Brooklyn

1. Identity card

Title: *Brooklyn*

Author: Colm Tóibín

Date of publication: 2009

Genre: Historical novel / Coming-of-age novel

Historical and Cultural Context: Set in the 1950s, the novel follows Irish emigration to the United States after the Second World War. Through Eilis Lacey's experience, Tóibín explores migration, identity, homesickness and the choices faced by many immigrants seeking a better future.

2. Plot summary

In a nutshell: the novel follows Eilis Lacey, a young Irish woman who emigrates from a small town in Ireland to Brooklyn in search of new opportunities. As she gradually builds a new life in America, she falls in love with Tony, an Italian-American. When family circumstances bring her back to Ireland, Eilis must choose between the familiar world she left behind and the future she has created in the United States.

Key Moments:

- ➜ Eilis leaves Ireland for Brooklyn.
- ➜ She adapts to life in New York.
- ➜ Eilis falls in love with Tony.
- ➜ She returns to Ireland after her sister's death.
- ➜ Eilis chooses to return to Brooklyn.

3. Main characters

Name	Role	Symbol
Ellis Lacey	protagonist	identity, belonging
Tony Fiorello	Ellis' husband	love, new beginnings
Rose Lacey	Eilis's older sister	family, sacrifice
Mrs. Kehoe	Eilis's landlady in Brooklyn	discipline, guidance
Father Flood	Irish priest who helps Eilis settle in Brooklyn	hope, opportunity

4. Major themes and links to the LLCER program

Première – Rencontres

How does the novel illustrate this theme?

- ➜ Encounters help Eilis adapt to a new country.
- ➜ Relationships shape her personal growth and future.
- ➜ Love develops across cultural backgrounds.

Key examples

- ➜ Eilis meeting Tony.
- ➜ Her friendships at the boarding house.
- ➜ Father Flood's support.

Terminale – Voyages, territories and borders

How does the novel illustrate this theme?

- ➜ Migration transforms Eilis's identity and sense of belonging.
- ➜ The novel explores the emotional impact of crossing borders.
- ➜ Ireland and America represent different visions of home.

Key examples

- ➜ Eilis's journey from Ireland to the United States.
- ➜ Her return to Ireland.
- ➜ Her final decision to settle in Brooklyn.

5. Key quotes and key words

"She had never imagined that homesickness could be like this."

"She had crossed the ocean and there was no way back."

migration – belonging – identity – home – exile – choice – adaptation

6. Author's message

- ➜ Migration changes the way people see themselves and the world.
- ➜ Home is defined by belonging as much as by geography.
- ➜ Personal growth often requires difficult choices.
- ➜ Love and opportunity can reshape one's future.