



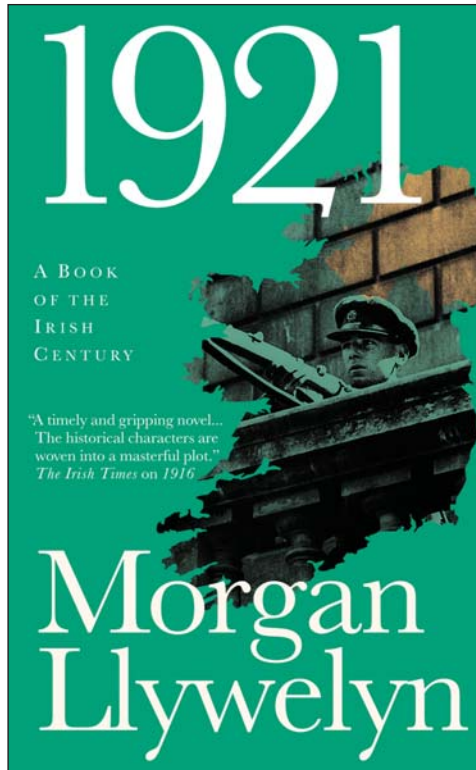
FORGE

READER'S GUIDE

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Morgan Llywelyn

1921



560 pages • 0-812-57079-0

★ “A thunderous, informative read that rises to the challenge.... Llywelyn’s best work yet.”

—PUBLISHERS WEEKLY, STARRED REVIEW ON 1916

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Morgan Llywelyn has brought the stirring depth and richness of Irish history and culture to life in a manner that few writers have ever accomplished. Her books have sold more than 40 million copies worldwide, and have been translated into dozens of languages. Among her most highly acclaimed historical

novels are the stunning *New York Times* bestseller *Lion of Ireland*, chronicling the legend of the ancient Irish warrior-king Brian Boru, and *Pride of Lions*, which continues that heroic epic with Boru’s young son Donough and his struggle to hold together his father’s kingdom.

Among the awards Morgan Llywelyn has received are the Poetry and Prose Award for Bard, and the Best Novel of the Year Award for *The Horse Goddess* from the National League of Penwomen and the American Library Association. *The Horse Goddess* was also named a Book-of-the-Month Club Selection, as was her *The Last Prince of Ireland*. She lives in Ireland.

ABOUT THE BOOK

“Whereas the Irish people is by right a free people:

And whereas for seven hundred years the Irish people have never ceased to repudiate and has repeatedly protested in arms against foreign usurpation:

And whereas English rule in this country is, and always has been, based upon force and fraud and maintained by military occupation against the declared wish of the people:

We solemnly declare foreign government in Ireland to be an invasion of our national right which will never tolerate, and we demand the evacuation of our country by the English Garrison:

In the name of the Irish people we humbly commit our destiny to Almighty God who gave our fathers the courage and determination to persevere through long centuries of a ruthless tyranny, and strong in the justice of the cause

which they have handed down to us, we ask His Divine blessing on this last stage of the struggle we have pledged ourselves to carry through to freedom.”

—from the *Irish Declaration of Independence*

For more than seven hundred years, the Irish people suffered beneath the yoke of British subjugation, their national identity stolen away by their English overlords. Throughout the long centuries, however, the vibrant spirit of the Irish was never broken, and while the celebrated Easter Rising of 1916 may have ended in failure, the harshness of the English response merely served to set the stage for the next irresistible struggle for Irish freedom.

