



1916

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1916 portrays a number of historical figures who were involved with the Irish Rebellion such as Padraic Pearse, Thomas McDonough, Thomas Clarke, and Joseph Plunkett. The main character of the novel, however, is an invented one; Ned Halloran survived the sinking of the Titanic, was a student at Pearse's St. Enda's school, and acted as a messenger before and during the Rebellion. He is well drawn, although he may be a little too perfect. The inclusion of Halloran's sister, Kathleen, is more troublesome; she lives in New York and falls in love with her parish priest. Author Morgan Llywelyn spends too much time on this tiresome subplot. The portrayal of the historical characters is much better. Llywelyn creates Padraic Pearse as an idealistic dreamer who is forced to become the forceful leader of a rebellious cause. Her portrait of Thomas Clarke is more realistic; Clarke was an older and ordinary man but his devotion to the cause was as great as the others. Joseph Plunkett is described in a moving portrait as an ill but dedicated man who marries just before his execution.

The plot of *1916* is very effective, if you take Kathleen Halloran's story out of it. Llywelyn includes headlines at the end of many chapters to show the political events that lead inevitably to the Rebellion. She also captures and clarifies the confusion and heroism of the Rebellion. The death of the leaders, especially Padraic Pearse, could not be done better. She also suggests but does not fully portray the reaction of the people to the Rebellion as it turns from scorn to admiration to deification. The book also contains a useful map of Dublin and a bibliography.

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