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Character Comebacks: King, Fielding, Grisham, and Doyle Catch Up With Old Favorites

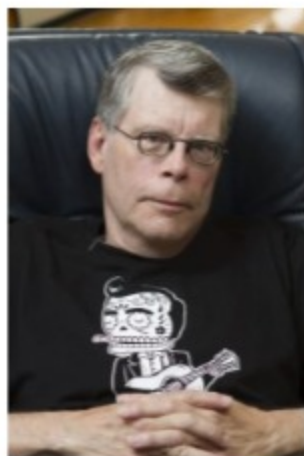
by Robin A. Rothman on August 26, 2013

They begin as strangers on the page, slowly coming to life in our minds. We picture the way they look. We imagine their mannerisms. We form opinions about their personalities.

In return, they tap into our emotions, entertaining us or irritating us, making us laugh or cry or scream or cringe. They teach us something about ourselves. And sometimes, when they're particularly special, they stick around, becoming in some way a part of us that we care about long after we've turned the last page.

In the next few months, four authors will reunite us with four vastly different fictional characters ... old friends we haven't seen for years. You might remember them as a kid coming to terms with his supernatural powers, a single gal infatuated with the idea of love, a controversy-courting lawyer trying to do the right thing, and a working class music fanatic grasping at success.

We take a look at where these characters have been and offer a sneak peek at where we'll soon find them, including excerpts from each new book.



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Character Comebacks: Stephen King Brings Back Danny Torrance

by Robin A. Rothman on August 26, 2013



It was 1977 when Stephen King published [The Shining](#). Since then, he has hinted a few times at writing a new story for Danny Torrance. In one interview he went so far as to wonder what kind of kids Danny and *Firestarter* Charlie McGee might have. Now, 36 years after we first followed Danny and his parents to the ominous Overlook Hotel, that hypothetical sequel has become a reality. [Doctor Sleep](#), a terrific tale in both senses of the word, comes out September 24.

As part of our Character Comebacks series, we catch up with where Danny's been and where he's going.

How we knew him: A boy with a very special talent, known as shining, that gives him (among other things) insight into future events, the ability to hear others' thoughts, and even telepathic conversations with others who can also shine.

Last scene: The Overlook Hotel, where Danny's father, Jack, was working as a caretaker, had been destroyed. The boiler exploded after Jack was overcome by supernatural forces and compelled to murder his family. Danny, his mother Wendy, and the hotel's cook, Dick Hallorann barely escaped. Finally, the three

reunited at a resort in Maine where Hallorann found work, and we were left with hope that Danny would one day be okay.

Where is he now: We see Danny Torrance first only a few years after the events at the Overlook. However, it's soon Dan Torrance -- approaching his thirties and into his forties -- that we come to know as Doctor Sleep, a man with demons (both real and imagined) who helps those passing from this life to ease their journey.

Why we love him: How could we help but adore this five-year-old who, like a true hero, faced the events of his childhood and the terrible burden his talent put on him. We want to see a kid like that come out okay. Even when we meet him again as an adult, he's riddled with emotional scars. And though many of his problems are of his own making, we long to see him finally find some peace, some happiness, some closure.

According to King: I wanted to see if [Danny] still had the shining as an adult, of course. But I was also curious about what he was like as an adult otherwise, having come from such a dysfunctional family and having lived through such a chilling supernatural event.

A sneak peek inside the new book:

On the second day of December in a year when a Georgia peanut farmer was doing business in the White House, one of Colorado's great resort hotels burned to the ground. The Overlook was declared a total loss. After an investigation, the fire marshal of Jicarilla County ruled the cause had been a defective boiler. The hotel was closed for the winter when the accident occurred, and only four people were present. Three survived. The hotel's off-season caretaker, John Torrance, was killed during an unsuccessful (and heroic) effort to dump the boiler's steam pressure, which had mounted to disastrously high levels due to an inoperative relief valve.

