



DOLLY WEST'S KITCHEN

by Frank McGuinness

directed by Kimberly Senior

STUDY GUIDE

prepared by

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Playwright Frank McGuinness

Frank McGuinness spent his childhood in the Irish Republic's Inishowen Peninsula, of County Donegal, where *Dolly West's Kitchen* is set. Born in 1953, McGuinness was a teenager during the turbulent violence of "The Troubles" in neighboring Northern Ireland.

As a playwright, his work is often concerned with the question of Irish identity, nationalism and history. It's no surprise that many of his plays premiered at Dublin's celebrated Gate and Abbey Theatres.

McGuinness's most popular works include the World War I drama *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme*. Over the last two decades, the playwright has also produced many new translations of classic plays by Henrik Ibsen, Bertolt Brecht, Anton Chekhov and Federico Garcia Lorca.

McGuinness began his life in writing in the 1970s as a poet and a university lecturer. But after seeing a production of fellow Irish dramatist Brian Friel's play, *The Gentle Island*, McGuinness was electrified by the possibilities of theater. He wrote his first full-length play, *Factory Girls*, just a few years later. This work was followed by *Observe the Sons. . .*, *Cathaginians*, and *Someone Who'll Watch Over Me*, among many others.

Dolly West's Kitchen premiered at The Abbey in 1999. It's part of a select group of McGuinness's plays, including *Gates of Gold*, the story of the closeted love affair between the founders of the Gate Theatre, that explore homosexual love and identity. Openly gay himself, with a partner of over 25 years, the playwright often explores the tension homosexual attraction and gay relationships create in often hostile Irish communities.

"I was 15, 16, when my sexuality was developing and there was a war going on all around me. That's the time that really shaped me. There was also a sexual struggle going on inside me. So that was bound to influence the plays. Even so, most of the central characters in my plays are not homosexual. Yet sexuality itself is a core issue."

— *Frank McGuinness*

Irish Family Values

The Role of Women in Ireland

The traditional Irish mother remained at home to take care of the household. Female dominance of domestic life was common and the mother generally played a disproportionate role in raising the children. The 1937 Irish Constitution had this to say on the subject:

“In particular, the state recognizes that by her life within the home, woman gives to the state a support without which the common good cannot be achieved. The state shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home.”

These words reflect the then widespread perception of women as passive and domestic, if not downright subservient to men. While not all Irish women were strictly tied to the house, their outside activities were generally limited to charitable work, parochial volunteerism, and caring for the handicapped and elderly.

Furthermore, in spite of the Irish emphasis on education and literacy, more attention was paid to the schooling of sons than to that of daughters. It would have been quite rare for a young Irish woman to attend university or travel independently outside of the country.

Dolly West's Alma Mater, Trinity College, founded in 1592, is the oldest school of higher education in Ireland. In the late-1920s (around the time when Dolly and Alec were students) it was considered the finest college in Ireland, and only slightly less prestigious than Cambridge or Oxford in Great Britain. Women were admitted to Trinity as full members for the first time in 1904, thus making it the first ancient university (Cambridge, Oxford, et al) in Ireland or Britain to admit members of the opposite sex. In 1934, the first female professor was appointed. During its early life, Trinity was exclusively for the Protestant Ascendancy class. Following early steps in Catholic Emancipation, Roman Catholics were first admitted in 1793. However, it was not until 1970 that the Roman Catholic Church lifted its policy of disapproval or even excommunication for Roman Catholics who enrolled without special dispensation.

The Role of Children in Irish Families

Irish families have traditionally been large. This is due in part to the continued adherence of many Irish to the teachings of the Catholic church on contraception. How the Irish rear their children depends to a great extent on the socio-economic background of the family. Generally, however, children are treated firmly but kindly. They are taught to be polite, obey their parents and defer to authority. Children are also taught to retain a strong sense of public respectability. The mother often plays the dominant role in raising children and imparting values; the father is frequently a distant figure. In many families negative reinforcement, such as shaming, belittling, ridiculing and embarrassing children, is as common as positive reinforcement. Overt affection displayed by parents toward their children is not common.

