

Title: *All the Bad Apples*
Author: Moira Fowley-Doyle
Genre: Realistic Fiction

Reviewer Name and Grade: Benjamin W. 9th Grade

Date Reviewed: June 22, 2020

This book takes place in Ireland, 2012. The book starts off in Dublin, the Irish capital, but progresses to many other towns throughout Ireland including Galway and Sligo. As the characters travel from town to town, they uncover a story about their ancestors. The story about their ancestors starts in London, 1858 and moves to Ireland in 1879. From then, the story jumps from town to town following the same path the characters in 2012 are following.

Deena Rys' family has always been cursed. It started many generations ago when Mary Ellen fell in love with Deena's great-great-great-grandfather Gerald William Rys Jr. When Mary became pregnant and was evicted by Gerald, she decided to take revenge on him by throwing his apple tree sapling into the ocean. Little did she know that the tree was special and that she had cursed herself and her child, a Rys. This curse was special too. It only happens at the age of seventeen to women and it brings terrible loss and tragedy to the bearer. You know you have the curse when the first banshee screams. The second banshee leaves gray hair tangled on the threshold of your home. The third banshee scores your skin when you sleep and that is when you know there is no hope left. All who bear the curse are known as "bad apples" and are removed from the family tree.

Deena Rys turned seventeen the day her older sister Mandy was seen jumping from a cliff. Nobody is surprised because she was always known as a "bad apple" but Deena refuses to believe that she is dead. When she starts receiving letters from her sister, she sets off on a journey to trace her family history. Mandy's first letter leads Deena to her secret daughter Ida. Her second leads to a girl named Cale who's family history is tangled with theirs. With the addition of Deena's best friend Finn, the four of them continue to follow the letters in hopes of finding Mandy, who they believe has gone to the end of the world to break the curse. The curse that Deena now has.

Deena has two sisters and an uncaring father. She doesn't have many friends and she's lesbian. Her sister Rachel is caring and the perfect daughter. Her other sister Mandy is also caring but a way worse daughter. She quit school at sixteen, toured with a punk band, joined a cult, and did a lot more naughty stuff. Deena's best friend is Finn who is smart and bi. Her niece is Ida who has way more friends than her. Her friend she ends up making is Cale who is completely open. All these characters are thrown into action when Mandy disappears.

Now, I will answer some questions about the book:

Did the plot keep you interested? - This book definitely kept me interested. You get pulled in as the author revealed more and more of the background history. As the characters continue on their journey, you just want to know how it ends and if they find Mandy.

Was the pace of the book too fast, too slow, or just right? - I think the pace of this book was just right. The book followed two different stories so there was no shortage of action or new stuff. The author kept the book moving with the letters Deena kept on receiving. The author also didn't reveal everything at once so the book wasn't paced too fast.

What grade level(s) is this book appropriate for? - I think this book is appropriate for kids in grades 7-11. There is some content in this book that I think only older kids will really understand. There is also a lot of cursing at times so this is definitely not something for younger kids. However, I think older kids about 11th grade might find this book too easy to read.

What type of reader would you recommend this book to? - I would recommend this book to readers who like suspense and unexpectedness. I wouldn't recommend this book to readers who like a lot of action because the book is mostly peaceful.

What other information do you think would be helpful for teens to know about this book - Whenever the story goes back in time, it's just what is written on the letters Deena keeps on finding. This book may seem like a fantasy but you will find out why it isn't at the end.

I would rate this book *4 stars*. The plot of this book was good and it kept me interested the entire time. The characters were well developed and the book moved at a nice pace. I was a little confused at the beginning when the story first went back in time because I couldn't exactly tell who was talking. I couldn't tell if it was Mandy's letter or if we actually went back in time.

Reviewer Name and Grade: Lillian H. 7th Grade

Date reviewed: July 10, 2020

The book *All the Bad Apples* is about Deena. A girl who lives in a family with a curse. The curse falls upon all the bad apples in the Rys family { the ones who don't care, who did one or more things wrong in their life which makes them a bad apple } once they turn 17. This curse contains terrible loss, sickness and even death. When Deena's older sister Mandy is found to be dead, Deena knows that there is something wrong. She starts receiving letters from Mandy telling Deena how the family curse started and how and where to go to break it. She sets off and picks up a crew on the way containing Mandy's so-called daughter, her best friend and a waitress at a pizza shop. Deena and her friends must go to the end of the world using just a series of letters, then find Mandy and bring her back home to reunite her with her true family.

