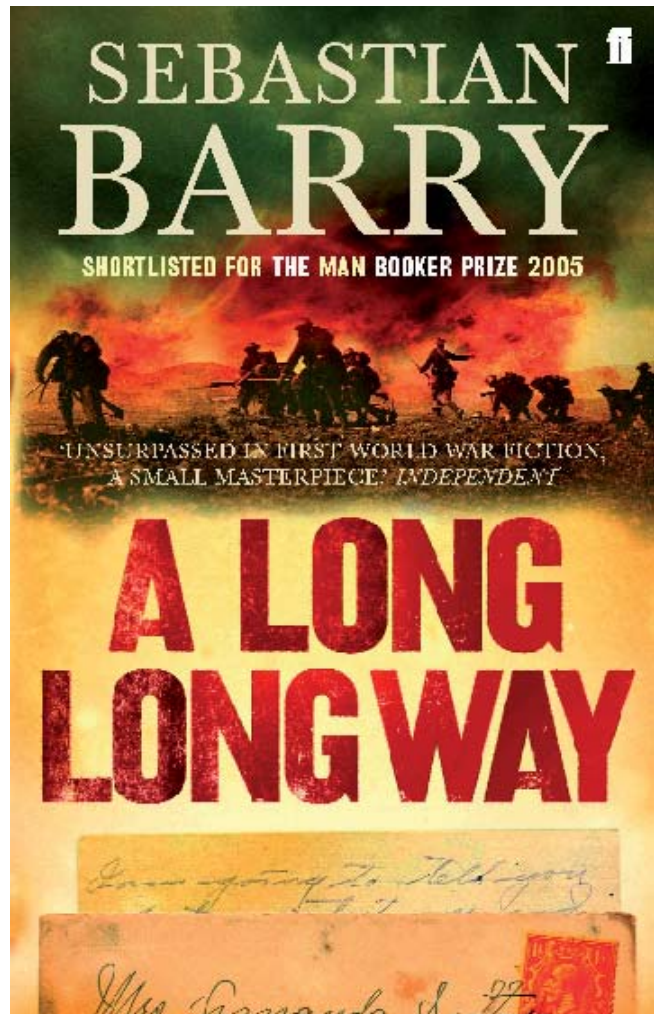


ALLEN & UNWIN



# READING GROUP NOTES

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## About Sebastian Barry

Novelist, poet and award-winning playwright Sebastian Barry was born in Dublin in 1955 and attended Trinity College, Dublin. He has written for the theatre since 1986, his prize-winning plays *Our Lady of Sligo* and *The Steward of Christendom* receiving rave reviews. His latest play, *Whistling Psyche*, was produced in 2004 at the Almeida Theatre in London, and starred Claire Bloom and Kathryn Turner. His first novel, *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*, was published in 1998 to great acclaim, and his second, *Annie Dunne*, in 2002. *A Long Long Way*, the story of the son of a Dublin policeman who goes to the trenches in 1915, was published in the spring of 2005 and was short-listed for the Man Booker Prize for Fiction. Film rights have been optioned by Noel Pearson, the producer of *My Left Foot* and *Dancing at Lughnasa*. Sebastian is currently working on a new novel, *Jenkyll and Hyde*. He lives with his wife and three children in County Wicklow, Ireland.

## About the book

Willie Dunne is the son of a Dublin policeman, a gifted, sensitive boy with a fine singing voice. Not tall enough to follow in his father's footsteps, when General Kitchener's call comes for volunteers to go to the trenches he willingly enlists. From the Battle of the Somme to near the end of the war, he sees and participates in terrible things. And for Willie, as for many of his compatriots, there is the strange ambivalence felt over fighting for the British when at home the British are fighting their kith and kin. Willie finds himself caught up in the Easter Rising of 1916, when British troops are slaying the rebels on the streets of Dublin. He is now defined by war, perhaps peculiarly completed by it. But war has a final surprise in store for him.

One of the most vivid and realised characters of recent fiction, Willie Dunne is the innocent hero of Sebastian Barry's highly acclaimed novel. Leaving Dublin to fight for the Allied cause as a member of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, he finds himself caught between the war playing out on foreign fields and that festering at home, waiting to erupt with the Easter Rising. Profoundly moving, intimate and epic, *A Long Long Way* charts and evokes a terrible coming of age, one too often written out of history.

