

It’s usually wise to ignore the blurbs on a book cover when reviewing it. This is a little harder to do when the blurb is written by J.M. Coetzee, and he’s saying that ‘this is writing of the highest order.’ Still, I struggled to maintain my scepticism for a few pages, until I had to agree with him. *Carry Me Down* is one of the best books I’ve read for ages.

John Egan is a five-foot eleven-year-old who towers over his classmates in rural Ireland. He is an only child. Everything about him makes him feel different and, he would like to think, special. His parents are clever, handsome and loving, but as puberty approaches he senses that their feelings towards him are changing. *Carry Me Down* charts a few months of John’s twelfth year, when he is in many ways still a child but adulthood is bearing down upon him – not only physically but also in his awareness of the cruelties of the adult world.

We inhabit John’s clever, bewildered mind as he tells his story in the first person present tense. The clarity and imaginative power of the writing are astonishing. This should win the Booker.