The setting of the book is mysterious and lonely. With just the four of them in abandoned creepy places you start to feel lonely and miss your friends and family. The setting is also scary. Looking for a person that is told to be dead can definitely give you the creeps. This book is mysterious because they don't even know if they will find Mandy in the end.

The time period I would guess to be around our time. 2020, because they have phones, electronics, cars, towns, cities and mostly everything that we have today.

The main events in the story is when Mandy dies, when they find out that Deena has been writing the letters, and when they find Mandy. Mandy dying is a main event because if she didn't die then they wouldn't have gone to find her in the first place because she would have still been with them. The group finding out that Deena has been writing the letters is a main event because that's when they decide to abandon Deena and let her finish the journey by herself. Also, finding

Mandy was a main event because that was the crews goal the whole time, even if it didn't turn out how they expected, it still happened.

The main characters in the story are Deena, Fin, Cale, Ida, Rachel, and Mandy. Deena is helpless by herself. She needs someone to guide her. She will do whatever she can to feel better and make things right over what is better and healthier for her. Fin says what he thinks. He is head strong but not always positive. He is not shy and is slightly rude but he makes his point. Cale is honest and not afraid to be. She is not afraid in general either. Cale is kind but in a rude way and doesn't care if she gets in trouble. Ida is timid but not shy. She isn't afraid but isn't brave either and she takes a while to get used to things. Mandy is brave and rude. She acts heartless but she cares more than anyone. Mandy doesn't know how to face her problems so she doesn't. Rachel is kind, motherly and careful of what she says. She believes what she sees and doesn't think out of the box. She wants the best for everyone but doesn't know how to get it done.

This book kept me very interested. I never knew what was going to happen next or how they were going to break the curse, or even if Mandy was alive or if the book was just tricking you. In the middle of the book there was a whole plot twist where Deenas friends find out that she has been writing the letters. I thought that the pace of the book in the first half was good. They were going from place to place uncovering more letters, but as they got closer to the end the book was just moving too fast. They were telling the story of the letters too fast. I would have liked more details in the letters. I would say that this book is appropriate for 7th graders and up. There are some topics in the book that are too old for younger readers. I would recommend this to a reader that likes to be surprised, mysteries and doesn't know what is going to happen next. If you like books that it is obvious what is going to happen then this book isn't for you. Don't expect what you think is going to happen because it most likely won't. You have to think outside of the box to understand the book and what is happening.

I would give this book four stars. {"I enjoyed this book and found it worthwhile reading."} I liked this book because I was surprised a lot. I never knew what was going to happen. I didn't think it was the best book ever but it was still good. I liked how there was a story inside the story and you had to learn and understand both stories. If you have the chance to read this book, then you should.

Reviewer Name and Grade: Yaseen V., 9th Grade

Date Reviewed: August 5, 2020

All the Bad Apples is a Young Adult novel about discovering yourself and your history. It is a very popular book written by the esteemed Moira Fowley-Doyle. This novel tells the story of a seventeen year old girl named Deena. As the main character, she is characterized as an outgoing, strong willed, and determined redhead. After being bullied at school and at home for her sexual orientation as a lesbian, Deena decides to venture to Ireland in search for her beloved sister Mandy, who is believed to have committed suicide. The day Deena declared she was gay, her dismissive father forced her to take her words back and her sister Mandy warned her that she would be in danger of their family curse. Soon afterwards, Deena heads to Ireland, leaving a letter that says she is going to find her missing sister no matter what. While on her journey, Deena picks up a few

companions along the way. She brings along her best friend Finn, who is bisexual, and Michaela, a girl who acts as Deena's potential love interest. Throughout her journey, Deena discovers eye-opening family secrets and clues that explain why her family is the way it is. One family secret that I found surprising was how Michaela's great great great great aunt and Deena's great great grandmother were involved in a lesbian relationship with each other. As the story progresses, Deena finds out all about her family's past and what men, the church, and the public did to her ancestors and what the "bad apples" truly mean to her. Deena ultimately starts her journey in the hope of finding her sister, but ends up learning about her family's history, finding out about a gut-wrenching curse, and ultimately discovering herself. Overall, *All The Bad Apples* is a fiercely feminist novel that fights against the common stereotype society has placed for girls and their personal interests.