## Interviews

***A Long Long Way - Sebastian Barry in interview***  
**by Mark Harkin – Three Monkeys Online website**

Sebastian Barry's *A Long Long Way* treats an issue which was virtually airbrushed from Irish history for generations after it happened: the involvement of Ireland in the British Army during the First World War. While school texts record the heroic deeds of the 1916 Rising—the event which ultimately led to the creation of the Irish Free State six years later—precious little attention is given to the tens of thousands of Irishmen fighting under the Union Flag in Flanders at that time. Only in recent years has Ireland come to accept its participation and suffering in the war between the European great powers.

Barry's *A Long Long Way* tells the life story of Willie Dunne, the son of a Dublin policeman, who volunteers for action in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. It is unflinching in its depiction of the squalor of life at the front for both private soldiers

and officers. The novel captures the gore of warfare and the sensibilities of the men assaulted by it. It is at once both brutal and poetic.

*A Long Long Way* is also the story of Ireland at a crossroads in its history. While the Royal Dublin Fusiliers suffer horrors abroad, their native city is in turmoil during the time of the Easter Rising in 1916. They find themselves fighting in an army which is frequently guilty of racism against Irish servicemen, while back at home, they themselves come to be regarded as traitors. The Irish soldiers thus constitute an entire generation caught on the wrong side of history.

**Three Monkeys** spoke to author Sebastian Barry about the story behind his latest, highly acclaimed work.

**Three Monkeys:** *A Long Long Way* strikes me as a singularly passionate, heartfelt work. How involved did you feel with the subject? The Great War has been a theme hinted at in your work before, for example in *The Steward of Christendom* [Barry's award winning play *The Steward of Christendom* has as its main character Thomas Dunne, a Dublin policeman serving the Crown, but also a mention of Willie Dunne, his son and the central protagonist of *A Long Long Way*]. Was there a sense of working your way up to dealing with it specifically?

**Sebastian Barry:** As the work went on, I became more and more involved, almost as if personally. As soon as I had the group of soldiers, and felt I knew them, the subject took complete hold of me. I wrote *The Steward of Christendom* in 1993, this in 2003, so, yes, I expect it took a decade for Willie's well to fill up, as it were.

**Three Monkeys:** In some ways, *A Long Long Way* has the obvious look of a book that was simply waiting to be written. Given the number of Irish families who were bereaved by the Great War, it's remarkable that no one got there ahead of you. Regardless of the self-confidence of Celtic Tiger Ireland, would you agree that a strong strain of self-censorship exists when dealing with Irish identity?

**Sebastian Barry:** Well, Jennifer Johnston wrote magnificently about the war some twenty five years ago, but I know what you mean nonetheless. Though there have been so many books about other nations at the war, the English in the main obviously. But in Ireland I suspect the matter of the war became merely impersonal, after so long a silence, people not suspecting it had anything to do with them, especially as it hardly registers in any of our school history books. If it was forgotten for real reasons, both good and bad, it became forgotten for no reason at all. But it has been extraordinary to me the numbers of people at readings and in letters that suddenly realise they have this strong connection, and remember they had great uncles or whatever at the war, and are suddenly appalled by what they went through, and, in many cases, suddenly proud, suddenly amazed, suddenly thankful, which is wonderful. The forgetfulness was born out of self censorship perhaps.

**Three Monkeys:** Your final acknowledgements suggest a mountain of research. At the same time, Willie Dunne is based upon your grandfather. How important was 'official' historical accuracy for you, writing the novel?

**Sebastian Barry:** There are some wonderful history books now; possibly because the topic was so out of the way, it attracted true maverick and gifted historians. The dry regimental history was the most useful, in that I was able to get some idea of actual battles, then try and 'forget' them, to remember them differently with the help of the characters in the book. I didn't feel I could make up the experiences of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers in Flanders, but at

the same time, as always, the most important thing had to be the penny whistle tune of the book.

**Three Monkeys:** How difficult is it to approach such a dramatic, violent period artistically? Did you take any cues from previous literary/dramatic works set during the Great War?