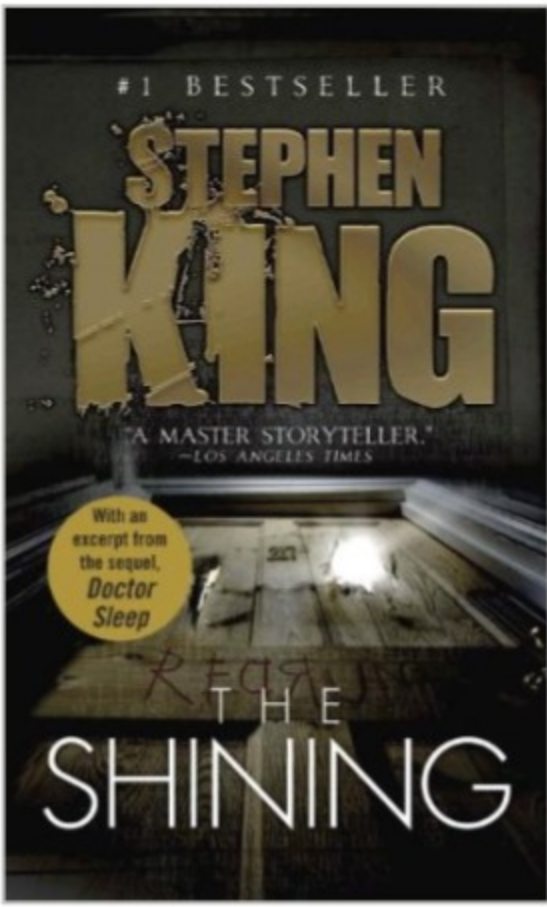
Two of the survivors were the caretaker's wife and young son. The third was the Overlook's chef, Richard Hallorann, who had left his seasonal job in Florida and come to check on the Torrances because of what he called "a powerful hunch" that the family was in trouble. Both surviving adults were quite badly injured in the explosion. Only the child was unhurt.

Physically at least.

Wendy Torrance and her son received a settlement from the corporation that owned the Overlook. It wasn't huge, but enough to get them by for the three years she was unable to work because of back injuries. A lawyer she consulted told her that if she were willing to hold out and play tough, she might get a great deal more, because the corporation was anxious to avoid a court case. But she, like the corporation, wanted only to put that disastrous winter in Colorado behind her. She would convalesce, she said, and she did, although her back injuries plagued her until the end of her life. Shattered vertebrae and broken ribs heal, but they never cease crying out.

Order [Doctor Sleep](#) now.

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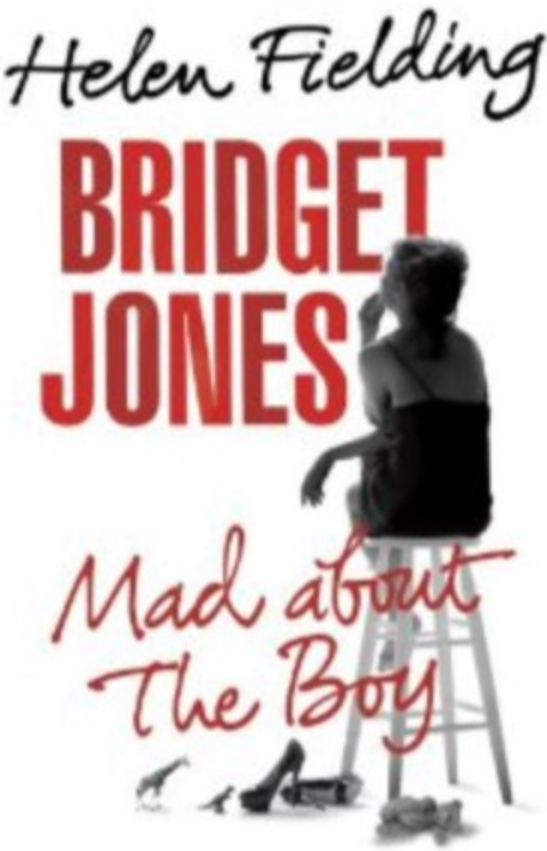


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Character Comebacks: Helen Fielding Brings Back Bridget Jones

by Robin A. Rothman on August 26, 2013



Since the first novel, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, was published in 1996, our fickle protagonist's affections have swung like a pendulum between arch-rivals Mark Darcy and Daniel Cleaver. It's been 15 years since the follow-up *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* and seven since Fielding's 2005-2006 column ran in the Independent, where she first published Bridget's singleton saga in 1995. Each left Bridget in completely different scenarios. When *Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy*, the most narrative and the most emotional of the series to date, comes out on October 15, the inevitable question might be answered: Which boy?!

As part of our Character Comebacks series, we catch up with where Bridget's been and what new trouble she's about to stumble upon now.

How we knew her: A thirty-something London girl ("singleton"), Bridget obsesses about self-improvement as a means to find love, then falls victim to chronic procrastination and over-thinking (not to mention over-eating, over-drinking, over-smoking, and over-reacting).

Last scene: If you've only read the books, Bridget had coupled with top barrister and solver of all

international Jones family scandals Mark Darcy, but she had stepped in it once again as others started to react to the hilariously inappropriate inscriptions she drunkenly wrote in all her Christmas cards. If you kept up with the 2005-2006 articles printed in the Independent, Bridget was in the hospital, having given birth to a son with Daniel Cleaver.

