

Library Now Opens at 10 am on Fridays

William Butler Yeats

Nearly eight decades after his death most *literati* still consider William Butler Yeats to be Ireland's greatest poet. He was also a Romantic, a Modernist, a mystical dreamer, a leader of the Irish Literary Revival, a Nobel Prize winner, and a dramatist. Yeats was born in Sandymount, just outside Dublin, in 1865. After being home-schooled, he received a formal education in London and Dublin. Starting at the age of fifteen, Yeats spent his summers with his maternal grandmother in Sligo. Captivated by the region's folklore and scenery, he adopted Sligo's countryside as his own. In 1885, Yeats decided to devote himself to poetry, and to Irish nationalism. At the same time he became fascinated with the occult, and actively pursued his mystical interests for the remainder of his life.

Yeats established his reputation in 1889 when he wrote the verse collection, *The Wanderings of Oisín and Other Poems*. His identification with the Irish cause was given impetus by Yeats' passionate love for the beguiling revolutionary, Maud Gonne. His aims and hers were at cross-purposes however: while Gonne was a strong advocate for Home Rule, Yeats saw promise in the Protestant Ascendancy. Although she spurned him, Gonne's presence haunted Yeats and his poetry for the remainder of his life. One of the great personalities of the Ascendancy was the widow, Lady Augusta Gregory. Together, she and Yeats founded the National Theater of Ireland at the Abbey Theater in Dublin in late December 1904. Yeats continued to write his passionate poems in the years leading up to World War I. Several of them touch on the theme of Irish independence, notably *September 1913*, and *Easter 1916*. During the war, Yeats was deeply affected by the death of Major Robert Gregory, Lady Gregory's only son, who was shot down from the skies over Italy in 1917:

I know that I shall meet my fate
Somewhere among the clouds above
Those that I fight I do not hate,
Those that I guard I do not love . . .

Finding Gonne beyond the pale, Yeats married (at age fifty-two) the remarkable Georgiana Hyde-Lees. The pair restored an ancient tower at the base of Ben Bulbin (a landmark mountain in County Sligo) and raised two children, a boy and a girl. Upon the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922, Yeats became a member of his country's Senate, and served there for two terms. In 1923, Yeats was the first Irish national to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature.

Yeats' poems demonstrate fierce emotion and dramatic creativity. Many are based on the Gaelic folk tales he found so fascinating, and reflect a uniquely Irish culture. Yeats died in France in 1939. His remains lie at the foot of Ben Bulbin, marked by the epitaph:

Cast a cold eye
On life, on death.
Horseman, pass on.

Essay by Bill Lounsbery

KRL has many books by and about W.B. Yeats.

Summer Book Recommendations

Cottage by the Sea by Debbie Macomber

Annie Marlow has been through the worst. Rocked by tragedy, she heads to the one place that makes her happy: Oceanside in the Pacific Northwest, the destination of many family vacations when Annie was a teenager.

Educated by Tara Westover

A haunting memoir about a girl who was not permitted to go to school by her survivalist, radically religious father, who held fast to the idea that the only purpose of females is to procreate. This girl set out on her own path, self-educated herself, eventually earning a PhD from Cambridge and a new life of her own.

Chosen Country: A rebellion in the west by James Pogue.

Pogue writes about the Malheur County (Oregon) takeover by cattlemen a couple of years ago. The story gives insight to the Bundy family and his followers vs. the government. Who would YOU take a bullet for?

MacBeth by Jo Nesbø

Shakespeare's classic story, set in a 1970's Scotland, in a fictional industrial town, where Duncan, the new police commissioner, strives to overcome the drug lords when he promotes young MacBeth as head of the Organized Crime Unit.

The Ha-Ha by Dave King.

A moving story about a brain-damaged man and his relationship with a neglected boy. Beautifully written and sensitive, ... simultaneously heartbreaking, humorous, and hopeful.

The Trouble with Goats & Sheep by Joanna Cannon.

It is 1976, in a small hamlet in England, and Mrs. Creasy is missing. Two little girls, Tilly and Grace, set out to solve the mystery. *From Nancy Pearl's summer reading list on NPR.*

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Manchester Library Sign ?**

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