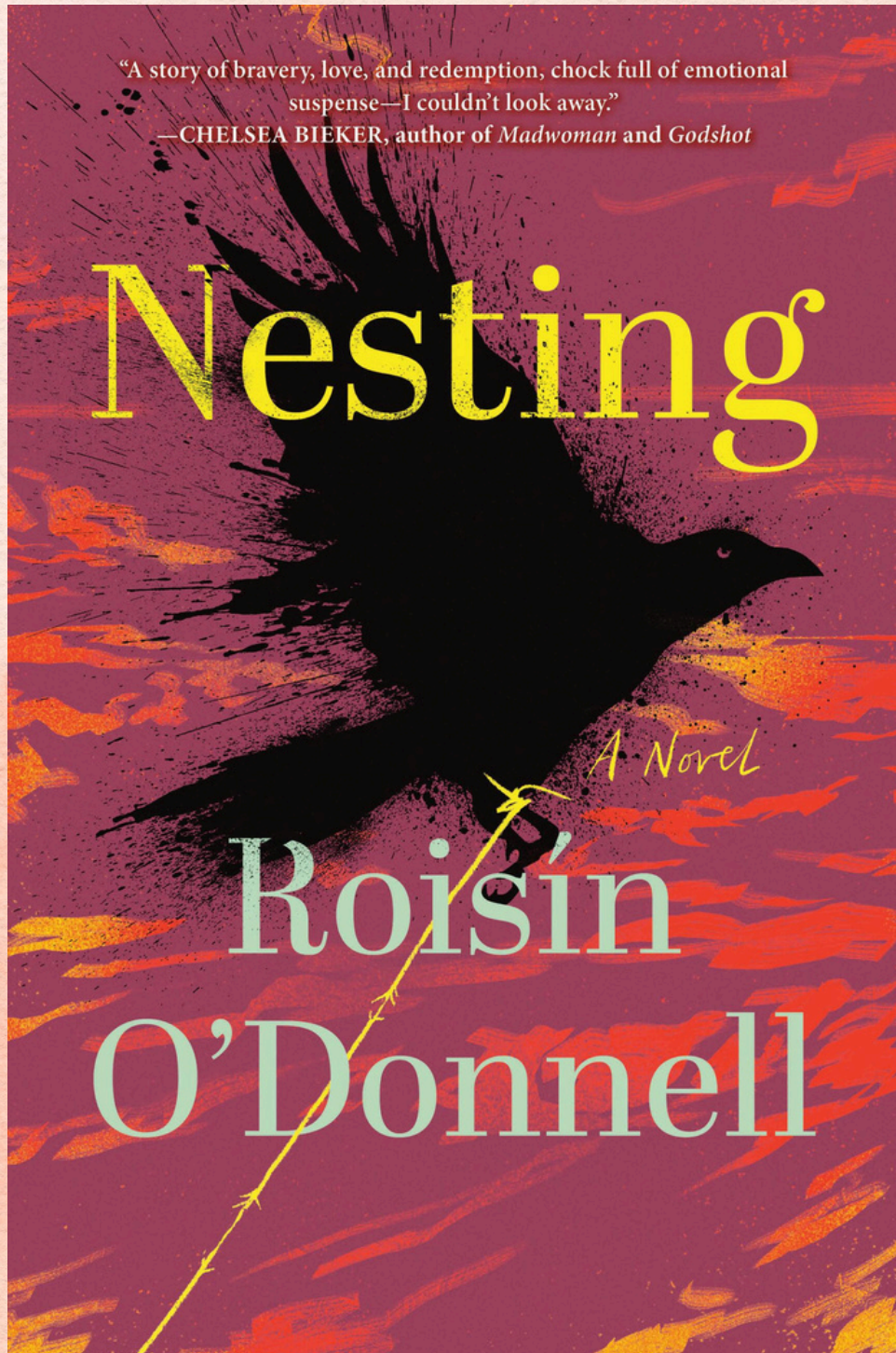




BOOK CLUB KIT



QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1** The epigraph for *Nesting* is a poem called “Mother Ireland.” The final lines are “Now I could tell my story. It was different from the story told about me.” Why do you think O’Donnell chose this poem? How is *Nesting* different from the story normally told about women like Ciara?
- 2** How did you feel when you first encountered Ciara? What made you want to keep reading? Does she change at all throughout the story?
- 3** At the beginning of the novel, Ciara has stopped using social media, listening to the news, and seeing friends—telltale signs of someone in an abusive situation. What other signs are present in the novel?
- 4** Many of the places in *Nesting* are authentic and taken from real life. Storm in a Teacup Café, the Housing Executive Office, and Whitefriar Street Church are a few examples. There is a strong tradition in Irish writing of using real places, dating back to James Joyce’s *Ulysses*. Why do you think O’Donnell used real locations? How is the Ireland portrayed in *Nesting* different from representations of Ireland in other Irish fiction you have read?
- 5** Interspersed between intense moments of Ciara’s escape are sweet, sometimes funny moments of Ella and Sophie simply being children (bickering with each other, complaining about snacks, etc.), seemingly unaware of the situation they’re in. What did you think of these moments? How do they help portray the realities of a mother leaving her marriage with two young children?
- 6** “Chase” the crow chick takes on different meanings over the course of the novel. Initially a mere tool for manipulation by Ryan, how did the bird’s symbolism evolve? Did you find any other symbols in the novel?
- 7** Ciara mentions a few times that Ryan has never hit her—as if that is her reasoning for not calling it abuse. ““He didn’t cheat, or drink, or gamble [...] He didn’t hit me or anything”” (pg 87). Should physical abuse and emotional abuse be treated differently? Compare this with her conversation with the solicitor saying some judges don’t recognize emotional abuse (pg 173). Do you think this is right?
- 8** The character of Diego offers friendship and a way for Ciara to reconnect with her past experience of living in Brazil. Did you have any thoughts on Diego and Ciara’s tentative relationship? What obstacles might Ciara face when it comes to forging new romantic connections?
- 9** Ciara starts teaching again to support her and her children, something Ryan persuaded her not to do so that she could care for the children. How does this job renew her sense of purpose? And what does she, in turn, learn from her students?
- 10** The ending of *Nesting* is left quite open, and leaves the reader wondering what the future will hold in store for Ciara and her family. Do you have any thoughts on what might happen next? How might Ciara’s life look one year from now?
- 11** Ciara has a degree in English literature and books have always offered her a source of solace and meaning. As she begins to recover and reconnect with herself, she returns to re-read the books she loves, describing them as “old friends.” What role have books played in your life? Are there some books you return to again and again?