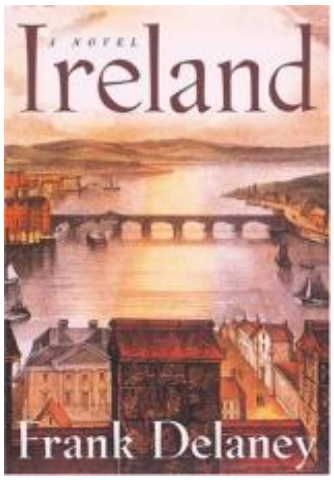
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Ireland: A Novel

by Frank Delaney



About the Book

From a land famous for storytelling comes
an "absolute masterpiece"* -- an epic novel
of Ireland that captures the intimate, passionate
texture of the Irish spirit.

One wintry evening in 1951, an itinerant storyteller -- a Seanchai, the very last practitioner of a fabled tradition extending back hundreds of years -- arrives unannounced at a house in the Irish countryside. In exchange for a bed and a warm meal, he invites his hosts and some of their neighbors to join him by the fireside, and begins to tell formative stories of Ireland's history. One of his listeners, a nine-year-old boy, grows so entranced by the story-telling that, when the old man leaves abruptly under mysterious circumstances, the boy devotes himself to finding him again.

Ronan's search for the Storyteller becomes both a journey of self-discovery and an immersion into the sometimes-conflicting histories of his native land. As the long-unspoken secrets of his own family begin to reveal themselves, he becomes increasingly single-minded in pursuit of the old man, who he fears may already be dead. But Ronan's personal path also leads him deeper and deeper into the history and mythology of Ireland itself, in all its drama, intrigue, and heroism.

Ireland travels through the centuries, interweaving Ronan's quest for the Storyteller with a richly evocative unfolding of the great moments in Irish history, ranging from the savage grip of the Ice Age to the green andtroubled land of tourist brochures and political unrest. Along the way, we meet foolish kings and innocent monks, fabled saints and great works of art, shrewd Normanraiders, strong tribal leaders, poets, politicians, and lovers. Each illuminates the magic of Ireland and the eternal connection of its people to the land.

A sweeping novel of huge ambition, **Ireland** is the beautifully told story of a remarkable nation. From the epic sweep of

its telling to the precision of its characters -- great and small, tragic and comic -- it rings with the truth of a writer passionate about his country and in full command of his craft.

* Jack Higgins

Discussion Guide

1. Is the storyteller a phenomenon unique to Ireland?

2. Why is Ronan enthralled before the storyteller even begins to speak? Can you imagine why Alison is so repelled?

3. There's nothing quite like Newgrange in the US -- or is there? What do public monuments represent in the United States? Were they built in anything like the same way?

4. Why is Ronan so much more interested in history than girls? What is it about the Storyteller that has made such a deep impression?

5. The Storyteller has a very specific method for reaching his audience. Is his method similar to that of an actor or a writer?

6. The Penal Laws made it very difficult for Catholics to become educated. How is a culture that is forcibly denied the growth and insight available through education and learning able to keep itself vitally alive?

7. In following the Storyteller for so many years, has Ronan, in fact, become a Storyteller himself?

8. Between the Norman-Irish and the Anglo-Irish, it seems difficult to define, who, really is "Irish." Is this similar to how "American" identity is formed?

9. How would have Ronan's life been different if he knew his family's great secret all along?

10. The book is called **Ireland**. To what extent is the country itself a character in the novel?

Author Bio

Frank Delaney is the author of the *New York Times* bestselling novel IRELAND, as well as TIPPERARY, SHANNON and SIMPLE COURAGE: A True Story of Peril on the Sea. A former judge for the Man Booker Prize, Delaney enjoyed a prominent career in BBC broadcasting before becoming a full-time writer. Born in Tipperary, Ireland, he now lives in New York City and Connecticut.

Critical Praise

"Delaney gracefully collects essential myths--and invents a few, too--in his heartfelt ode to the oral tradition."

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