Irish Social Values and Customs

Religion and Sexuality

As the dominant religion in the Republic of Ireland, Catholicism suffused almost every aspect of Irish daily life in the 1940s world of *Dolly West's Kitchen*. Catholicism's influence was keenly felt in the realm of love, marriage and romance. Most Irish people saw marriage not only as a societal necessity, but as the fulfillment of a Biblical commandment. Grown men and women who strayed from the traditional path leading toward spouse and children were viewed with a mixture of confusion, disapproval and pity.

Evidence of open homosexuality was met with vehement distaste by most Irish people. Gay men were considered aberrations from the norm whose lifestyles challenged not only God, but also the fabric of the community. As a result, almost all gay men and women remained closeted. There were very few places for gay men or women to gather, especially away from the Irish urban centers. Many gay men and women married partners of the opposite sex. Ironically, other gay individuals joined religious orders, and served the very religion that condemned their sexuality as nuns or priests.

Death and Funeral Rites

In remote times in Ireland the Irish generally treated death in a boisterous and playful manner. It is possible that the storytelling, music playing, singing, dancing, feasting and playing of wake diversions during the two or three days the dead person was laid out prior to burial owed something to pre-Christian funeral games. Such activity may also have stemmed in part from a welcoming of death by an exploited and destitute people.

The main purpose of a wake is for relatives, neighbors and friends to visit in order to pay their respects to the dead person and to offer condolences to the family. Though food and drink are still invariably offered to visitors, the over-indulgence of eating and drinking rarely occurs. In years past the dead body was laid out on a bed in the person's own house. Today the wake often takes place in a funeral home with the body lying in a casket.

Catholic dead often have rosary beads entwined in their crossed hands, and some are dressed in the brown habit or shroud of the Franciscan Third Order. Flowers and candles are usually placed about the casket. The laid-out corpse always has somebody standing beside it. This is mainly out of respect for the dead person. Many years ago, however, there was a practical reason for watching the body, namely to guard it from the predations of body-snatchers who would sell it to medical schools.

The *caoine* or keening of women over the corpse has, except for rare occasions, died out in Ireland. It is common for visitors to a wake to say a short silent prayer for the soul of the dead person.

Having a Bit of Craic: Jokes, Teasing and Fun

The Irish “gift for gab” is an integral part of the country’s national identity. Over time, the Irish people have gained the reputation of being particularly silver-tongued, witty and poetic in their speech and writing. Some historians and sociologists attribute the legendary Irish sense of humor to Ireland’s turbulent and violent history. A strong sense of humor and the ability to laugh in the face of hardship became an important coping skill for the Irish people during years of war and civil strife.

The Irish refer to their habit of finding the humor in any situation (even dire ones) as *Craic* (an Irish Gaelic word, pronounced “crack”). Seeing the funny side of life and injecting a bit of wit into any chat is considered an essential conversational

skill. Many Irish jokes revolve around punning and other types of word-play. And nearly all humor has a self-deprecating edge.

Craic forms the basis of a pastime that has mostly died away today, but was quite popular in the '40s, known as *slagging*. The activity takes place in the company of a small group of close friends or family members and consists of good-natured mockery of one member of the group. The jokes tend to be quite barbed, but always good-natured, as the idea behind it is, "The more I tease you, the more I like you." The person being slagged is expected to give as good as he gets, and turn the joke back on the attacker. The loser of this game is the person who loses his temper or shows hurt feelings first—displays of pique that inevitably give rise to a fresh round of slagging!

Ireland During World War II

Timeline of Events Leading up to the War

- 1913** The third Irish independence (or "Home Rule") bill is defeated in the English House of Lords.
- 1914** A tentative Home Rule bill is passed in England, but suspended until the end of World War I.
- April, 1916** In Dublin, a group of Irish nationalist rebels led by Patrick Pearse occupy the Dublin Post office and fight to establish an Irish Republic. The so-called *Easter Rising* insurrection is neutralized within a week by British forces who execute the rebellion leaders and arrest thousands of citizens. The actions of the English heighten the Irish disgust with British rule. The memory of the *Easter Rising* rebellion helps lead to the declaration of an Irish Free State five years later.
- 1919** The Irish fight for independence from England in a bloody guerilla conflict known later as the Anglo-Irish War. The war drags on until an uneasy truce is declared in 1921.
- December 1921** The Irish Free State is declared after the establishment of the Anglo-Irish Treaty. But many Irish decry the Treaty's provision for a constitutional link to Great Britain.

- 1922** A short but bloody civil war break outs in which the *Sinn Fein* party, led by Eamon de Valera and Michael Collins, fights with other Irish Nationalist factions, to preserve Irish Unity.
- 1922** The six counties that remain loyal to British rule become Northern Ireland.
- 1932** After serving as a military officer, activist, legislator and orator for the cause of Irish Independence, Eamon de Valera is elected as Prime Minister of the Republic of Ireland.
- 1933** In Germany, Adolf Hilter comes to power as Chancellor.
- 1937** The Irish Free State’s name is officially changed to “Eire.” The name change reflects a resurgence of Irish language speaking and writing, after decades of British efforts to squelch its use by the Irish people.
- September 1939** A state of war is declared between Germany and England. France, Australia, and New Zealand also declare war. Irish announces a policy of “benevolent” neutrality in the conflict, and declares an internal state of emergency.
- June 1940** The Fall of France to German troops brings the war’s progress dangerously close to Ireland.
- 1940** De Valera condemns the German invasion of Belgium and Holland.
- 1941** In the thick of the London Blitz, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill sends a telegram to de Valera offering Irish Unity in exchange for the Republic’s abandonment of its neutrality. The offer is roundly rejected by De Valera and his cabinet.
- 1941** IRA leaders suspected of collaborating with Axis forces are imprisoned in the Curragh interment camp for the duration of the war.
- April 1941** In Northern Ireland, Belfast is repeatedly bombed by the Luftwaffe. The Republic sends medics and fire engines across the border to aid the injured.

- May 1941** Dublin suffers its own Luftwaffe attack. The German government declares the bombing a mistake and offers compensation, but some Republic citizens wonder if the attack is in retaliation for the Republic's assistance during the April "Belfast Blitz" in Northern Ireland.
- 1944** The Germans are defeated by the Allied Forces.
- 1945** After Hitler's death, De Valera expresses condolences to Germany, and is attacked by the Irish, British and American press for the controversial gesture.

Ireland and "The Emergency"

Republic of Ireland Prime Minister Eamon de Valera declared a policy of Irish neutrality in World War II shortly after early hostilities broke out in Western Europe. With its own civil war only recently deposed, the newly minted Irish Republic was still vulnerable to internal insurrection, and the young government was loath to publicly align itself with England so shortly after the declaration of its independence from Great Britain.

The Irish Republic's neutral stance reflected an interest in self-preservation and self-government. As such, iDáil Éireann (the Republic parliament) fully supported the national policy, as did the majority of the Republic's citizens. In concordance with the nation's neutrality, a general state of emergency was declared, and "The Emergency Powers Act" was instantly enacted, which gave the Republic government war-time powers to control the press and economy. "The Emergency" would become the widespread euphemism for World War II in Ireland.

The Republic's supposed neutrality actually favored the Allied forces in several important ways. Republic citizens were permitted to enlist in the British army, and nearly 40,000 of them joined up to fight. Perhaps more significantly, Ireland allowed British forces to mine their coasts for German U-Boats, accepted thousands of British women and children fleeing London's Blitz, and gave food, munitions, and medical care to Allied forces.

These Allied troops included thousands of servicemen from the United States, sent to patrol both Northern Ireland and vulnerable sections of the Irish Republic's coastline against Axis invasions. American soldiers gradually became a familiar, although exotic, presence in many Irish towns, both in Northern Ireland and the Republic.

In sharp contrast to the preferential treatment given to Allied troops, downed Axis pilots recovered in Irish Republic territory were held in Spartan detainment camps until the war's end. Irish Republic intelligence agents also worked closely with Britain to ferret out German undercover agents working in the Republic.

Furthermore, in spite of their neutrality, Republic citizens endured hardships nearly identical to citizens of countries at war. The Irish people were subject to strict food rationing, frequent supply shortages, frightening air raid drills, the issuing of mandatory gas masks, foreign and domestic troop encampments and rampant media censorship.

First Person Accounts of Life in Ireland during World War II

Gathered by the BBC as part of their *Peoples' War* World War II Online Oral History project:

Wartime Memories of an Irish Schoolgirl

When war broke out, I was eleven years old and living in a small town called Abbeyleix, in the Irish Midlands. I was in my final year at primary school and I was studying for a scholarship to go to boarding school.

In early June of 1940 we suffered a severe electrical storm. While the storm was raging, we heard a knock on the door and my father went to answer it. I followed at a discreet distance, wondering who the caller might be. A member of the Gardai Siochana (Irish Police) stood there, asking for my brother, Ted, and telling my father that Ted was to report immediately to the barracks in his uniform to collect his rifle and his orders. Germans, he said, had been spotted, dropping by parachute into Knapton Woods and the members of the Local Defence Force (LDF) were to report for duty! Ted was fifteen years old at the time but he had joined the LDF. His duties up to then had merely involved guarding the gates of fields to ensure that farmers didn't move their cattle during a severe outbreak of foot and mouth disease.

After the policeman had left, my father went to look for Ted and he found him in bed, hiding under the bedclothes, whimpering and shaking in fear. There was no way he was going out to face German soldiers! My father comforted him and said he wouldn't have to go. The policeman returned and asked where Ted was and my father pleaded with him to let him go in Ted's place. He said he had fought Germans at the front in the First World War and he could handle a rifle far

better than his son, a lad at fifteen years of age, could. The policeman relented and said he would report that he couldn't find the lad! He warned my father to keep his son hidden.

Ted later joined the Civil Defence (ARP) and diligently carried out his duties, watching from the Tower of Lincoln Castle for the approach of German bombers and parading along the walls as he carried out his fire-watching duties. He later spoke of the terror of those years. After one bombing raid he retrieved the charred body of a child from the rubble and he never forgot having to hand the body to the mother.

In September of 1940 I went away to boarding school in Cork and that is where I spent the final five years of the war. About the same time that we were experiencing a scare in Abbeyleix, girls in the boarding school had woken up one night to the loud roar of an aeroplane and they rushed to the window to see a German bomber fly low past the school. They could see its markings clearly. Perhaps the pilot had lost his way or, perhaps, he was fleeing from RAF pursuers. During a similar incursion in Dublin, a plane had dropped its bombs while being pursued.

Apart from these episodes, we were fairly sheltered from the harsh reality of war throughout our school years, but we regularly had air raid practices and these usually occurred during the night. How I loathed being woken up from my deep sleep!

We would make our way down to the basement, where we would be ordered to don our gas masks. At that time I suffered badly from claustrophobia and there was no way I was going to put my mask on. I decided I'd risk dying in an air raid rather than suffocate in that horrible contraption. I became so distressed about it that the teacher on duty would give up trying to make me put the mask on.

From one classroom I would dreamily look out at a barrage balloon floating serenely over the city. It looked so graceful as the sun glinted on its silver body, but it was another constant reminder of a possible threat.

My Memories of "The Emergency"

This is Henry Hennigan's story as told to Sheila Jones. My name is Henry Hennigan and I was 9 years old when war broke out. I lived in the west of Ireland on a farm. We were kept aware of events through daily newspapers and by listening to the one radio in the village. Lots of locals would gather around the radio, BBC. Would listen to the news

reports and then talked about it; it became a social event for us. There was also rationing in Ireland and certain luxury items were not available. However living on the farm we had access to food that towns people would probably not have. We produced extra stock for export to the UK, poultry and livestock. I remember hearing the planes going over, probably the Americans but they may have been German. It was always in the back of our minds that we could be hit. We were very aware of the bombing raids in England. I remember having to make sure our curtains were drawn at night. Schooling was not affected but we were expected to do much more work on the farm and we had less homework. As children this was a bonus. I remember the end of the war and everyone's joy and relief although we did not have the celebrations as in England.