Did the plot (for fiction) or presentation of information (for non-fiction) keep you interested?

Yes, this novel was incredibly harrowing and opened my eyes to the different struggles Deena and her ancestors have faced throughout the years. It kept me turning the pages!

Was the pace of the book too fast, too slow, or just right?

The pace of the book was just right due to the excellent framework and plot of the author. I love how it was able to build up anticipation to what the curse and "bad apples" were.

What grade level(s) is this book appropriate for?

I believe this is great for grades eight and up, due to its story, plot, and overall tone.

What type of reader would you recommend this book to?

I would recommend this novel to someone who is interested in mysteries and family dramas.

What other information do you think would be helpful for teens to know about this book?

I think it is important to realize how dark and twisted society can be to certain people.

5 stars: I'm really glad I read this book; it was awesome!

I thoroughly enjoyed this novel because it told a fascinating story that included modern issues and how the history of your ancestors can be darker than you could ever imagine. Overall, I was hooked from start to finish and loved Deena's character because she was strong and determined to venture into the unknown to find her sister, and herself.

Review Name and Grade: Naysa Thesatus, 7th Grade

Date Reviewed: October 12, 2020

The book starts off with the introduction of the main character Deena Rys. Deena is a girl living in Ireland and it is her seventeenth birthday. Her whole family is Irish and are living in Dublin, in the early 2000s. She lives with her two sisters (which are twins) Mandy and Rachel. Today their father is coming to visit in the afternoon. Deena is not happy about it. Deena is getting ready to go to school and talks to her sister about rumours going on about her. She tells Rachel that people are saying that she is gay, and admits that it's true. While he is saying this her father bursts into the house. Rachel covers for her sister saying he didn't mean it and their dad says that he hopes there is not another bad apple in the family. Rachel says that Deena is a normal nice girl and that this is all a big misunderstanding. Deena goes to school reflecting on what her sister had said. After school Mandy picks her up and gives her a birthday present, a collection of books, and Deena is very thankful. Then they start to talk about what Rachel had

said. Mandy says it's because of the Rys family curse. Mandy explains that the curse follows people who are different from the rest of the family. Later in the day Mandy goes missing. She is reported dead, but Deena knows that she is alive. She finds a list left by her sister, and starts the search alone. Her best friend Finn joins her. They reach an old farm and find a paper. This is about Denna's great great great grandmother. The curse started because Marie, who was pregnant, had a craving for apples. Her husband brought her all sorts of apples but they were all too sweet. The doctors told her to plant an apple tree, so they did. Her baby was supposed to die because it takes years for a tree to grow, but overnight the tree was there. It was the most sour apple in all of Europe. When she ate the apple the baby kicked for the first time, and when he was born the room smelled of apples. When their son grew up she told him that the juice of these apples runs in your blood, so he must plant the tree on his land, and his children's blood will have apples too. Then when he became older he planted it in the rain but the mud sucked him in. Then a girl saved him. Her name was Mary Ellen Boyle. He fell in love with her, while having a fiancée and she started to crave apples. Then the son left her. Her family disowned her and she went to a home for other mothers. Now Denna and Fina find a girl named Ida, who happens to be Mandy's daughter. Then they go to Dublin to get the rest of the history. While on the journey Denna heard shrieks following her twice, and started to think it was the curse. Her friends thought she was going crazy, but then they found the next note in a pub. Mary Ellen's son was a weak and sickly child, who was constantly afraid. He loved a girl named Julia and she got pregnant. Mary Ellen made a friend in a new town they lived in named Ann. People called them witches for the medicines they made. Eventually years later they died. The whole town felt it, it rained for weeks, the cows' milk was thinner, the chickens were skittish and their prize bull seemed sad. Denna and her friends reach the next place which is Mary Ellen's cottage in the forest. Then they went to the home where Mary Ellen had her son. It was around 1 am at this time and the large building looked dangerous. Julia had to work at a building for young women for years, and she gave birth. Her baby boy happened to be Denna, Rachel, and Mandy's father. Their father was raised in a strict area with the nuns and was serious. Denna and her friends sleep for the night. In the morning Deena keeps seeing a bull and gets led to the cliff where Mandy disappeared. Then she found her and the curse had been broken by releasing the stories.

