

Mrs Kelly - The villain of Brooklyn

- We don't need to see Mrs Kelly as a villain in a traditional sense. She doesn't do great harm, hurt or injure anyone. However in the context of the film and its cultural context she has a certain amount of power.
- As the owner of the local grocery store she has a certain amount of power over her staff and customers. She abuses this power and uses it to make herself seem powerful and others weak.
- Although not truly evil she is mean minded, petty and vindictive. Her meddling and gossiping could cause great harm to the heroine Eilis.
- An early indication is her nickname 'Nettles' which suggests sharpness, pain, prickliness. Although not lethal the sting of a nettle is undoubtedly painful.
- We learn that Eilis's part time job in Mrs Kelly's shop is the only job available, this puts Mrs Kelly in a very powerful position. She attempts to dominate Eilis, for example forcing her to attend early mass before work. She utterly dominates her other employee Mary, talking down to her and belittling her.
- As a potential provider of credit she is in a very strong position to dominate her poorer customers. This can be seen when she allows a wealthier woman to skip a queue and be served before her poorer customers.
- She also humiliates another woman who asks to buy shoe polish, telling her it is 'not really a Sunday item', adding insultingly that 'it looks like you needed it yesterday'.
- When Eilis tells her that she is going to Brooklyn, Mrs Kelly instantly and vindictively fires her despite Eilis's willingness (and perhaps need) to work until her departure.
- Although it is none of her business she expresses her 'pity' for Eilis's 'poor sister', saying that this is 'the end for her'. This pretense at sympathy is merely a way of making Eilis feel bad rather than truly sympathising with Rose.

- When Eilis returns from Brooklyn Mrs Nettles again attempts to dominate her and exert power over her. Even when Eilis no longer works for her she still feels that she can summon her at will. Eilis is initially amused at the summons but can see that her former coworker Mary is still terrified of Mrs Nettles and agrees to accompany her.
- Although Mrs Kelly is initially more respectful and pleasant to Eilis, inviting her up to her private parlour and asking after her mother and her new life in Brooklyn, her intent soon becomes clear.
- Mrs Kelly enjoys drawing out her revelation that she knows that Eilis has married in New York, however her pleasure is short lived as Eilis is no longer the naive, young woman who can be intimidated. She literally and figuratively stands up to Mrs Kelly, telling her proudly that 'My name is Eilis Fiorello'.
- The final shot of their encounter tells us everything we need to know. The bullying, spiteful gossip is no longer able to dominate Eilis.
- Gossip, spiteful, vindictive, snobbish, domineering, dictatorial, shallow, hypocritical.

