



From left to right: Basalt Rocks in Giant's Causeway; Belfast City Hall in Donegall Square; Statue of W. B. Yeats in Sligo; Bridge over River Liffey in Dublin

IRELAND'S LITERARY LEGENDS

Linger anywhere in Ireland—whether at a pub, café, or street corner—and it seems everyone has a story to tell. Perhaps the Irish have been inspired by their country's rocky shores and tumbling green fields. Or maybe their history gives the Irish a sense of the anecdote: they live among ancient ruins, massive castles, and legends of long-ago heroes.

Irish tales are known for often mocking the foibles of the mighty, and perhaps that's why Dublin-born **OSCAR WILDE** seems so quintessentially Irish. While the playwright, novelist, and bon vivant cared for life's deeper issues, he maintained an Irish sense of humor. As he once wrote, "Life is far too important a thing ever to talk seriously about." Visitors can find out more about Wilde at Dublin's 1 Merrion Square, his childhood home.

Wilde attended Trinity College in Dublin, whose library is home to over five million books. At its Old Library, find the lavishly decorated Book of Kells, illuminated some 1,200 years ago. Close by is the Dublin Writers Museum, which gives an informative overview

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Trinity College's Old Library in Dublin

of the city's rich literary history, from the ancient bards to James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, and beyond.

The Nobel Prize-winning poet and dramatist **WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS** spent his childhood northwest of Dublin, in County Sligo, a place haunted by the old Irish tales. In the town center, visitors will find the Yeats Memorial Building, home to an exhibition on the life of the poet. Be sure to visit Lissadell House, which inspired Yeats. At

Drumcliffe Church, look for Yeats's final resting place, sited below the towering mountain, Ben Bulbin.

Born the year Yeats died, Nobel Laureate **SEAMUS HEANEY** is Ireland's greatest living poet. Born in Derry, Heaney spent

his adult life in Belfast, a forward-looking city where many great ships were built, including the *Titanic*. Belfast still bustles with activity in the lively shopping areas, such as Donegall Place and Victoria Square. Wander the Linden Hall Library, the Victorian wonderland, Crown Liquor Saloon, and the Seamus Heaney Centre for Poetry, where the new Irish poets are born.

Heaney and other poets have been inspired by the Giant's Causeway, located on the North Antrim Coast. Folklore has it that a giant built this strange collection of 37,000 flattop rock formations. Visit the area called the Wishing Chair, where sitting, Heaney once wrote, will sharpen "your outlook / Beyond the range of possibility."

Among such wonders, new generations of storytellers will take over from the old. The Irish celebration of story also overflows into numerous literary festivals, such as Galway's Cúirt International Festival of Literature, Listowel Writers' Week in North Kerry, or Yeats International Summer School in Sligo. Become a part of the story yourself—visit Ireland today.