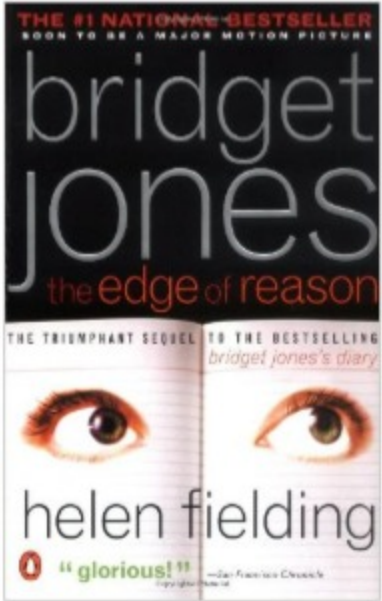
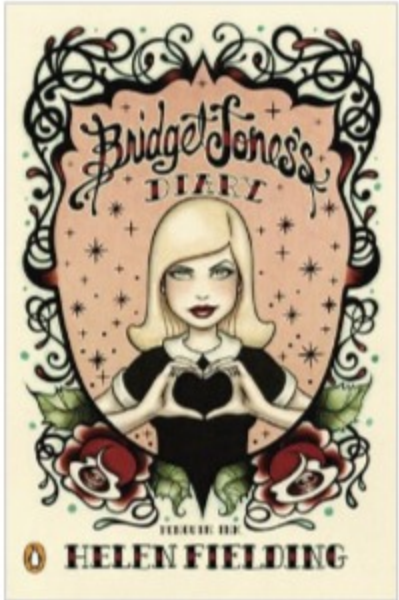
Where is she now: London, present day, Bridget's aged along with us during these many years away. She continues to seek mythical secrets to love, dabbling in modern-day tools such as Internet dating sites and social media. Though the nature of her drama has matured, her reaction is as endearingly naïve as ever.

Why we love her: She's so fabulously flawed, reflecting (in gross exaggeration, of course) our own ridiculousness, our own insecurities, our own inner pep talks. In a weird way, she gives us hope: on the one hand, that we're not as bad off as she is and, on the other hand, that we, like she, will weather whatever's bogging us down.

According to Fielding: Bridget's return happened quite organically. There were things that were making me laugh about modern life in London, and as I wrote I realized the voice was Bridget's. I didn't tell anyone I was doing it for a long time, so I could write without feeling self-conscious. The Bridget character makes me see the funny side of things, and feel that it's OK just to sort of muddle along being a human.

A sneak peek inside the new book:

7.06 a.m. Just remembered am on Twitter. Feel wildly puffed up! Part of huge social revolution and young. Last night I just didn't give it enough time! Maybe thousands of followers will have appeared overnight! Millions! I will have gone viral. Cannot wait to see how many followers have come!!
7.10 a.m. Oh.
7.11a.m. Still no followers.



Order [Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy](#) now.

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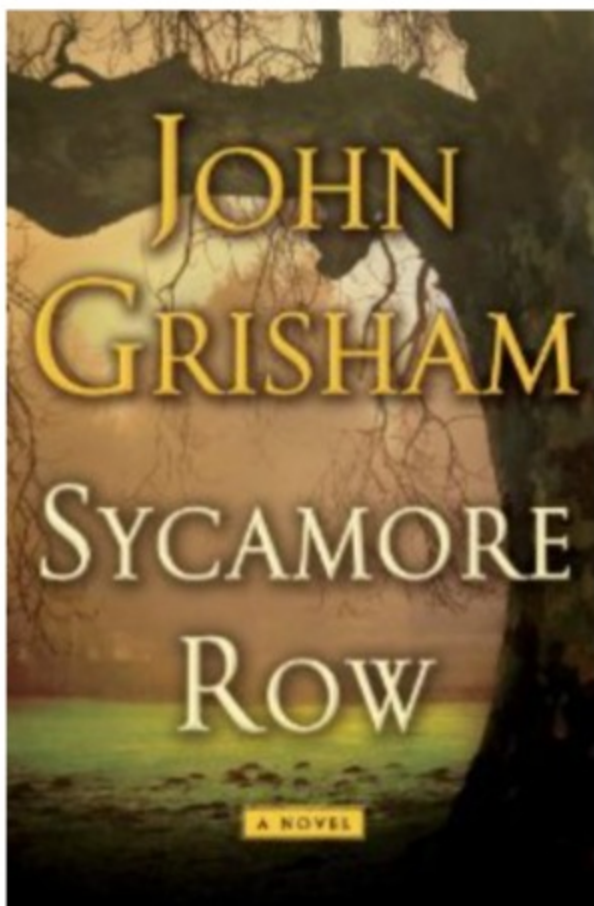
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Character Comebacks: John Grisham Brings Back Jake Brigance

