



Tipperary: A Novel of Ireland

Frank Delaney

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“My wooing began in passion, was defined by violence and circumscribed by land; all these elements molded my soul.” So writes Charles O’Brien, the unforgettable hero of bestselling author Frank Delaney’s extraordinary new novel—a sweeping epic of obsession, profound devotion, and compelling history involving a turbulent era that would shape modern Ireland.

Born into a respected Irish-Anglo family in 1860, Charles loves his native land and its long-suffering but irrepressible people. As a healer, he travels the countryside dispensing traditional cures while soaking up stories and legends of bygone times—and witnessing the painful, often violent birth of land-reform measures destined to lead to Irish independence.

At the age of forty, summoned to Paris to treat his dying countryman—the infamous Oscar Wilde—Charles experiences the fateful moment of his life. In a chance encounter with a beautiful and determined young Englishwoman, eighteen-year-old April Burke, he is instantly and passionately smitten—but callously rejected. Vowing to improve himself, Charles returns to Ireland, where he undertakes the preservation of the great and abandoned estate of Tipperary, in whose shadow he has lived his whole life—and which, he discovers, may belong to April and her father.

As Charles pursues his obsession, he writes the “History” of his own life and country. While doing so, he meets the great figures of the day, including Charles Parnell, William Butler Yeats, and George Bernard Shaw. And he also falls victim to less well-known characters—who prove far more dangerous. *Tipperary* also features a second “historian,” a present-day commentator, a retired and obscure history teacher who suddenly discovers that he has much at stake in the telling of Charles’s story.

In this gloriously absorbing and utterly satisfying novel, a man’s passion for the woman he loves is twinned with his country’s emergence as a nation. With storytelling as sweeping and dramatic as the land itself, myth, fact, and fiction are all woven together with the power of the great nineteenth-century novelists. *Tipperary* once again proves Frank Delaney’s unrivaled mastery at bringing Irish history to life.

Praise for Frank Delaney’s TIPPERARY:

“[T]he narrative moves swiftly and surely...A sort of Irish *Gone With the Wind*, marked by sly humor, historical awareness and plenty of staying power.” — *Kirkus Reviews*

“[A]nother meticulously researched journey...Delaney’s careful scholarship and compelling storytelling bring it uniquely alive. Highly recommended.” — *Library Journal* (starred)

“Sophisticated and creative.” — *Booklist*

“Delaney’s confident storytelling and quirky characterizations enrich a fascinating and complex period of Irish history.” — *Publishers Weekly*

“Read just a few sentences of Frank Delaney’s writing and you’ll see why National Public Radio called him ‘the world’s most eloquent man.’” — *Kirkus Reviews*, “Big Book Guide 2007”

From the Hardcover edition.

Tipperary: A Novel of Ireland Details

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From Reader Review **Tipperary: A Novel of Ireland** for online ebook

Nancy says

3.5 stars

Charles O'Brien is an Anglo-Irishman born in 1860. When he falls madly in love with April Burke, he decides to write the history of his love affair. Along the way he meets Oscar Wilde, Charles Parnell, William Butler Yates, and many other important figures associated with this turbulent time in Ireland's history.

Lynn Flowers says

I loved the imagery and history in this book, as well as the revelation at the end. However, the first half is too slow and the interweaving of timelines was not as smooth and captivating as it could have been. I learned a lot about Irish history and enjoyed the characters so overall glad I read it!

Lynn Bornath says

The beginning of the book was a bit boring and the present-day narrator felt intrusive. I didn't care much for Charles either. He came across as a bit pathetic, chasing after a mostly unlikeable woman who wasn't the least bit interested in him. However, about a quarter of the way into the book, things began to improve. The history became more interesting, more was revealed about the present-day narrator, and Charles developed a backbone (and a personality). By the time I reached the end, I'd learned quite a bit about Ireland's history, I liked almost all of the characters, and I'd decided that I liked the book, too. It was worth wading through the boring bits at the beginning.

Kathleen DuVall says

Having previously read "Ireland" by the same author and knowing that I love anything that is Irish historical fiction, it was a good bet that I would like this one too. It was interesting in that it centers around a manuscript written long ago that is found and "reprinted". Interspersed into the tale told are the comments from a man who I considered the editor of the manuscript who provided historical reference to enhance the story. The backdrop to the story was Ireland in the early 1900's so there was much reference to the Easter Uprising, the formation of the Black and Tans, Charles Stewart Parnell and other significant events during that time.

I bought this book from B&N just because of the author and setting and now I'm glad that I did as I will read it again.

Terry says

I usually devour books but for some reason this took me almost a month to read. I just didn't feel as engaged in the book so I let days pass without reading it. I loved Delaney's previous book, *Ireland*. My favorite part of *Ireland* was Delaney's love of storytelling, Irish culture, and Irish history shone through his beautifully-written book.

Tipperary shows his love of Irish culture/history as well, but the storytelling piece suffered a bit. He also recycled almost all of the elements in *Ireland*: noble but lonely man with love of all things Irish and in a traditionally Irish occupation that has him travel to every part of Ireland; the almost obsessive devotion to an elusive love object; questions of ancestry; switching narrators throughout the story; even the direct participation of the main character in the Easter Uprising and multiple encounters with famous Irish notables. It felt like he took so many of the same elements that were successful in *Ireland* and rearranged them with moderate success in *Tipperary*.

I found myself finally engaged 2/3 of the way through the book, and overall it was pretty satisfying. But it was not Delaney's best work.

Corinne Edwards says

When Charles O'Brien sits down to write a history of his life, he starts at his first memory and then moves forward. Throughout his life, Charles' true home was in County Tipperary, in Ireland. It's where he finds a passion for the land and its people, it's where he comes home to after traveling around the country as a healer. It's also the place where an Anglo-Irish castle lies dilapidated and abandoned. For Charles, all of this is also wrapped up in his devotion to one woman and throughout his *History* he tells a sweeping story of Ireland in the midst of chaotic upheaval and change as well as his own personal experiences as he longs for a woman out of reach.

"Epic" seems like too grand a term for this book - it's more intimate than that and doesn't cover multiple generations enough to seem to warrant the word. Like *Forrest Gump*, Charles O'Brien keeps being in the right place at the right time to witness some very important events and people in Irish history. Sometimes it's a little TOO coincidental, but I feel like I do have a much better sense of the timeline of the Irish struggle. The time period, from before the turn of the century to post WWI, was a huge time of change and the book does a good job of making you both sympathetic for the Irish but also frustrated with the way they sometimes are their own worst enemy with the choices they make. I enjoyed the narrative style that changed from Charles' own written record to that of another narrator who takes Charles' text and gives it context and helps us understand his unreliability about certain experiences. Our narrator shares information from other sources, both primary and secondary, that flesh things out and also paint a wider picture of the time. I particularly liked the storyline involving the castle as well as the little mysteries involving Charles and the narrator.

While it didn't change my life, I was entertained, I learned a lot of Irish History and I do feel like I know Tipperary now - and since I have a lot of family that emigrated to the United States from that actual county, that matters to me.

Alison says

I listened to this book on CD and really enjoyed the reading by the author. Who doesn't like listening to a Irish voice. The prose were poetic. He has a gift for telling stories. The Irish history was interesting as it was interwoven with the characters in the story. It was nice to be reminded of the depth of a book and the beauty of words placed together after reading so much by way of an easy read in the YA fiction category.

Katharina says

I had the pleasure of listening to the audiobook, as read by the author. This reads as a beautiful blend of storytelling and history; I had to double check to see if I was, in fact reading nonfiction or a novel. I loved the dimensions of the characters, complete with flaws and foibles. Wonderful read—I highly recommend the audiobook.

Teri Pre says

Made it through 75% and calling it done. Forrest Gump? Meet Ireland. Pffft!

Mary says

This is a tough one to rate, and I don't often put in reviews. I had been in Ireland in 2017 and going back in 2018, so even this was fiction, I did learn some things about the country. I had a horrible time staying it for probably 70% of th book, the last 30% was good. But it kept flipping who was 'talking' so I lost some of the content.

Joanie Zosike says

Delaney manages to keep a dangerously delicate conceit together while unravelling this fictionalized history about Tipperary. The history seems accurate, although the story that reveals it, is his invention, a tapestry of complex characters. It is highly dramatic and moves fast, and he kept his many characters engaged with one another in unexpected ways. I enjoyed this read very much.

Lorna says

This was a book of the history of Ireland as it struggled to become a nation from the mid-eighteenth century through World War I that was told in this captivating novel beginning with a trunk being discovered by a history professor intrigued by its contents including the written history of a Charles O'Brien. But as O'Brien cautions the reader, *"Be careful about me. Be careful about my country and my people and how we tell our history."* And so begins the story that I found hard to put down. It was the perfect book to be reading on St.

Patrick's Day.

Sara Brady says

Although slow going in many aspects, I found the insight on famous figures and events of the last century of Irish history very engaging. The style of diary entries and commentary by a narrator/first-person voice makes this novel interesting and unique. With a plot twist and surprise at the end, it left me ready to read everything else Frank Delaney has written! This is an excellent choice for anyone looking for an easy and enjoyable Irish historical fiction novel.

Candy says

It was okay. I found that I muddled through it, and it really did take me a long time to finish it. I was determined, in the end, to just sit and finally finish it.

It's an interesting account of early Ireland history, from the point of view of a young man (when he started his journal), through the tumultuous years of Ireland's history. As many reviews have pointed out, it does seem to take from Forrest Gump, with notable Irish heroes, writers and poets just conveniently showing up during the course of the young man's life.

I found that I would be a couple of sentences into a paragraph before I knew whose point of view it was. It did drag quite a bit for me, hence the 2 star rating.

ladywallingford says

At the beginning, I couldn't put it down, but by the middle of the book, it slowed down for me, especially when we started getting into Ireland's fight for independence from Great Britain. The story interweaves Charles O'Brien's history of his life and times with that of the person who is reading the history. This person has a surprising connection to Charles O'Brien. Charles O'Brien's history not only discusses the fight for home rule and the return of land to the Irish but also his love for April Burke, the inheritor of Tipperary, a noble house that had been abandoned for decades, one that Charles helps April restore to its former glory.

I would recommend this to people who like historical fiction set in late 19th and early 20th century Ireland who like intricate plots and exploring relationships between friends and romantic partners.

Jim says

An author's second novel seldom lives up to the first. Mr. Delaney, though, has served up another gem. In the author's note to his first novel, Ireland, Mr. Delaney points out "Beneath all the histories of Ireland...there has always been another, less obvious, reporter speaking – the oral tradition, Ireland's vernacular narrative, telling the country's tale to her people in stories handed down since God was a boy".

Wikipedia lists ten castles in County Tipperary, but Tipperary Castle is either a figment of a fine

imagination, an amalgam of other castles, or a combination of the two. Charles O'Brien is born on land adjacent to Tipperary Castle. The story, or history, is O'Brien's. A personal history of a Castle, and the woman, that captivate him.

Charles' story begins "Be careful about me. Be careful about my country and my people and how we tell our story. We Irish prefer embroideries to plain cloth...We love the 'story' part of the word 'history,' and we love it trimmed out with color and drama, ribbons and bows. Listen to our tunes, observe a Celtic scroll: we always decorate our essence." A description of what love of the land means, roughly a quarter of the way into the book, is memorable - and a description of Irish cuisine a third of the way in is laugh out loud funny "All seemed gray or black - excellent colors in themselves, but not in meat or potatoes. I thought I was looking at beef until Lady G said 'Why must we always have mutton?' To which her daughter replied, 'Mamma, this is pork'.

Mr. Delaney puts the O'Brien family in the upper middle class, and after his education Charles becomes an itinerant healer; there were not enough doctors to cover rural Ireland. Charles travels the country, mingling at all levels of society, from poor tenant farmers to the Anglo-Irish in the country for hundreds of years, to recent more English immigrants.

In Charles' travels he is called to Paris to care for Oscar Wilde, who is on his death bed. Wilde is cared for by many others, including April Burke. With only a few days to live, Wilde tells a tale of another April Burke, an actress in a troupe and former shady lady, that owned Tipperary Castle. During the time in Paris, Charles, stricken by April, tries desperately to get her attention and does, but not in the way he hopes - she threatens to have the police throw him in jail as a stalker if he doesn't quit following her around.

