



Red Dirt

E.M. Reapy

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A gripping tale of loss and hope, of self-destruction and self-acceptance, from an exciting new debut author.

Three young Irish people have come to Australia, running from the economic ruins of their home country and their own unhappy lives. In this promised land, stunned by the heat and the vast arid space of the interior, they each try to escape their past in a chaotic world of backpacker hostels, huge fruit farms and squalid factories, surrounded by new friends who are even more damaged and dangerous than they are themselves. Endless supplies of cheap drink and drugs loosen what little sense of responsibility they have, and a spiral of self-destructive behaviour forces each of them to face up to the reality of their lives.

This is a story of the consequences of impulsive choices and of the places where they lead. A vulnerable young man is left alone by his friends in a remote wilderness; a desperate girl puts herself into the hands of violent sex traffickers; a once-privileged favourite son lets a drunken quarrel escalate to murder. An utterly compelling, readable novel that hooks from the first page and immerses us in an all-too topical nightmare.

Red Dirt Details

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Author : E.M. Reapy

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From Reader Review Red Dirt for online ebook

Brendan Telford says

Another hard book to rate as I really enjoyed Red Dirt although I felt that the coincidences by the end were a little too far-fetched. The Irish backpacker experience is well described, and the grittiness to some of the passages are well constructed. It was interesting to see the character of Murph - the focus of the first part of the novel - change in Hopper's perspective at the end of the novel. Many of the characters are unlikeable yet empathetic, and the Australian outback is as beautiful and brutal as ever. I couldn't help but grimace though at a few hackneyed sequences - the kangaroo passage and its "meaning" in particular really stuck out - and whilst providing tension, the vast array of characters exhibiting the Australian "grotesque" trope began to grate. But in all an enjoyable read.

Kim says

This is a tale of three Irish youngsters who have left Ireland for pastures new in Australia - their past and their trials, tribulations and mishaps in Australia, often caused by their own behaviour, attitudes and history. The book is in three sections - Me, You and Them.

In 'Me' we meet Murphy, staying in a backpacking hostel in Perth with his friend Shane but soon to be travelling to the Outback to work on a mango farm. They get a new acquaintance, Hopper, to tag along with them - but when Hopper, high on drugs, jumps out of the car in the middle of nowhere in the dark, the others drive on without him, leaving him to his fate. This affects Murphy badly and, although he meets Fiona at the farm and they form a sort of bond, the events surrounding Hopper lead to a shocking outcome;

In 'You', we learn of Fiona's journey to Australia and, eventually, the mango farm - trying to pay her way and make ends meet, in desperation she agrees to travel to an isolated farm to live with three men. Her decision has severe repercussions for Fiona;

In 'Them', we get Hopper's backstory and learn what happened to him prior to and after his abandonment in the desert, which leads back to a confrontation with Murphy and Fiona.

Overall, this was a fairly good read, which I enjoyed, but not enough to rate it more than 7/10.

Breakaway Reviewers says

This book was not for me!

This book has had countless great reviews and has been shortlisted for awards but I just did not feel any empathy to the characters at all.

It is cleverly constructed, the 3 central characters, Murph, Fiona and Hopper, all tell their story in 3 separate parts. They are all young and Irish and have travelled to Australia to escape the Irish recession.

Each story comes together at the end and shows how each of them have had to deal with their own demons and are trying to find answers in a new country when their own homeland has failed them.

However, from my own point of view I just could not understand how drinking to excess and taking copious

amounts of drugs was a solution to anything especially as they never had any money and as soon as they managed to get some it was immediately swallowed up by their excesses. I am also not a fan of excessive swearing and although I appreciate that this is probably a true reflection of how these characters would speak in their situation I just did not like it.

Book reviewing to me should be honest and impartial and that is why I have not praised this book however I am sure that it will appeal to many other readers but it was not for me!!

Dexter

Breakaway Reviewers received a copy of the book to review

James says

A smart, confident dissection of the Irish Recession from an angle which has remained largely unexplored, *Red Dirt* tells the story of three Irish youngsters who have been forced to emigrate as a result of financial upheaval.

Set among backpackers in the Australian outback, it would be tempting to think of this as being like Alex Garland's *'The Beach'*. However, the three distinct voices made me think of Donal Ryan, the ear for dialogue of fellow Mayo-nian Colin Barrett, and the talent for suspense of Claire Keegan.

Definitely worth your time. Definitely an author to watch out for. Long may we remain disaffected and young if we have voices like Reapy to speak for us.

Miriam Smith says

Red Dirt is a gripping read about young Irish backpackers in Australia trying to escape from their pasts and live a different life. The character stories come together well with each story being told in an interesting and intriguing way. This is an excellent first time novel from the author. I won this book through a competition with Portbellobookblog and I am honoured to have had the chance to read and review. My only criticism was my difficulty in following the Irish dialogue at times but without the authenticity of that it wouldn't have been the same. Would recommend.

