



## The Oxford Companion to Irish Literature

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By turns sacred or profane, mystical or earthy, scathingly satirical and modern or achingly nostalgic for the ever-receding past, the literature of Ireland has long entranced and entertained readers the world over. Now *The Oxford Companion to Irish Literature* provides a comprehensive and delightfully readable guide to the evolution and achievements of Irish writers and writing across sixteen tumultuous centuries, from fourth-century *ogam* writing etched on ancient stones, to the towering twentieth-century figures of Yeats, Joyce, and Beckett, to the bold new voices emerging today as Ireland enters a new era and a new century.

Written by a distinguished team of writers from Ireland and around the world, this remarkable *Companion* offers over 2,000 entries that provide insight into the intimate fusion of history, literature, and culture that distinguishes so much of Ireland's poetry, drama, and fiction. Unrivalled in scope, this superb volume encompasses writing in both the Irish language and in English, across the religious and political spectrums, by native Irish and Anglo-Irish writers and such outsiders as Londoner Edmund Spenser, who completed *The Faerie Queen*--and indeed most of his life's work--during his two decades in Ireland. In contrast to other, less complete references, the editors of this *Companion* seek always to show the complex and continuing influence of the Irish language on writers in English, and vice versa. And as befits a country where so many writers have not only been commentators and observers of history but also active participants in the nation's affairs, there are dozens of entries on important historical events that shaped the lives and fired the imaginations of the Irish, from the Battle of the Boyne and the Great Famine of the 1840s, to the Easter Uprising of 1916 and today's continuing conflicts and controversies. Hundreds of biographical entries range from the early bards and authors such as Adaman, the seventh century abbot and biographer of the Irish saint Colum Cille, to contemporary writers such as Seamus Heaney, Brian Friel, and Booker Prize-winning novelist Roddy Doyle. The myriad contributions of Ireland's women writers also are well-represented here, with entries on folklorist and dramatist Lady Gregory, co-founder of Ireland's world-renowned Abbey Theatre, and many others, including the novelists and short story writers Mary Lavin, Elizabeth Bowen, Julia O'Faolain, Edna O'Brien and Maeve Binchy, and contemporary poets Eilean Ni Chuilleanain, Nuala Ni Dhomnaill, and Rita Ann Higgins.

Whether readers are seeking a quick introduction to the mythic figures of Cu Chulainn and the sidh, or fairy folk, who haunt the pages of Yeats's early poems, a handy who's who to the Dublin of Swift, Joyce, or Behan, or an invitation into the theatrical worlds of J.M. Synge or Sean O'Casey, *The Oxford Companion to Irish Literature* is a wonderfully accessible reference and an indispensable research tool. It will be treasured not only by students and scholars of Irish writing and history, but by anyone seeking a more acute understanding of one of the world's most vibrant literary traditions.

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