O'Brien resolves that the way to get noticed is to make the ancestral connection to the Actress April Burke. So begins a quixotic quest. Along the way are strewn other well known Irish names - William Butler Yeats, George Bernard Shaw and Michael Connor to name a few. Throw in a castle restoration of monumental proportion, accomplished during the Irish Civil War (that breaks an imperial yoke), with a genealogical mystery mixed in and you end up with is a finely embroidered and thoroughly enjoyable tale.

Serf says

This was more of a 3.5 star for me. I really enjoyed the historical aspect of this novel, reading about England's rule in Ireland at the time and the fight to give back rule to the Irish. I also enjoyed the story of the restoration of Tipperary castle and his descriptions of it were superb. It was largely unbelievable that a person who wasn't well connected or wealthy could meet with every person of interest in Ireland at the time which is why a lot of people may be put off this story. Although it would be quite cool to have met all those amazing characters, I think the author was just showing off his knowledge about them.

Brendan Lyons says

Frank Delaney is a shanachie, following on in the tradition of the old storytellers of Ireland. This would seem to be the art he employs, but behind the apparent simplicity and anecdotal nature of the tales he tells lies a very sharply-honed novelist's mind. There is a design behind the loosely linked series of stories through which the principal narrator, Charles O'Brien, sets out his own life story from the 1860s through to the early 20th century. Charles acts as a witness to the way in which the land was restored to the dispossessed and embittered native population and comes in contact, often quite innocently, with major figures of the period

such as Parnell, Oscar Wilde, Shaw, Yeats and even Michael Collins. Other voices interject from time to time to indicate that Charles for all his confidence in his own eloquence and grasp of the situation often doesn't quite understand how others see him nor what is really taking place in the country. This is wonderfully well done and constitutes a fresh and rather variegated look at a period which most of us who grew up in Ireland only know from textbooks. One of the most devastating and politically incorrect themes which continually comes through (flying in the face of the pieties of the modern Republic) is that there is such an enormous disparity between native Catholics and settler Protestants, both of whom passionately love the land, that there is practically no hope whatsoever of the two tribes ever being able to comprehend one another.

Amy says

I generally enjoy historical fiction, especially when written about a time and/or place that I know little about. Novels such as "I, Claudius" or "Arthur and George" do a wonderful job of illuminating Ancient Rome or nineteenth century London, respectively. With this novel, however, I didn't feel enlightened so much as lectured to, and ultimately confused. I was never able to get a good sense of the characters, and what they felt and saw. Instead, it just seemed to me that the author simply listed facts, dates, names and places. I agree with another reviewer that reference sources were necessary in order to follow the story, but I guess I was never drawn enough into the story to want to consult those sources (and I also feel that a work of fiction should stand on its own, and not require you to do so!)[return]I also don't feel there was much difference in voice between the two narrators, so I was constantly trying to figure out who was speaking. This could be a large part of the reason that I was never able lose myself in the story. I feel it is a mistake to have two narrators, each speaking in the first person.[return]In the end, I don't think I would have finished this book, if I hadn't received a copy through the early reviewers program.

Kelsey says

Tipperary reads like a textbook with a human interest story thrown in for good measure. This makes sense when you find out that the author is a retired BBC broadcaster. If you are interested in the Irish revolution, this novel is a terrific way to find out more. But I don't recommend this book for anyone looking for an "escape" or "for fun" read.

On a personal level, the characters frustrated me (especially Charles and his inaction/immaturity). The storyline tends to drag, too, probably because it is interspersed with a lot of factual information from the seemingly-omniscient narrator--whose identity and personality is revealed about two-thirds of the way through the book. That far in, such a revelation comes as a bit of a shock, really. 'Twas a tad unsettling.

Don't get me wrong; I learned quite a lot, and I AM interested in the historical subject matter. If I didn't happen to be so interested, however, I don't know that I would have finished the book.

Bottom line: As a history lesson, *Tipperary* is much better than your average textbook. As a novel, though, it doesn't quite jive.