**Sebastian Barry:** I must have read some of the English novels when I was young, but I purposely didn't go back to them for this. I read none of the contemporary novels for the reason I didn't want to be 'helped', if you follow me, which is always a danger. I wanted to write about Willie at the war as if it had never been written about before, because obviously his own experience was one time only and unique. I didn't want to make a work of literature in that sense, but a sort of remaking of his actual experience—impossible of course, but that seemed the best lamp. Of course it was a little terrifying to approach the war at all. But the men got me through, believe me.

**Three Monkeys:** In an age of rigid literary specialisation, you write critically acclaimed plays, poetry and novels. Was it always clear to you that the story you wished to tell in *A Long Long Way* would be in the form of a novel?

**Sebastian Barry:** In this case, yes, though *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*, which is being republished by Faber next year, was written first as a play, a play that didn't work. Most of anything I have written begins life as a short poem, sometimes years and years before.

**Three Monkeys:** The days of tens of thousands of Irishmen fighting in the British Army are in the distant past now. One of the issues your novel explores is how so many came to serve under the British flag in Flanders. Did you feel it incumbent upon you to give a voice to their diverse motivations? Do writers have a social/historical responsibility?

**Sebastian Barry:** Not when I started, but, as I say, as I went on, and felt the men were allowing me in near them, and I could see what was happening and hear what they were saying, I began to feel a strange responsibility. I mean, it seemed to me after a certain time that they were their own authors, authors of themselves, and I was deeply anxious to be true to them, and I was amazed myself at their situation, their courage, and simplicity.

**Three Monkeys:** Considering, once again, that you write plays, poems, and novels, who are the writers who have had the greatest influence on you. Or, to put it another way, what writers do you enjoy reading?

**Sebastian Barry:** Of modern writers, I love Michael Longley, J M Coetzee. In older times, Conrad, Hardy. I could not read till I was nine, and one of the saving graces of that was being able to 'read' films like any other person. I saw the old *Oliver Twist* as a little boy and also *Beauty and the Beast* [directed by Jean Cocteau in 1945]. Great influences, feeling myself to be 'there' in the prison with Fagan (good Irish name), there in the dangerous enchanted garden

**Three Monkeys:** The book contains a number of parallels with *Doctor Zhivago*. Did you work on the basis that the trauma of one era dying violently and another beginning equally violently, could be best expressed and comprehended through one man's tragedy?

**Sebastian Barry:** Does it? Wonderful! Shamefully I haven't read it, though I know Pasternak's poems and it was joyful to visit his dacha in Russia some years ago in the days before Yeltzin (his widow was still there). The whole history of the world seems to me to be one person's story or it's nothing, or something else, just a great moil of nameless suffering. The single view also prevents generalizing too much. It is also a helpful camera, or box camera

anyway (if you remember them).

**Three Monkeys:** A number of writers have started turning their attention to the effect and meaning of the attacks of September 11th. It took Ireland, through writers such as yourself, decades to come to terms with the Great War (indeed it could be argued that the process is an ongoing one, by no means finished). Is it then too early to start approaching, successfully, 9/11 in literature and art?

**Sebastian Barry:** I don't know. But I suspect the reported number of good novels this year is a result of 9/11 and all the other alarms of recent years. I think it set a certain gear into movement, unseen, silent, at the heart of many writers. Writers with children, writers with that hope of a peaceful century; a sort of literary battle stations. I was not surprised to hear Ali Smith describe her wonderful book [*The Accidental*] as a war book.

**Three Monkeys:** Is Ireland any closer to getting over its denial about the trauma suffered during those years? Do you expect to see more Irish novels based in that period?

**Sebastian Barry:** I think we might. It is part of the grace of the Irish people that if a wrong or an absence is pointed out, they usually will listen with a certain pointed humanity. It has been wonderful to me the attitude of audiences around the country in their willingness to hear about Willie and his friends. To understand them, to identify with them, and silently and with enormous friendship to salute them.

