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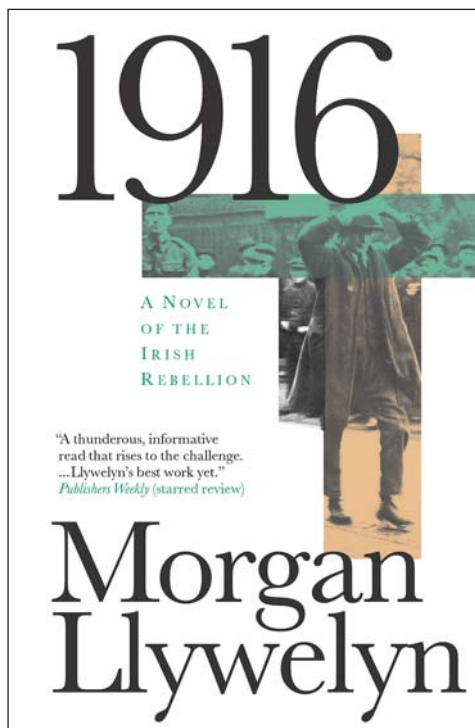
READER'S GUIDE

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## Morgan Llywelyn

1916

A NOVEL OF THE IRISH REBELLION



“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*

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Photo: Paddy Whealan, *The Irish Times*

Morgan Llywelyn's books have sold more than forty million copies worldwide and have been translated into many languages. Since 1980, she has created an entire body of work chronicling the Celts and Ireland, from the earliest times to the present day.

Her highly praised historical novels include the *New York Times* bestseller *Lion of Ireland*, which chronicles the legend of Brian Boru, and *Pride of Lions*, which tells the story of Brian Boru's son Donough and his struggle to maintain the kingdom his father created.

Llywelyn has received many literary honors. Her novel *Bard* won the Poetry and Prose Award. *The Horse Goddess* was chosen as a Book-of-the-Month Club selection and received the Best Novel of the Year Award from the National League of Penwomen and the American Library Association. *The Last Prince of Ireland* also garnered a Book-of-the-Month and History Book Club selection.

Morgan Llywelyn lives in Ireland.

### ABOUT THE BOOK

*The drama inherent in the events of 1916 requires no embellishment. There has never been a rebellion quite like it, there will never be such men and women again.*

The Easter Rising of 1916 was a major turning point in Irish history. Inspired by poets and schoolteachers, fueled by a desperate desire for freedom, and played out in the historic streets of Dublin against the background of World War I, it is a story of a tremendous power and unique poignancy.

Only the bestselling novelist and Irish historian Morgan Llywelyn could paint such a vivid and compelling portrait of the birth of modern Ireland. The American Civil War inspired *Gone with the Wind*; the Russian Revolution inspired *Dr. Zhivago*. The Easter Rising has inspired *1916*—the book Morgan Llywelyn was born to write.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. At the beginning of the book, the author provides a *Dramatis Personae*—a list of all fictional characters and a list of historical figures (members of the Rising who were executed are listed in boldface). Do the historical figures blend well with the fictional characters? Are the fictional characters as passionate and colorful as their real-life companions?
2. During the course of her research, Morgan Llywelyn was given access to private and family papers, unpublished and suppressed papers, as well as eyewitness accounts. This historical information is a synthesis of reliably documented facts that gives believability to the fictional characters and credibility to the many historical figures depicted in *1916*. Through the novel's main character, Ned, the reader is introduced to the renowned scholar and poet, Patrick Pearse, Irish republican Seán MacDermott, and Socialist labor leader and journalist James Connolly, as well as many others. How does the portrayal of these figures compare to the way history commonly represents them?
3. The American public has often been presented with a one-sided and romanticized view of the Irish/British situation. How does *1916* compare with other treatments of the subject in popular culture, such as the films *Michael Collins* and *In the Name of the Father*? What other works of fiction/drama could *1916* be compared to?
4. The rigid and complex class structure of Ireland is a powerful force in *1916*. The treatment of the Irish aboard the *Titanic*—booked for “steerage passage” only and the last allowed to board the life boats—is an example of discrimination against the Irish. What are some other examples of this discrimination and how did it carry over to America?
5. The Easter Rising was a defining event in the history of Irish Republicanism and was responsible for the Proclamation of the Republic. This proclamation demanded equal rights and opportunities for Irish citizens and many consider it to be the founding document of the Irish Republican Army and a major influence of the Sinn Féin party, which originally was founded on strictly non-militant principles. Today the once chivalrous IRA and Sinn Féin are synonymous with terrorism—when did this evolution take place and what caused these organizations to change? Is the overall outcome of the Easter Rising considered a triumph or a tragedy?

6. Beginning with the execution of sixteen Irish leaders by the British government, the Easter Rising gave birth to a new attitude about Irish rebellion against British oppression. But today, the current troubles in Northern Ireland overshadow the ideologies and events leading up to the Rising and the Irish people have been made to feel ashamed of their own patriots. After learning about the brave men and women of Ireland who began this fight more than eighty years ago, will the readers of *1916* feel more sympathetic to today's IRA activities or to today's British policies?

## A FEW WORDS WITH MORGAN LLYWELYN

### On why *1916* had to be written:

“This book will be highly controversial. In the years following the Rising, people knew the truth of it, but then another generation came along that had its own political agenda. Truth became distorted. There was a wave of revisionism, as the ‘Big Brother’ in Orwell’s 1984 ‘revised’ history—or as the Russian historians did under Stalin. A lot of Irish people alive today think that the distortion they know is the truth. It isn’t. The footnotes are to show them and interested Americans and Irish-Americans where the facts are to be found.”

### A word to critics:

“There are people who will read this book and cry angrily, ‘That can’t be true, that’s not the way I learned it!’ To them I say, ‘Go back and study again. Fight off the prejudices of the past and take a fresh look.’ The information exists, although much of it has been suppressed for years and is just now coming to light.”

### On the novel as history:

“As with every other pivotal event in history, the complete story of the events surrounding 1916 will always elude us. Each person involved had their own separate truth. And no matter how objective he or she claims to be, each historian who writes about a subject approaches it with at least some degree of bias based on his or her own conditioning. I’ve spent years researching, interviewing, documenting, and verifying each source in order to give the truest possible picture while at the same time telling a compelling story. It is a principle tenet of my work that the truth of history never be sacrificed for the sake of drama.”

### On Ireland today:

“Ireland is undergoing a sea change. We’re one of the fastest growing economies in Europe. We who have been taught for eight hundred years that we are inferior, that we must have no self-confidence, are beginning to rediscover our heritage. There is an absolute explosion here; it’s described as ‘the Celtic tiger.’ So it’s about time we allow ourselves to be proud of how it all began, too.”

## FOR FURTHER READING ON IRELAND AND THE IRISH REBELLION

### FICTION

*The Scorching Wind* by Walter Macken

*The End of the Hunt* by Thomas Flanagan

*Strumpet City* by James Plunkett

*Farewell Companions* by James Plunkett

### NONFICTION

*The Easter Rebellion* by Max Caulfield

*The 1916 Poets* edited by Desmond Ryan

*The Irish Republic* by Dorothy Macardle

*Modern Ireland 1600-1972* by R.F. Foster

*Patrick Pearse: The Triumph of Failure*

by Ruth Dudley Edwards

*Terrible Beauty: A Life of Constance Markievicz*

by Diana Norman

*“Dear, Dirty Dublin” A City in Distress, 1899-1916*

by Joseph V. O’Brien

*The Life and Times of James Connolly*

by C. Desmond Greaves