incidents in the life of Mary. Her mother soon dies of cancer in the ovaries, leaving Mary all alone with her father, who struggles to control himself and his sexual urges.

Once she becomes pregnant, Mary finds herself all alone and unable to speak to anyone about her suffering. Irish society at that time disapproves of pre-marital sex and teenage pregnancy, and it completely rejects the idea of abortion. The laws of the country reflect the strong Catholic values that exist in Ireland, although the society is beginning to change and the people are now divided about their principles. Mary soon finds herself at the centre of a national debate on abortion.

One of her community members, Betty, feels sorry for Mary and brings her to England to have an abortion. This fails and both are brought back to Ireland and arrested. The case reaches the newspapers and becomes the subject for the radio programmes, debates in the pubs, and common gossips in the city centres.

Mary struggles with her inner conflicts as she is ashamed of what has happened to her. She is afraid of the authorities, and she does not know how to deal with her father. The resolution of these conflicts is not clear. A trial in the court of

Dublin makes the most powerful men in the country reconsider their laws about abortion. There are many people in the society that support Mary's freedom to choose whether or not she will keep the baby, while there are also strong religious groups that demand she should stay in Ireland and keep the baby.

As a matter of fact, during her struggle long before the trial, Mary has the habit of writing about her suffering in a diary. Nobody knows about the diary because Mary always keeps it for herself. Later, when the diary is found, people learn that she has in fact been raped. Her father is never brought to court because he commits suicide, and the judges rule that Mary is free to go to England. She has a miscarriage in the end, so she does not have to decide whether she will have the baby or not. Conflict resolution happens in violent ways, and much of the novel is depressing. In the end Mary finds her life again, and finally she is able to have a freedom and live like a young girl should be.

## **Biography of Edna O'Brien**

Edna O'Brien was born in Twamgraney, County Clare. Her family was opposed to anything to do with literature. O'Brien was educated in the Convent Mercy in Loughrea (1941-1946). She studied at the Pharmaceutical College at night. During this period she wrote small pieces for the Irish Press. She got married and moved to London with her husband and child. She lives in London and reads such famous writers as Tolstoy, Thackeray, and F. Scott Fitzgerald. The first book O'Brien ever bought was Introducing James Joyce by T.S. Elliot. She said Joyce influenced her and made her realize that she wanted literature for the rest of her life.

She created her first novel, The Country Girl, in 1960. The book was very successful but extremely controversial in Ireland. She then wrote Lonely Girl in 1962, which was followed by Girls in Their Married Bliss in 1964. These three books are together known as O'Brien's first trilogy, bringing her success and growing popularity. She has since written more than nineteen books, including short stories, novels, screenplays, and plays.