## Reviews

### The ruination and revelation of one Irishman's Great War

By Patricia Craig

Published: August 4, 2005

Despite his title, Tipperary doesn't actually feature in Sebastian Barry's remarkable Great War novel. He doesn't quote them, but four lines by the Irish poet Tom Kettle are closer to the spirit of his work: "Know that we fools, now with the foolish dead/ Died not for king, nor crown, nor emperor,/ But for a dream, born in a herdsman's shed,/ And for the secret scripture of the poor."

*A Long Long Way* tells the story of Willie Dunne, a builder's apprentice and volunteer for Kitchener's Army, enrolled in the Dublin Fusiliers. He experiences confusion over the term "volunteer" and its usage in Ireland, what with Ulster Volunteers opposing Home Rule, their counterparts in the South upholding it, and his own volunteer status under the Crown. "Well, it was a veritable tornado of volunteers... If he never heard the word again it would be too soon."

It is 1916 when this wry thought strikes Willie, midway between the buoyancy and high morale of 1914 and the numbness of the war's last bedraggled months. It is also a moment of crisis in Ireland, with the Easter Week rebels overthrown and the executions about to begin. For Irishmen who believe they are fighting a just war against the Germans, events at home have disconcerting implications. All kinds of emotions - bitter resentment, admiration, chagrin and incomprehension - come into play.

Willie, on leave over Easter, is overtaken by a pang of sympathy for a dying rebel in a Dublin doorway. This feeling, which he expresses in a letter, nearly results in total alienation from his father, a Catholic policeman and old-fashioned loyalist for whom the insurgents are traitors.

But the worst destruction is taking place in Flanders, at the Somme, in Ypres, in rat-filled trenches and over landscapes of mud, barbed wire and body parts. One of Barry's most striking achievements is to indicate the Irish battalions' complex sense of commitment to contradictory purposes, while focusing on the hellish actuality of the war.

It's not by accident that Willie's peacetime occupation is that of builder, although Barry is far too adept an ironist to insist on the contrast between construction and ruination. He conjures up the enormity of the situation while avoiding cliché, and evolves a style appropriate to the undertaking, plaintive and robust. Unsurpassed in First World War fiction, *A Long Long Way* is a small masterpiece with an exhilarating resoluteness and authority.

### ***The Observer***

#### **Hear the Bleak Ballad of Willie Dunne**

**Published: April 3, 2005**

Like the rest of his generation, the hero of Sebastian Barry's fourth novel was born at the wrong time, in the 'dying days of the century', which made him just old enough to enlist at the outbreak of the First World War. He was also born in the wrong place, in a Dublin packed with political differences that would explode with devastating force in the Easter rising of 1916.

Right from the start, Willie Dunne is doomed; he already belongs with the nameless millions whose fate is briefly written 'in a ferocious chapter of the book of life'. And, indeed, anyone who read Barry's last novel, *Annie Dunne*, may recall that Annie's brother barely registered in her memories of childhood, dispatched to his muddy resting place in little more than a paragraph. Yet here, Barry sets himself the task of spinning this ephemeral life into fully fledged story, in which a scrawny, mewling baby, Willie, is greeted as 'a scrap of a song none the less, a point of light in the sleety darkness, a beginning'.

The author's determination to make something substantial of Willie Dunne is shared by the boy's father, an imposing 6ft 6in policeman who has great hopes that his son will follow him into the force. To Willie's bitter dismay, however, he never reaches regulation height and only when he goes to fight for 'King, Country and Empire' does he feel he's reached 'bloody manhood at last'. It is not long, of course, before Willie realises just how bloody his manhood will be. The intimate brutality of life in the trenches is evoked in visceral detail, from the stench of raw terror to the sensation of walking on a 'foul carpet of crushed dead'. In this landscape of death, all the normal associations of domestic and natural life are horribly mangled and imbued with a macabre grace: gas folds over the trench like a bedspread and a kingfisher shoots along the river bank like a 'glistening blue bullet'.

The poetic quality of Barry's writing, in which a description of the arrival of winter comes with three dazzling similes, may initially seem to add a layer of inappropriate luxury and beauty to the bleak subject matter, but it serves

a deeper purpose here, reflecting Willie's faltering understanding of the war.