by Robin A. Rothman on August 26, 2013



In 1989, John Grisham was a lawyer/politician serving in the Mississippi House of Representatives, about to publish his debut novel: a legal thriller called [A Time to Kill](#). Now, 24 years later, this bestselling author -- whose first print run numbers have the word "million" after them and Hollywood adaptations feature A-list actors -- can choose to write about anything he darn well wants. So it's telling that [Sycamore Row](#), due out October 22, takes us right back to that small Mississippi town where we first met Jake.

As part of our Character Comebacks series, we catch up with where Jake's been and what he's facing now.

How we knew him: A good husband, a doting father, and a protégé to local legal icon Lucien Wilbankes, 32-year-old Jake's an idealistic defense lawyer who's well-liked by all the locals in his small Mississippi town. He puts everything he loves on the line when he takes on a career-making (or -breaking) capital murder case so divisive it garners national attention.

Last scene: Downing a margarita with his mentor Lucien Wilbankes and banker Stan Atcavage before facing the horde of

press outside his office. The verdict came back Not Guilty By Reason of Insanity thanks to one bold juror's persistence.

Where is he now: It's been three years since the notorious Carl Lee Haily trial. When a wealthy local man ends his life, leaving behind a recently altered radical will, Brigance is once again in the middle a controversial trial rife with racial tensions.

Why we love him: He's the well-meaning underdog. His sense of integrity, particularly when he and his family are vulnerable, make him all the more courageous. He's not perfect. He's not pure. But he's smart, and he's good. He makes the right decisions, especially when they're the most difficult.

According to Grisham: Jake was and is a very autobiographical character. When I wrote [A Time to Kill](#), I was that lawyer working in that small town, with big dreams and almost no money. So, I know him better than any character since, and I've always wanted to watch him through another trial.

A sneak peek inside the new book:

They found Seth Hubbard in the general area where he had promised to be, though not exactly in the condition expected. He was at the end of a rope, six feet off the ground and twisting slightly in the wind. A front was moving through and Seth was soaked when they found him, not that it mattered. Someone would point out that there was no mud on his shoes and no tracks below him, so therefore he was probably hanging and dead when the rain began. Why was that important? Ultimately, it was not.

The logistics of hanging oneself from a tree are not that simple. Evidently, Seth thought of everything. The rope was three-quarter-inch braided natural Manila, of some age and easily strong enough to handle Seth, who weighed 160 pounds a month earlier at the doctor's office. Later, an employee in one of Seth's factories would report that he had seen his boss cut the fifty-foot length from a spool a week before using it in such dramatic fashion. One end was tied firmly to a lower branch of the same tree and secured with a slapdash mix of knots and lashings. But, they held. The other end was looped over a higher branch, two feet in girth and exactly twenty-one feet from the ground. From there it fell about nine feet, culminating in a perfect hangman's knot, one that Seth had undoubtedly worked on for some time. The noose was straight from the textbook with thirteen coils designed to collapse the loop under pressure. A true hangman's knot snaps the neck, making death quicker and less painful, and apparently Seth had done his homework. Other than what was obvious, there was no sign of a struggle or suffering.

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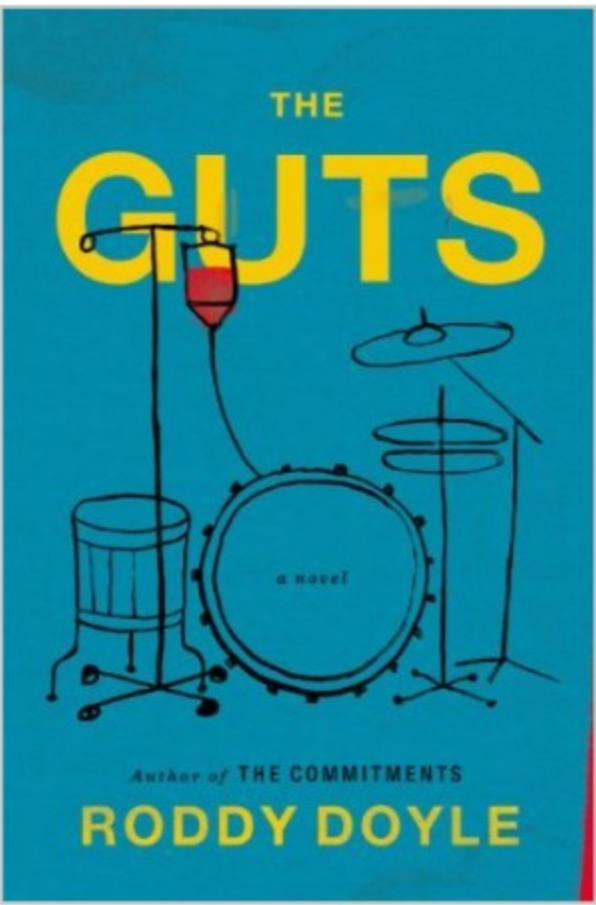
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Character Comebacks: Roddy Doyle Brings Back Jimmy Rabbitte

