

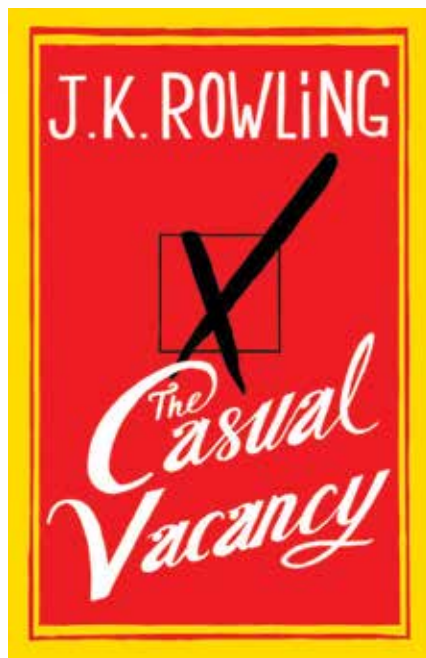
HEALTH & LIVING

There's life after Harry

HARRY Potter fanatics waited with anticipation for JK Rowling's debut foray into adult fiction late last year, expecting the fantasy author to deliver another unique story for a more grown-up audience.

The Casual Vacancy didn't disappoint. It would be untrue though to say it was on the same par as the Harry Potter series, which instantly transported the reader to a magical realm as soon as the first page was turned. By contrast, the introductory chapters in *The Casual Vacancy* were too bombastic, rambling and deviating from the more interesting character stories. However, once Rowling moves forward from the rather long-winded explanations of why a local council in an English village is divided, the story quickly gathers momentum and offers an entertaining read.

Barry Fairweather, a popular member of Pagford community and council seat-holder, dies in tragic circumstances leaving behind a distraught family and devastated friends. There are those though who have only one ambition when they hear about his death – to win his council seat.



Rowling dedicates different sections of the book to each main character and it is difficult not to empathise and experience the different emotions each individual goes through. From the bullied teenager

seeking solace from life by self-mutilating; to the middle-aged wife who hates her husband and lusts after the teenage members of her daughter's favourite boy-band; to the downtrodden schoolgirl, at a loss since Barry's death, trying to keep up with her heroin addict and part-time prostitute mother.

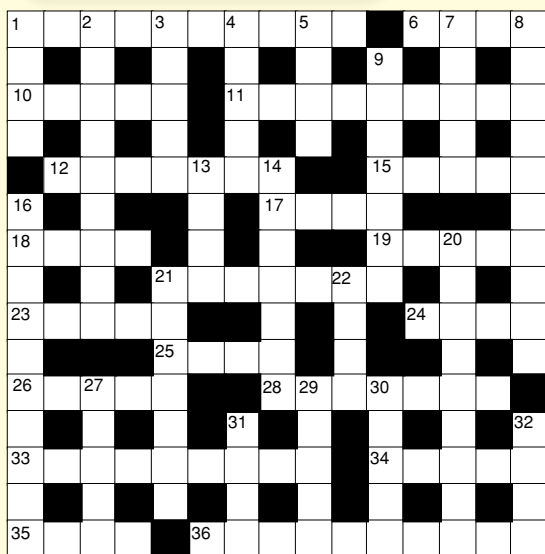
Rowling builds momentum throughout by layering the characters' stories around each other so that each chapter goes from one point of view of the day's events to another character's totally different take on those same events.

The book is entertaining but deals with very real and very serious societal issues. It ends on the same note it begins but it is impossible to predict the eventual outcome. Even though the events leading up to the conclusion of the story are both positive and negative, Rowling ensures the reader leaves the community of Pagford with a smile. She convinces the reader there is life after wizards and wands.

– Shauna Rahman

**The Casual Vacancy is published by Little Brown
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Crossword Competition

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Across

1. Father finds a popular assassin an analgesic. (10)
6. Movie. (4)
10. Opposite of lower. (5)
11. Suffered, endured. (9)
12. Aridity. (7)
15. Mythological creature - a dryad, for example. (5)
17. Molten rock from a volcano. (4)
18. O, Mr Kilmer, how can you be egg-shaped? (4)
19. Dance with a strange bachelor. (5)
- 21, 26a & 33a. UTI in full might be incorrect, fair, tiny aunt. (7,5,9)
23. Out of the question. (3,2)
24. Quaint. (4)
25. Fish found on the bottom of the foot. (4)
26. See 21 across.
28. Noisy toys for infants. (7)
33. See 21 across.
34. Deciduous tree with distinctive bark. (5)
35. Display one's petulance. (4)
36. That communist child looks fishy! (3,7)

Down

1. Decant. (4)
2. Momentous way to bring an insect into the country. (9)
3. Holy book of Islam. (5)
4. Pop supremo Mr Walsh. (5)
5. Whirlpool. (4)
7. Mule I distract with part of the intestine. (5)
8. The forerunner - and principal competitor - of computer dating services! (10)
9. Farm storage building. (7)
13. Always, at any time. (4)
14. Defamation. (7)
16. On a lower level, you'll find Feathers Street has tunes! (10)
20. With which to catch and kill rodents. (9)
21. Take objects from a tall arrangement. (7)
22. Weathering on iron. (4)
27. Dreadful. (5)
29. 'E sang about a girl's name. (5)
30. Shinbone. (5)
31. Showing great knowledge and judgment. (4)
32. Scandinavian god of thunder. (4)

Solutions to February crossword:

Across: 1. Middle-aged 6. Apes 10. Unfit 11. Pulmonary 12. Fiancee 15. Isaac 17. Quiz 18. Arum 19. Omaha 21. Melanin 23. Nitre 24. Cape 25. Alto 26. Earns 28. Rancher 33. Shivering 34. Views 35. Yo-yo 36. Hypnotised
Down: 1. Maul 2. Difficult 3. Lutan 4. Apple 5. Ella 7. Plaza 8. Skyscraper 9. Horizon 13. Cube 14. Equator 16. Painlessly 20. Awareness 21. Measles 22. Iron 27. Rainy 29. Argon 30. Covet 31. Tiny 32. Used

The winner of the February crossword is:
Tara Maher
from
Ferrybank, Waterford

The prize will go to the first all correct entry opened.

Closing date: Friday, March 15, 2013

Post your entry to: Crossword Competition,

The World of Irish Nursing, MedMedia Publications, 25 Adelaide Street, Dun Laoghaire, Co Dublin