As the political and moral ground slides beneath his feet and the Irish soldiers are simultaneously despised by nationalists as traitors and denounced by the English as mutineers, Willie clutches at familiar symbols in a desperate attempt to bridge the gap between the world he knows and the one he has stumbled into.

The great achievement of this novel is the restraint with which Barry allows the awful complexity of Willie's situation to dawn on him. Early in the story, when he learns something disturbing about his father's policing, we are told that the knowledge 'sat up in Willie's head like a rat and made a nest for itself there'. During the course of the novel, the scampering of confused thought and the constant gnaw of doubt gradually become impossible for Willie to ignore.

With the grim inevitability of a tragedy, Willie is successively stripped of all that propelled him into war, from the heroic ideals invoked by Kitchener to the hand-me-down beliefs inherited from his father and his romantic hopes for the future.

Willie, and the men like him, went to war not so much to fight against the Germans, but to fight for their country, only to find that the most deadly enemy came from their own side and that the Ireland they had grown up believing in had dissolved behind them 'like sugar in the rain'. What remains for each of them is a trembling body and a head full of screams.

The title of this novel comes from the popular First World War song - 'It's a long, long way to Tipperary/ But my heart's right there!' - which presents one view of the Irish soldier's relationship to his native land. Willie Dunne's story, his 'scrap of a song', offers another perspective, one in which the only place that feels like home is a bomb-scuffed trench and the only people who really comprehend the hollowness of the heart are those who have lived it too. With disarming lyricism, Barry's novel leads the reader into a hellish no-man's-land, where the true madness of war can only be felt and understood rather than said.

### ***The Guardian***

**Fintan O'Toole admires novels from a contrasting pair of Dublin writers, Dermot Bolger and Sebastian Barry**

**Published: May 7, 2005**

"History," says James Joyce's alter ego Stephen Dedalus in *Ulysses*, "is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake." But wake into what exactly? What do those Irish writers who have tried to follow Joyce see when they rub the sleep of history from their eyes, except another history, an alternative past that can be imagined as a replacement for the familiar nightmare? For to write at all is inevitably to remember. Lost in wonder at the potency of words, one of the characters in Sebastian Barry's beautiful new novel *A Long Long Way* contemplates "the power of them strung together on the penny string of a song, how they seemed to call up a hundred vanished scenes, gone faces, lost instances of human love."

The careers of Barry and of Dermot Bolger, both Dubliners born in the 1950s, have long consisted in the construction of alternative histories by using fiction to call to mind aspects of Irish reality that have been occluded in official

versions of the past. Bolger, typically, has focused on suburban working-class life, rescuing the ordinary and the obscure from oblivion. Barry's enterprise, in his plays and his three previous novels, has seemed more idiosyncratic. He has been weaving a private mythology from vestigial memories of his own 19th- and 20th-century ancestors, creating in the process a kind of anti-history of anomalous lives that elude the apparent simplicities of the orthodox narrative of the Irish past. Very different in style and attitude, they share a concern with those whom Bolger, in *The Family on Paradise Pier*, calls, in Stalin's term, "the former people."

One of the intriguing aspects of their new novels, though, is that, to an extent, they change places. While both focus on people whose Ireland disappeared with the nationalist revolution of 1916-23, a brief description of the stories they tell would surprise those familiar with their previous work. The clued-in reader would easily guess that the fictionalised history of a colourfully peculiar Protestant Big House family was Barry's work and that the violent tale of an ordinary Dublin soldier in the first world war was Bolger's. In fact, it's the other way around, and the energy of new departures gives both books a welcome freshness.

Bolger's *The Family on Paradise Pier* draws both on a real family and on recognisable historical characters, including the left-wing agitator Jim Gralton, the Behan family and even, briefly, Charles Haughey. The narrative is partly based on conversations taped by the author in 1992 with Sheila Fitzgerald, then almost 90. Though he changes her first name to Eva, and does likewise with those of her four siblings, he retains their sonorous family name — Goold Verschoyle — and follows their lives between 1915 and 1946, through the collapse of their world and their attempts, by means of art and politics, to create another. They interact with great events — the Irish and Russian revolutions, the British general strike, the Spanish civil war and the second world war — but have no real effect on any of them.