In bestselling novelist Morgan Llywelyn the Irish have finally found their own vibrant voice for history. With *1921*, Llywelyn has combined her consummate storytelling skill with impeccable research to vividly recreate the turbulent struggle for Irish independence after the First World War. Seamlessly meshing fictional and historical characters into an unforgettable epic, Morgan Llywelyn chronicles the rise of Sinn Fein and the IRA, unabashedly relating the indiscriminate violence and unsung heroism that would result in the founding of the Irish republic. Richly detailed and moving, *1921* is a story of blood and sacrifice, tragedy and ultimate triumph, which unmistakably shows why Morgan Llywelyn is today’s preeminent writer of Irish historical fiction.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Like most revolutions, the Irish struggle for freedom began with high ideals and intense moral purpose, yet soon there was brutality too. Is moral degeneration an inevitable part of warfare and politics, or were the character flaws of the leading players responsible?
2. The author does a marvelous job of showing the very human side of such legendary historical figures as Michael Collins, Eamon de Valera, and others. Do these portrayals of flawed men and women shatter their mystique or add to them?
3. We know that there are no black-and-white truths in war or history, merely shades of gray. How might the history of the struggle as portrayed in *1921* differ in perspective if taught in an English school? An Irish classroom? An American class?

4. In recent decades, the IRA has become increasingly known as a terrorist group, while the Protestant militants in the Orange Order who annually parade through Catholic areas are often presented as “upholding tradition” Who is responsible for the images each group represents?

5. Michael Collins and Eamon de Valera are each presented very differently in the book. What do you think of the portrayals? Does the author give away her own political bent through this treatment?

6. Morgan Llywelyn makes much reference to the widespread political apathy of many of the Irish people—of all classes—to the struggle for independence. Is this surprising? What does this say about human nature? About the leaders and followers of such revolutionary movements?

7. When the leadership of the Easter Uprising were caught and executed by the English, many Irish initially branded these leaders as brigands or traitors, yet soon after, they were hailed as heroes. Is this a common reaction, or is there something unique to Irish culture which influenced this seismic shift in public attitudes?

8. The American Revolution achieved independence from England in the 1770s, yet it took Ireland nearly 150 years longer to overthrow English rule. Was this American success merely a function of the great geographical distance, or were there other factors that allowed the English to retain Ireland under their sway?

9. The book makes reference to the non-violent independence moment in India under Gandhi. Could this non-military avenue have proven successful in Ireland as well, or was violence the only path to freedom?

10. Does the book show the first stirrings of Feminism among the Irish revolutionaries? Contrast the revolutionary activities of the book’s courageous women involvement with the cloistered role of women under Irish familial tradition.

11. The Catholic Church takes quite a beating in the book, with many clergymen portrayed as weak-willed or pandering to the authorities. Do you believe this is a fair portrayal?

PRAISE FOR MORGAN LLYWELYN'S 1916:

“Transcends any dry historical account of the Easter Rebellion. This is a book destined for history and easily matches the ancient Celtic epics of the Ulster Cycle. A wonderful book brilliantly told by a master of the novel.”

—RANDY LEE EICKHOFF,

SYNDICATED REVIEWER AND AUTHOR OF *THE RAID*

“A novel in the tradition of *Exodus*! An ambitious book which only a novelist of Morgan Llywelyn’s stature could have accomplished. Against a powerful backdrop, her characters, fictional and historical, enact their parts in a breathtaking story; a story of high drama and heroism, a story of human tragedy and degradation. This is the stuff of epic sagas—a tour de force.”

—PETER BERESFORD ELLIS,

AUTHOR OF *THE RISING OF THE MOON*

“A marriage of stories and truth that breathes life into history in a way a textbook never could.... It is [Llywelyn’s] soul’s song for Ireland, which is clearly the place of her heart.” —*THE KNOXVILLE NEWS-SENTINEL*

“Llywelyn weaves the tapestry of her story with intelligence and skill, and gives us access to a period when the bullets flew and patriots gave their lives for the ideal freedom.”

—*SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE*

“Llywelyn tells her tale with gusto and a respect for the facts; a good deal of both bizarre and somber history shines through the fictional fustian of its likable characters.”

—*KIRKUS REVIEWS*

“The politics and factionalism behind the Rising are a tangled web indeed, but Llywelyn unravels them skillfully. Even those who know the story well will be surprised and rewarded by the way she brings back to life a group of brave men who went nobly to their deaths.”

—*THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER*