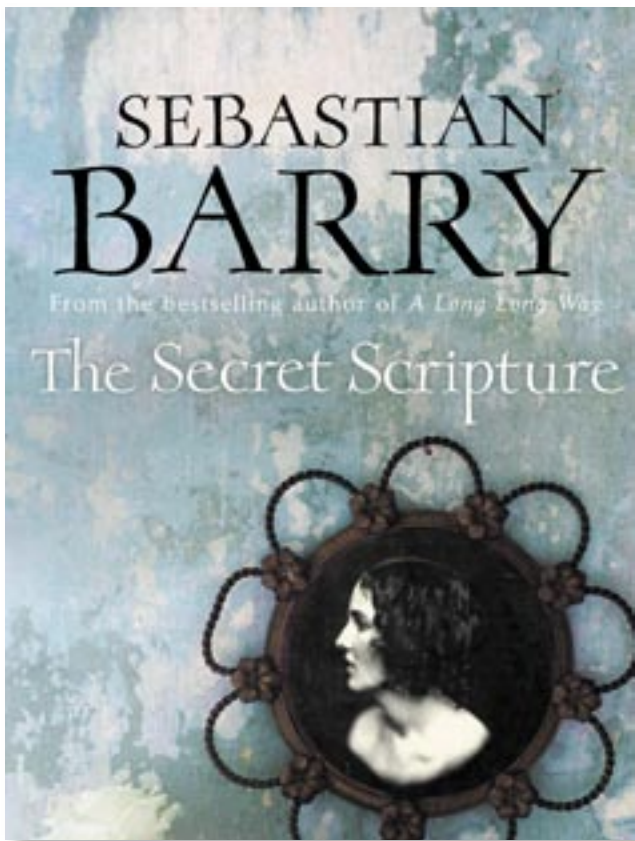




## Reader's Guide



Other books by Sebastian Barry

**The Whereabouts  
of Eneas McNulty (1998)**  
**Annie Dunne (2002)**  
**A Long Long Way (2005)**

# The Secret Scripture by Sebastian Barry

Published by Faber and Faber  
Hardback RRP £16.99

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

## About the author

Sebastian Barry was born in Dublin in 1955. He has won, among other awards, the Irish-America Fund Literary Award, the Christopher Ewart-Biggs Prize, the London Critics Circle Award and the Kerry Group Irish Fiction Prize. *A Long Long Way*, which was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize 2005 and the Dublin International Impac Prize, was the *Dublin: One City One Book* choice for 2007. *The Secret Scripture* was published in 2008. He lives in Wicklow with his wife and three children.

## The Secret Scripture

Told through the journals of Roseanne McNulty and her psychiatrist Dr Grene, the story that emerges - of Roseanne's family in 1930s Sligo - is at once shocking and deeply beautiful. Refracted through the haze of memory and retelling, Roseanne's story becomes an alternative, secret, history of Ireland. Exquisitely written, it is the story of a life blighted by terrible mistreatment and ignorance, and yet marked still by love and passion and hope.

## Discussion points

During her narration of events Roseanne points out "No one has the monopoly on truth, not even myself, and that is a vexing and worrying thought." Do you feel that Roseanne is a reliable narrator? Has Sebastian Barry created one of the most memorable narrators in recent fiction?

To what extent do you think Roseanne and Dr Grene's stories intertwine and to what extent are they contradictory?

Sebastian Barry has said that his novels often begin as plays and poems and Barry's prose is frequently described as poetic and full of 'beautiful imagery'. What effect does the style of prose and language have on the reader?

The two narrators in the story, Roseanne and Dr Grene, have different narrative styles, what impact does this have on the reader? Did you enjoy reading one account more than another?

The dramatic revelation at the end of *The Secret Scripture* has divided opinion; some reviewers describe it as effective and powerful while others have said it verges on melodrama. What are your feelings about the end of the novel?

## Themed reading

*Bad Blood* Colm Toibin  
*Amongst Women* John McGahern  
*The Regeneration Trilogy* Pat Barker

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