Eva does not, as she dreams, become a great painter. The Marxist revolutions that Brendan and Art dream of don't happen. Brendan disappears into the gulags. The family falls to pieces. Idealism is betrayed, but for Eva especially it is not abandoned. Though the breadth of the canvas does lead to an occasional loss of focus, Bolger nevertheless sustains a remarkably vivid account of the way those who don't count may nevertheless matter. His best novel since *The Journey Home* in 1990, it is a moving testament to the ability of the human personality to endure even when the world it inhabits has no great use for it.

If Bolger's material is self-consciously unusual, Barry's story is, on the surface, all too familiar. Novels have rained down on Flanders almost as abundantly as the shells that once cratered its fields. Yet *A Long, Long Way* is strikingly distinctive, both in the quality of its prose and in its angle of vision. For the Irish soldiers who fought in the British army, the first world war had an added dimension of futility. Like American soldiers who fought in Vietnam, the country they were supposed to be fighting for dissolved, as Barry puts it, "like sugar in the rain." Tens of thousands of Catholic nationalists joined up at the urging of leaders who believed that the war would bring all Irish factions together and thus create the conditions for an amicable transition to Home Rule. But the 1916 Rising caused the ground to shift towards a more militant nationalism. Those who survived the horrors of Flanders returned not as heroes, but as traitors. The home fires had burned out of control, consuming the memory of their sacrifice.

*A Long Long Way* recreates the experience of one short life that was wasted in this way, that of his ancestor Willie Dunne, who died aged 21 in October 1918, near the war's end. The name will be familiar to Barry's readers. The



Dunne family — Thomas, the Catholic chief superintendent of the Dublin Metropolitan Police under British rule, his son Willie and his three daughters — figure in Barry's celebrated play *The Steward of Christendom* and in his previous novel *Annie Dunne*. In the play, Willie appears as a silent ghost haunting the memory of his deranged father in 1932. Here, the ghost becomes flesh.

Barry's previous work on the Dunne family, and the references to characters from other Barry plays, are not important for enjoyment of the novel but they do help to account for its uncanny power. Though relatively short, it feels as if it is surrounded by a great hinterland. It seems to distil a great quantity of thoroughly imagined material, so that the reader, even without knowing much about the other members of the family, becomes aware that the author knows them very well indeed.

This depth of intimacy creates the sense that every sentence has unspoken things weighing upon it. The pressure results in a language that is both hypnotically lyrical and vividly immediate: "The gas boiled in like a familiar ogre. With the same stately gracelessness it rolled to the edge of the parapet and then like the heads of a many-headed creature it toppled gently forward and sank down to join the waiting men." There is, indeed, a new edge to Barry's writing here. Whereas his previous work has tended towards a dream-like beauty, *A Long Long Way* is soaked in blood, semen, excrement and filth. Yet it still manages to retain an elegiac, trance-like elegance. Rage at the senselessness of Willie's death is balanced by Barry's determination to call up the dead with appropriate dignity.

Through this richly textured language, Barry creates for Willie Dunne a no-man's land unlike any other. It stretches, not just between the British and German lines, but between the man he becomes at war and everything he knows and loves. He loses his country, the girl he loves, and even his father, who is horrified by Willie's ambivalent sympathy for the executed Dublin rebels. With no world in which to live, he becomes a kind of ghost even before he is dead. It is Barry's heartbreaking achievement not to exorcise that ghost, but to allow it to haunt us with the unspeakable sorrow of an irreparable loss.

### ***The Listener***

#### **New Zealand**

World War I is famous for its war poetry – Owen, Sassoon, Rosenberg – but in Sebastian Barry's *A Long Long Way*, Elizabeth Smither (reviewer) found a World War I novel that is fit to stand in that company. Five foot six and 17, Willie Dunne enlists in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers; he is so proud of his uniform that he thinks "his toenails might burst out of his boots." But, of course, there are mixed loyalties for Irish boys fighting for the British Empire, and Willie's police superintendent father cannot forgive his son's compassion for the "traitors" of the 1916 Easter Uprising. Barry's lyrical prose is supple enough to take the perspective of a bird, a bed, a field.

## Some suggested points for discussion

- ☞ 'Barry writes prose so exquisite and purely poetic that it can seem almost decadent. The incongruous distance between ITS beauty and the ugliness of war lends an unsettling edge to this poignant and brilliantly rendered elegy' (*The Age*). Discuss.
- ☞ How does Barry capture the experience of war? Besides this theme, what others are presented and how do they affect you?
- ☞ How does Willie's relationship with his family change throughout the events of the novel?
- ☞ *A Long Long Way* is full of the physical horror of the war: the slaughter and the squalor. Is that an aspect that you feel has faded from public consciousness, or indeed one which was hidden from Irish people?
- ☞ It's not by accident that Willie's peacetime occupation is that of builder, although Barry is far too adept an ironist to insist on the contrast between construction and ruination. He conjures up the enormity of the situation while avoiding cliché, and evolves a style appropriate to the undertaking, plaintive and robust. Unsurpassed in First World War fiction, *A Long Long Way* is a small masterpiece with an exhilarating resoluteness and authority. Will this novel have a lasting effect on the reader and their views on World War One?
- ☞ What difference does it make that his hero is so young? Do you feel more sympathy for him? How does it affect the story? How would your feelings for Willie differ if it had been written in the first person? Is he a reliable narrator? Do you trust him?
- ☞ The poetic quality of Barry's writing, in which a description of the arrival of winter comes with three dazzling similes, may initially seem to add a layer of inappropriate luxury and beauty to the bleak subject matter, but it serves a deeper purpose here. How does this help reflect Willie's faltering understanding of the war?
- ☞ As the political and moral ground slides beneath his feet and the Irish soldiers are simultaneously despised by nationalists as traitors and denounced by the English as mutineers, Willie clings to symbolic moments of his past in a desperate attempt to bridge the gap between the world he knows and the one he has stumbled into. What are these?
- ☞ Willie, and the men like him, went to war not so much to fight against the Germans, but to fight for their country, only to find that the most deadly enemy came from their own side and that the Ireland they had grown up believing in had dissolved behind them 'like sugar in the rain'. What remains for each of them is a trembling body and a head full of screams. How can they grow without losing their family heritage and all that remains of Irish history?
- ☞ Willie's politics are unformed, but he cannot smother the questions that begin to crowd in on his consciousness. His father's bitter condemnation of the "traitors" of the uprising has to be somehow balanced with his friend Jesse's self-sacrifice to the army firing squad: "An Irishman can't fight this war now." How does Willie find this balance?

- ☞ Through this richly textured language, Barry creates for Willie Dunne a no-man's land unlike any other. It stretches, not just between the British and German lines, but between the man he becomes at war and everything he knows and loves. He loses his country, the girl he loves, and even his father, who is horrified by Willie's ambivalent sympathy for the executed Dublin rebels. With no world in which to live, he becomes a kind of ghost even before he is dead. It is Barry's heartbreaking achievement not to exorcise that ghost, but to allow it to haunt us with the unspeakable sorrow of an irreparable loss. How does Barry portray this?
- ☞ 'Barry's shamefully neglected *A Long Long Way* was shortlisted but passed over for the Man Booker Prize in 2005. Its portrait of one soldier's brief life and the horrors of war moved me more than any book has in a very long time' (James Bradley, *The Sydney Morning Herald*). Sebastian Barry's epic novel has received praise around the world, however missed out on the Booker Prize. What should make a prize winner and how does one novel win by leaps and bounds over others?

## Suggested further reading

*The Sea* by John Banville

*This is the Country* by Willie Wall

*Arthur & George* by Julian Barnes

*The Accidental* by Ali Smith

*The People's Act of Love* by James Meek

*Slow Man* by J.M. Coetzee

*Never Let Me Go* Kazuo Ishiguro

## Other Books by Sebastian Barry

### Novels

*Annie Dunne*

*Hinterland*

*The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*

*Whistling Psyche / Fred and Jane*

### Plays

*Boss Grady's Boys*

*Fred and Jane*

*Hinterland*

*Our Lady of Sligo*

*Prayers of Sherkin*

*She Was Wearing...*

*The Only True History of Lizzie Finn*

*The Pentagonal Dream*

*The Steward of Christendom*

*White Woman Street*