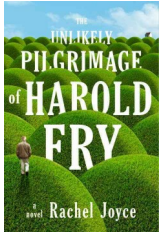


The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry

Next Booksplus Meeting on Sunday July 7



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Booksplus, a library book discussion program for adults, will be talking about Rachel Joyce's first novel *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry*. It's a book about a long journey to help a friend. One morning shortly after he retired, Harold received a letter from Queenie Hennessy, his love from long ago. She informs him that she is in a nursing home and dying. He writes a bland message on a card, yet on the way to the mailbox, he decides that he must deliver it to Queenie in person. Thus, Harold begins his pilgrimage where he encounters many interesting people who teach him--old as he is--about life. And what about his wife, Maureen, whom he left at home? She too is jolted and changed by Harold's journey.

Rachel Joyce, the author of this book, wrote twenty radio plays for the BBC after acting for a couple of decades. In a recent interview, she describes why she wrote her first novel, "I began writing this as a radio play when my father told me he was dying. He had spent years battling cancer, and after several brutal operations, surgeons told him there was nothing left to be done. He was very frightened and so was I. I was appalled at the idea of not having my father. I was appalled at the idea of watching him die. But both happened, and while they did I wrote this story about a man who sets off to save someone else. It was my escape. My way of making sense. And somehow also my way of finding the flip side to my complicated, wild grief."

In an interview in the Canadian magazine, *Chatelaine*, Joyce described the process of creating Harold's journey. "Harold's route begins and passes through places I know, love, or have passed myself.... That is the way with this book? it has a lot of what I know or have seen. (This is true too of the people Harold meets.) Kingsbridge, for instance, which is Harold and Maureen's hometown, is where my husband was brought up. The barn where Harold spends his first night outside is next to where we live. Every day on the school run, I pass the view where Harold makes his big realization about the nature of his walk. But when I didn't know a place myself, I researched it very thoroughly. I studied maps, guide books, the internet and photos. As I wrote the book I had endless notes about Harold's journey. I knew which road he was on every day, as well as how many miles he had walked and where he slept. I knew the reader didn't always need to know these things but I also knew that I did. In the end I cut out the pages of our road map and stuck them in a long chain up two walls of our house. My husband rang one day? lost on the A 46? and said, 'The road map has jumped from page 5 to 38. Is this anything to do with you?' Harold's journey, though, is also for me an emotional one. It's about doing something against the odds. And I felt that in writing my first book, I was on exactly the same journey as Harold; mine too was an act of faith with no guarantee of success or completion. His fears and doubts and moments of certainty all echoed mine."

Summer is a time for travelling and for visiting family and friends. Join us to discuss this delightful story about an older man rediscovering life while exploring his country. The discussion group will meet in Room 2B at 2 p.m. Feel free to drop in.

Posted by Dory L. on June 28, 2013

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The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry
