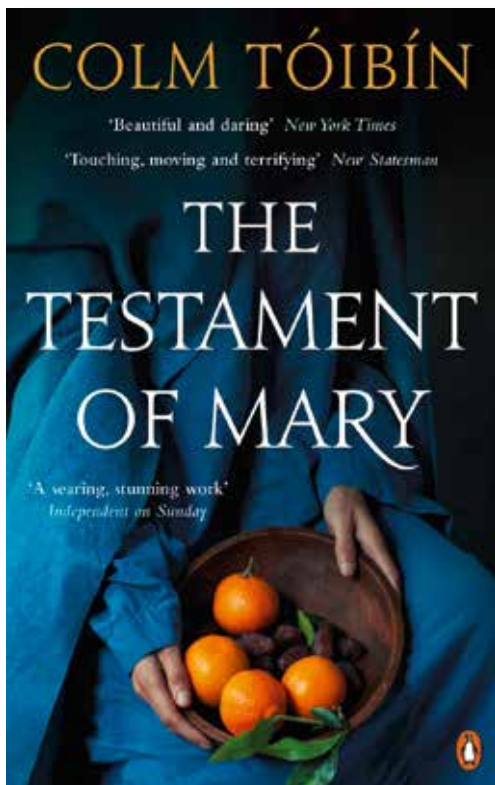


The Man
Booker
Prize

2013

Reader's Guide



Other novels by Colm Tóibín

Brooklyn (2009)

The Master (2004)

The Blackwater Lightship (1996)

The Story of the Night (1996)

The Heather Blazing (1992)

The South (1990)

The Testament of Mary

Colm Tóibín

Viking

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About the author

Colm Tóibín was born in Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford in 1955 and educated at University College Dublin.

He is the author of seven novels: *The South* (1990), winner of *The Irish Times* Literature Prize in 1991; *The Heather Blazing*, winner of the Encore Award for the best second novel in 1992; *The Story of the Night* (1997); *The Blackwater Lightship* (1999), shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize; and *The Master* (2004), shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize and winner of the *Los Angeles Times* Novel of the Year and the Prix du Meilleur Livre Etranger in France; and *The Testament of Mary* (2012), longlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2013.

The Testament of Mary

In a voice that is both tender and filled with rage, *The Testament of Mary* tells the story of a cataclysmic event which led to an overpowering grief. For Mary, her son has been lost to the world, and now, living in exile and in fear, she tries to piece together the memories of the events that led to her son's brutal death. To her he was a vulnerable figure, surrounded by men who could not be trusted, living in a time of turmoil and change.

As her life and her suffering begin to acquire the resonance of myth, Mary struggles to break the silence surrounding what she knows to have happened. In her effort to tell the truth in all its gnarled complexity, she slowly emerges as a figure of immense moral stature as well as a woman from history rendered now as fully human.

Discussion points

Do you agree that throughout the novel Mary 'is more angry than accepting'?

In a recent interview Colm Toibin said he was very careful that the book didn't become just a debunking of the biblical stories about miracles. Was he successful?

Do you agree with the reviewer (Naomi Alderman, *The Observer*) who wrote "Since there are people who love to find reasons to take offence, *The Testament of Mary* might prove offensive for some".

Mary refers to Jesus as 'the one who was here', 'my son' or, 'the one you are interested in'. Why doesn't she use his name?

What was your reaction when Mary fled the crucifixion before her son was actually dead?

Themed reading

Michele Roberts *The Secret Gospel of Mary Magdalene*

Useful links

Author's website

<http://www.colmtoibin.com>

Guardian interview

<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/feb/19/colm-toibin-novelist-portrait-artist>

Telegraph interview

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/booknews/9615673/Colm-Toibin-you-have-to-be-a-terrible-monster-to-write.html>