In our readings about Irish identity, we have moved chronologically into the 2000s. Donal Ryan’s novel deals with the social effects of the economic crash in a small Irish Village. The prosperity of the Celtic Tiger as Ireland’s economy was known came to an end around 2007. How much did you learn about the collapse from reading this novel?

The story is told in 21 monologues. Did you find that the monologues were more like what these characters would like to say rather than what they would say? Think about how the two themes of economic loss and personal loss are related. Did the job losses reinforce some of the villagers’ sense of uselessness?

The novel starts with Bobby Mahon’s musings and ends with his wife, Triona’s. Did that alter your opinion of Bobby? Does the final sentence in the novel, “What matters only love?” imply a positive approach to things to come?

How did some of the parents’ withholding of love have devastating effects on some characters? Were there any examples of good parents?

How does the title symbolize the stories being told?

Other books by Donal Ryan:

*The Thing About December* – 2013  
*All We Shall Know* – 2016  
*A Slanting of the Sun* - 2015  
*From a Low and Quiet Sea* – 2018 (Long Listed for the Booker)

On March 28 we will discuss *Midwinter Break* by Bernard MacLaverty.