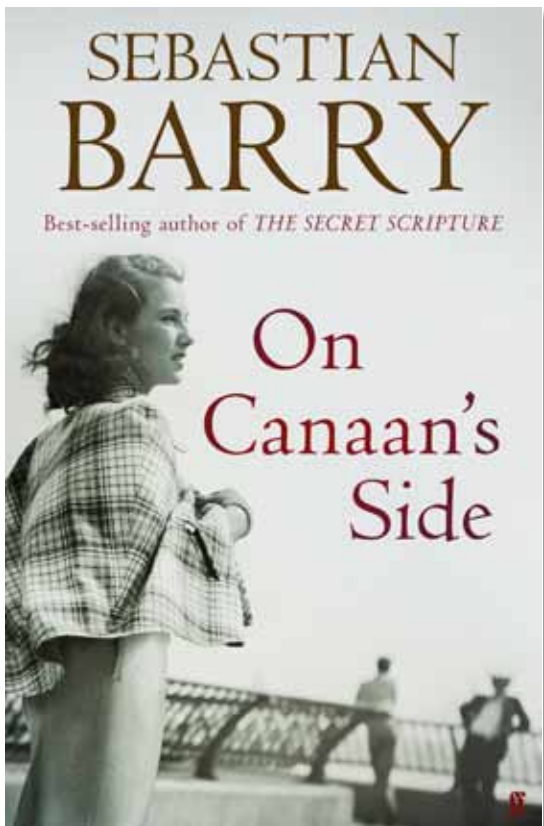




The Man  
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2011

## Reader's Guide



### Other novels by Sebastian Barry

*Macker's Garden* (1982)  
*The Engine of Owl-Light* (1987)  
*The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty* (1998)  
*Annie Dunne* (2002)  
*A Long Long Way* (2005)  
*The Secret Scripture* (2008)

# On Canaan's Side Sebastian Barry

Faber and Faber  
Hardback £16.99  
Ebook £12.99

[www.themanbookerprize.com](http://www.themanbookerprize.com)

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Man



## About the author

Sebastian Barry was born in Dublin in 1955. His plays include *The Steward of Christendom* (1995) and *The Pride of Parnell Street* (2007). His novels include *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty* (1998), *Annie Dunne* (2002) and *A Long Long Way* (2005), which was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize and the Dublin International Impac Prize. It was followed by *The Secret Scripture* (2008), which was also shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize before being named the 2008 Costa Book of Year. A top 5 Bestseller, it also won the Irish Book Awards Best Novel, the Independent Booksellers Prize and the James Tait Black Memorial Prize. Sebastian Barry lives in Wicklow with his wife and three children.

## On *Canaan's Side*

'As they used to say in Ireland, the devil only comes into good things.'

Narrated by Lilly Bere, *On Canaan's Side* opens as she mourns the loss of her grandson, Bill. The story then goes back to the moment she was forced to flee Dublin, at the end of the First World War, and follows her life through into the new world of America, a world filled with both hope and danger.

At once epic and intimate, Lilly's narrative unfurls as she tries to make sense of the sorrows and troubles of her life and of the people whose lives she has touched. Spanning nearly seven decades, it is a novel of memory, war, family ties and love, which once again displays Sebastian Barry's exquisite prose and gift for storytelling.

**'A marvel of empathy and tact.'** Joseph O'Neill

**'Writing like this should be relished as deeply as it is felt.'**  
Frank McGuinness

## Discussion points

*On Canaan's Side* is set in Ireland and America, do you find one setting more moving than another?

Do you agree with the *Irish Independent's* review "her (Lilly's) first-person narration promises an openendedness that's largely fulfilled - Lilly's innate optimism, curiosity and friendliness are so companionable as to have the reader constantly hoping that what she next relates will somehow turn out to be less catastrophic than what's gone before".

Although Lilly's life has been traumatic; bereavements, marital hardship, exile from Ireland, she remains stoical and thankful for her life. Do you empathise with Lilly?

In a recent interview when asked 'What do you hope people take away with them after reading your work?', Sebastian Barry replied "That every life, no matter how obscure or seemingly unimportant, weighs heavily in the weighing-scales of God, or whoever or whatever has us here." Has he achieved this in *On Canaan's Side*?

## Themed reading

Sebastian Barry *Annie Dunne*  
Colm Toibin *Brooklyn*  
JG Farrell *Troubles*

## Useful links

**Publisher's website**

<http://www.faber.co.uk>

**Q&A interview with Sebastian Barry (Faber)**

<http://www.thethoughtfox.co.uk/?p=4951>

Round up of reviews

[http://theomnivore.co.uk/book/7361-On\\_Canaan\\_s\\_Side/Default.aspx](http://theomnivore.co.uk/book/7361-On_Canaan_s_Side/Default.aspx)

Critical perspective

<http://www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/?p=auth02B11P375512626533>