

Short Story: Young People These Days [B2]

Una sostenitrice dei valori tradizionali maltratta i giovani con il suo bastone, incolpandoli dei problemi sociali. Ma è davvero la paladina della morale o può risultare aggressiva nelle sue azioni?

I'm watching you," Nellie Brown tells the teenage girl in the sweet section of her local shop. "[I know what you're up to.](#)" "What?" The girl gives her a [bewildered](#) look. "I'm not up to anything!" "Oh, we'll see about that." Nellie read an article just last week about the increase of [theft](#) in Ireland, and knows that young people like this girl [are to blame](#) — because young people [are to blame](#) for everything these days. "Young people these days... no respect!" she says, as she follows a group of boys down an [aisle](#) and [waves](#) her [cane](#) at them. Nellie doesn't need her [cane](#) to walk. She can walk perfectly well, thank you very much. But the [cane](#) is a convenient instrument when she needs [to reprimand](#) or intimidate, and so do her part for society. "Doing your job for you again," she tells the young woman at the [checkout](#). The woman is Greta, the daughter of the man who owns the shop. Nellie doesn't [appreciate](#) how Greta is looking at her, as if she's the [troublemaker](#) — and not the young delinquents. "If it weren't for me, you'd have a [riot](#) on your hands." This time, Nellie is thinking of footage she's seen on a news channel, of a group of young people the journalist referred to as a "[flash mob](#)" running into a shop in New York and stealing the merchandise before running away. "Excuse me?" says Greta, giving Nellie her change. "Look, young lady, you might not care if some of these ruffians steal your father's merchandise. But their thieving makes everything more expensive for honest citizens, including old-age pensioners like me." "Nobody's stealing anything," says Greta. "Thanks to me!" says Nellie. She leaves in disgust, only to discover two teenagers [loitering](#) outside, no doubt hoping to convince someone to buy them alcohol or cigarettes. They have the audacity to ask her for money. "Get on home!" she shouts at them, and hits them with her [cane](#). "[I'm sick of the lot of you!](#)" She walks home, lamenting the deterioration of her town, Maynooth in County Kildare. When she was a girl, young people were honest and respectful, but these days they are out of control. They don't go to [mass](#); some of them don't even believe in God or

read the Bible. It was different in her day. Nellie has [committed not only to](#) reprimanding young delinquents, but also to converting them to Catholicism. A year ago, when her neighbour began renting her house to a group of Maynooth University students, Nellie was horrified. But then she had a revelation: this was the perfect opportunity to guide a group of impressionable young people away from a life of immorality. So every evening, she plays recordings of the [mass](#) loudly out her window, in the hope that God's message would dissuade them from the alcohol, drugs and immoral behaviour all students participate in these days. A few evenings later, Nellie is having a cup of tea, listening to the [mass](#) that [is blaring](#) out the window. She lowers the volume before going to the door, where she discovers two young [Gardaí](#). They introduce themselves as Garda Roger Bentley and Garda Helen McGuire. "Oh, I think I know what this is about," says Nellie. For years, she'd been hoping to be a [contender](#) for the local Garda award, given annually to a resident of the town for their service to the local community. Certainly, Nellie [merits](#) recognition for her efforts to dissuade young people from committing crime and to maintain order. "[Is that so?](#)" says Garda Bentley. "It's about the award?" says Nellie, a declaration more than a question in her mind, but she wants to appear [humble](#). "No," he says. "I'm afraid we've received a number of [complaints](#) about you," says Garda McGuire. "Complaints?" Nellie laughs. "Is this some sort of joke?" The two [Gardaí](#) are quite young, so she wouldn't be surprised if this is their idea of some demented joke. "It's no joke," says Garda Bentley, opening a page of his notebook. "First complaint was by two youths. [Assault and battery](#) outside Murphy's Shop on Wednesday morning." "[Assault and battery?](#)" Nellie is indignant. "They said you hit them with a stick," says Garda McGuire. "Well... they were [loitering](#), [up to no good](#)" "Actually, they were collecting money for a local charity." Garda Bentley continues. "Greta Murphy of Murphy's Shop witnessed the assault and made a separate complaint: [harassment](#) of customers. She said it's been going on for months and you'll be [barred](#) from the shop if it continues." "I haven't harassed anyone," protests Nellie. "You know young people these days. I was just... well, monitoring their activities." "Not your right or responsibility," says Garda McGuire. "We've also received several noise [complaints](#) from your neighbours," says Garda Bentley. "If you have

hearing problems, may we suggest headphones?" "My hearing is perfectly fine," says Nellie, offended. "Well then, perhaps lower the volume. The students next door are studying for their exams, so would [appreciate](#) some peace and quiet." "Studying! That's what they say!" Nellie feels her cheeks burning. "Consider this a formal warning, Mrs Brown," says Garda McGuire. "The youths have declined to press charges for now, but if you continue with these forms of behaviour, we will have no choice but to take legal action against you." Nellie is too humiliated to respond, and even more humiliated as the [Gardaí](#) leave and she hears one say to the other, with a laugh, "Elderly people these days, huh?"

Glossary

- **troublemaker** = piantagrane
- **merits** = meritare
- **barred** = bandire
- **contender** = concorrente
- **humble** = umile
- **complaints** = lamentele
- **checkout** = cassa
- **flash mob** = mobilitazione improvvisa
- **up to no good** = non avere buone intenzioni
- **Is that so?** = davvero?
- **aisle** = corridoio
- **Assault and battery** = aggressione aggravata
- **harassment** = molestia sessuale
- **I'm sick of the lot of you** = sono stufo di voi
- **mass** = messa
- **is blaring** = risuonare
- **Gardaí** = corpo di polizia irlandese
- **bewildered** = sorpreso
- **theft** = furto
- **cane** = bastone
- **to reprimand** = rimproverare
- **appreciate** = apprezzare
- **riot** = rivolta
- **I know what you're up to** = so che cosa stai tramando
- **are to blame** = essere i colpevoli
- **waves** = agitare
- **loitering** = gironzolare
- **committed not only to** = impegnarsi a