Melanie says

Irish immigrants in Australia looking for a new start-- I was transported to a land and ways of seeing through a very different perspective. Told from the point of view of three different characters the experiences of these people were often heartbreaking. The writing is amazing and I loved hearing their Irish voices in my head. I was enthralled with this book and devoured it, but then needed some time to digest. I loved the writing and the story-- I hope many more readers get their hands on this great book from a new Irish author.

M. Lee says

Really liked this up until about half way through. Then I began to lose interest in the characters and the demons they had.

Loved the way it was constructed but by the third 'act' I couldn't care less about the characters any more.

They were too same-y, doing pretty much the same thing (drink/drugs/fruit (is garlic a fruit?) picking) and running from one place to the next with no inkling of hope.

Shame really, really liked the start.

Craig says

I loved this book so much that I almost devoured it in a whole sitting, if it weren't for the fact that I had to go out it would have been done in a day. First thing to say is this isn't my usual sort of book but ever since I've joined the Goldsboro Books book of the month club I've always took notice of whatever books they have coming up for sale as I've never been disappointed in one. I saw this one and really liked the byline so I ordered a copy and jumped over to Netgalley to see if there were any advance copies to be gotten as I'm no good at waiting. :)

I was caught from the start. I initially suspected it was going to be set in the past but it's right up to the minute and the way it describes people's different experiences of days together or crossing each other is what caught me. I really liked the parts where people ended up in danger and was never sure if they'd make it or not.

I read some of the reviews were likening the read to something similar to Trainspotting and I guess there's an element of that, having not seen the film or read the book I'm unawares. I do have experience of the trails that the people in the book go through and I loved how there were those who had gone through similar events who helped others going through it with instructions to pay it forwards in future.

The only thing that lacked real believability to me was how accepting the parents of the girl were to her lack of communication but if that's all that I struggled with it's definitely a good book for me!

I devoured the book in two sittings and will certainly be looking out for any future ones.

Anthony Ferner says

An oblique look at the fall-out from the financial crisis and recession in Ireland, Red Dirt follows the (mis)fortunes of three victims of the crash - each of them losers in their own way - as they move around the backpacker hostels, mango farms and garlic factories of Australia, leaving a trail of destruction in their wake. Some of the voices perhaps work better than others and the story just occasionally treads water. But the characterisation is vivid, the dialogue is pithy and demotic, and there are some truly excellent dramatic passages - the standout one for me was the escape of the main female character, Fiona, from the Fletchers' farm. Overall, the reader's attention is gripped and held. Yet another promising author from the Irish fiction

factory's apparently inexhaustible production line.

Rosa says

Contado de forma muy sencilla y como bastante slang y palabras gaélicas nos cuenta la historia de tres personas cuyas vidas se cruzan en un momento crítico.

Me he bebido el libro a tal velocidad que el final me ha resultado soso. A medida de lo que podía llegar a pasar pero, soso. Una pena porque las dos primeras partes y el principio de la tercera me han gustado mucho cómo se iban desarrollando y cómo se desenvuelven las personalidades de cada uno de los protagonistas de manera tan característica.

Lo recomiendo, sobre todo, si se ha estado conviviendo con irlandeses.

Andy says

fast paced tale of three young Irish emigrants to Australia - Fiona, Murph and Hopper – divided into three linked sections, out of chronological order, told from three different perspectives (first person, second person, third).

a tale of consequences, as the result of bad decisions, drugs and alcohol and poor luck.

on occasion the consequences do seem out of proportion, and can almost anticipate that each scenario is going to come to sticky end

first section's characters, the two lads, are almost caricatures of lads living life without fear of the consequences, least relatable and seem to escape unscathed, mostly

latter sections and characters better developed

Trainspotting vibe - does seem to me as if written in preparation for movie

overall, enjoyable

Thomas says

Definitely got The Beach/Trainspotting vibes with some Wolf Creek. Great voice.

Stephen Roger Powers says

A raw and engrossing story about down-on-their-luck Irish emigrants backpacking in Australia. Reapy does a good job weaving storylines and points of view together, all of which are powerful, particularly the garlic factory and the road trip Hopper and Norman take together. It's easy to see how even halfway around the world the past catches up to characters fleeing the fallout of a recession back home.

Jay says

Red Dirt is a novel about three young Irish migrants, Murph, Fiona and Hopper, who have moved to Australia in the hope of finding a better life. They live in youth hostels and spend their days looking for work in factories and on farms. All three make mistakes throughout their journey, come across one another and are eventually brought together with tough decisions to make.

I enjoyed this book because of the interesting characters and also because how Reapy structured it into three sections: the first being told in first person by Murph, the second in second person by Fiona and the third in third person by Hopper. I liked Fiona's section best as second person writing is unusual and out of the three she was my favourite character due to her bravery.

I recommend this novel to anyone as it is original, gripping and has an interesting structure.

Writerful Books says

There have been quite a number of books written about the immigrant experience but none as fast-paced and riveting as Red Dirt, a debut novel by E.M. Reapy, which tells the story of three Irish people escaping their recession ravaged country to find a better life in Australia. The story is told in three parts (Me, You & Them) from the point of view of Murph, Fiona and Hopper who are unknown to each other until their lives intersect while backpacking around Australia.

Read the full review at [Writerful Books](#)