Did the plot of the story keep you interested?

The plot of the story kept me interested and reading for more, so I could see if Denna found her family and herself and learn more about her family history.

Was the pace of the book too fast, too slow, or just right?

The pace of the book felt too slow. I think that is because there was a lot of time between the scenes and major parts.

What grade level(s) is this book appropriate for?

I think this book is appropriate for grade levels 7 and up.

What other information do you think would be helpful for teens to know about this book.

This book has many stories about a curse that is not true at all and it can be sad.

I rate this book with 4 stars. I enjoyed it and found it worthwhile to read. I like how Deena found herself and grew closer to her sisters. The book felt slow in the beginning but quickly got exciting.

Reviewer Name and Grade: Yujay A., 9th Grade

Date Reviewed: December 29, 2020

In Dublin, Ireland, 2012, Deena, a 17 year old lesbian, lives with her 34 year old sister Rachel. Deena attends a Catholic school, where she is bullied for her sexuality. Deena's best friend Finn is a bisexual very intelligent black male who attends a different school. Deena's mother passed away when Deena was very young, and her father does not live with her and is very uncaring and cold. On Deena's seventeenth birthday, her other sister, Mandy, who is also Rachel's twin, tells Deena that they will go on a road trip together. However, later that day, Mandy disappears and the police believed she had committed suicide. The last thing Mandy had told Deena about was a family curse, where the "bad apples" of the family would have horrible events happen to them. Deena does not believe that Mandy is dead, and goes on a journey to find her. Deena starts receiving letters from Mandy explaining her family's history and the curse, and directing them to new locations to find more letters.

We learn that Deena's great-great-great-grandfather Gerald William Rys Jr.'s mother survived giving birth to Gerald because of a very rare and precious apple tree. Gerald moves away from his mother, bringing an apple sapling with him. When his secret lover, Mary Ellen, becomes pregnant and is evicted because of Gerald, she destroys his apple sapling as revenge. This starts the curse on the Rys family, which is signified by three banshees which appear when one is a "bad apple". The first banshee screams and lets the "bad apple" know they are cursed, the second banshee leaves a bone comb with gray hairs, and the final banshee leaves red scratch marks on the cursed, meaning the cursed is about to die. Deena slowly discovers this information through the letters, meeting Ida, Mandy's secret daughter, and Cale, another lesbian who is somehow related to the Rys family. With Finn, the four make their way through Ireland and discover much about the cursed Rys family. Deena also starts to see the three banshees and realizes that she is cursed because of her sexuality. The four teens must find a way to stop the Rys curse before it is too late, find out where Mandy is, and discover shocking secrets along the way.

Did the plot (for fiction) or presentation of information (for non-fiction) keep you interested?

Yes, as the story continued, more and more was revealed about the curse, making the reader want to keep reading. There was a lot of suspense and many plot twists, making the novel very interesting.

Was the pace of the book too fast, too slow, or just right?

The pace of the book was a little too fast, and it was sometimes hard to keep up with everything going on. The plot was very complex with many layers, and it became difficult to keep track of all the characters and events.

What grade level(s) is this book appropriate for?

This book is appropriate for grades 8 and up, as it is pretty hard to understand, and there is a lot of mature content and strong language.

What type of reader would you recommend this book to?

I would recommend this book to anybody who likes horror-type books and anybody who likes mystery and suspense.

What other information do you think would be helpful for teens to know about this book?

This book has many flashbacks to many generations back.

I would rate *All the Bad Apples* 4 Stars. This was a very interesting novel to read and really captivated me. There was a lot of suspense and the flashbacks added to the depth of the story. The ending explained the purpose of the book really well. However, the novel was at times a bit too complex and the plot was sometimes too slow or too fast.