by Robin A. Rothman on August 26, 2013



Roddy Doyle wrote two more books after he published *The Commitments* in 1987, completing what came to be known as the "Barrytown Trilogy" (named for the fictional Ireland town in which they all took place). But the two follow-ups were about Jimmy's family members. It's been 26 years, and while his family serves a larger role now than they did in the original, we're once again focusing on not-so-young-anymore Jimmy, Jr. in *The Guts*, due out January 23, 2014.

As part of our Character Comebacks series, we catch up with where Jimmy's been and "What's Goin' On" now.

How we knew him: A twenty-something Dublin lad who lives with his parents and uses his passion for music to build and drive an Irish soul band to the brink of success.

Last scene: Jimmy was (at least physically) where he had been when the story started --in his room with a few mates listening to music. Only this time he had the benefit of some hard-learned lessons: the soul band he created and managed disintegrated just when they were on the verge of a big break, and instead of Motown classics, it was the Byrds he was playing for his crew as

they plotted their next project.

Where are they now: When we catch up with Jimmy, he's 48 and has a wife, four kids, and devastating news for all who care about him. Music is still his business: helping musical acts that have faded away find new life in the digital age. He's a "musical fascist" (as his wife puts it) who'd rather spend more on an electric guitar than buy an acoustic that will turn his son into a singer-songwriter. A couple of his old band members come into the picture, and old goals set the circle- of-life spinning again for Jimmy and his old dreams.

Why we love him: When it came to music, young Jimmy was opinionated, bossy, stubborn, but above all passionate and well- meaning. He had a knack and a special spark that just made us root for him. Now, middle-aged Jimmy is facing one hell of a challenge, sending him spiraling into questionable behavior. Still we're rooting for him not just to survive, but to truly live.

According to Doyle: I started thinking about Jimmy again soon after the Irish economy collapsed. Many of the early reports on, say, Irish radio were almost gleeful and nostalgic; explanations of the word, 'recession', were often accompanied by a 1980s soundtrack. I wrote *The Commitments* in the mid '80s, a time of deep recession, and I began to wonder how Jimmy and his family would be coping with this new recession. I was also interested in seeing if I could give vibrant middle-aged life to a character who had previously been a very young man. I wanted to inflict the misery of middle-age on Jimmy and see what he -- actually, I -- could do with it!

A sneak peek inside the new book:

--D'yeh do the Facebook thing?

--Wha' d'yeh mean?

They were in the pub, in their corner. It wasn't unusual anymore, having a pint with his father. In the early evening, before he went home after work. He'd phone, or his da would phone. It wasn't an organized, regular thing. It had started the day his da got his first mobile. His first call was to Jimmy.

–How's it goin'?

–Da?

–Yeah, me.

–How are yeh?

–Not too bad. I'm after getting' one o' the mobiles.

–Great.

–I'm usin' it now, like.

–Congratulations.

–Will we go for a pint? To celebrate.

–Grand. Good. Yeah.

Jimmy's da had still been working when he got the phone. But he'd retired a while back. –There's fuck-all work, he'd told everyone when he'd made the announcement on Stephen's Day, when Jimmy had dragged the kids to his parents' house to collect the presents and kiss their granny. – So I might as well just stop an' call it retirement.

Jimmy's own job was safe – he thought.

–Well, said his da now in the pub. – Facebook. Yeh know it, yeah?

–I do, yeah, said Jimmy.

–What d'you make of it?

–I don't know.

–Yeh don't know?

–No, said Jimmy. –Not really.

–But you've kids.

–I know tha', said Jimmy. – I've four of them.

–Is it the four you have? Said his da. – I thought it was three.

–No, said Jimmy. –It's been four for a good while. Ten years, like.

This was what Jimmy liked. It was why he phoned his da every couple of weeks. His da was messing, pretending he didn't know how many grandchildren he had. It was the way he'd always been. A pain in the hole at times, but, today, exactly what Jimmy wanted.

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