World War II in Southern Ireland

I heard the sombre pronouncement by Neville Chamberlain on September 3rd 1939 that England was at war with Germany. I was 14 years old and viewed this news with mixed feelings of anxiety and excited anticipation. This was something different in my safe, peaceful and secure life. On that day I didn't know how different that was going to be.

My 19 year old sister was a nurse in a London hospital at the outbreak of war. In recollection, I don't think the war began to show effects in Wexford until early in 1940 when rationing, curfews and blackouts began to be introduced. Rationing was controlled by a similar system of stamps to that of Britain and covered everything from food, clothing, and footwear to sweets and chocolate. We were forced to eat what was described as "black bread" because the preferred white bread was illegal. Black bread was actually a very dark brown colour with a rough texture and not being allowed butter we had to use margarine. That for an Irishman was analogous to a pilot trying to fly a plane with only one wing! I was a smoker then (something I'm stupidly paying for now) and tobacconists introduced their own system of rationing. To be allowed five John Player medium cigarettes one had to purchase ten Turkish Pasha cigarettes, the most foul smelling smoke on earth. The odour represented that which would occur by locking ten cats in a small room for about a week.

In the 1940s we began to feel like the British people in all except the horrific bombing. Since Wexford is only a very short sea journey to Cardiff and the West coast of England and when these areas were being attacked on clear nights with the wind from the east I was wakened on many occasions by the night bombing. The throbbing noise

of the German bombers engines were an immediate recognition for me and the noise of heavy explosions was frightening. Following the noise of a heavy night of west coast bombing, which many people in Wexford heard and talked about the following day, rumours abounded that Germany was going to invade Ireland very shortly. This was the most frightening experience for me and my family exacerbated by the concerns for my sister in London which was at the very heart of the Blitz.

Throughout 1940 and 1941 these rumours became more prevalent and the government introduced the Local Defence Force and the ARP and at 16 I became a member of the ARP. For any of us, our feelings were that if Hitler wanted to take Ireland at 13.00 hours it would be his by 16.00 hours.

There was personal tragedy in my neighbourhood. My next door neighbour's daughter and her two twin six year old children were killed in a bombing raid in Coventry. Another family in my community suffered the trauma of being informed much later in the war that their son had died in the battle of El Alamein. Yes death did visit Wexford at the hands of the Nazi regime. I am not sure of the year but on a Sunday mid-day I saw about six bombers travel due west up my street (Thomas Street). I recognised them as German by the engine sounds. Shortly after the planes had gone due west a number of military vehicles raced up Thomas Street going in the direction of the planes. The news broke afterwards that Campile was bombed and that the Co-Operative Dairy factory was flattened with 10 deaths and one man killed in his field. The local reason for this bombing was that the CO-Op were supplying butter and other such foodstuffs to England through Belfast, whilst the German reason was that the planes became separate from the main group and were jettisoning their bombs over an uninhabited area.

These are some of my memories of WW2 in Wexford, but the abiding memory for me is at the end of the war when my mother sent my youngest sister who would have been eleven for a pound of bananas I could not understand her asking mother what a banana was.

Battle Fatigue

The most common stress reactions include fatigue, slowing of the reaction time, slowness of thought, difficulty prioritizing, difficulty initiating routine tasks, preoccupation with minor issues and familiar tasks, indecision and lack of concentration, loss of initiative with fatigue and exhaustion.

Other physical symptoms include:

- Headaches, backaches, inability to relax, shaking and tremors, sweating
- Nausea and vomiting, loss of appetite, abdominal distress, frequency of urination, urinary incontinence.
- Heart palpitations, hyperventilation, dizziness, insomnia, nightmares, restless sleep, excessive sleep, excessive startle, hypervigilance, heightened sense of threat
- Anxiety, irritability, depression, substance abuse, loss of adaptability, suicidality and disruptive behavior
- Loss of beliefs, mistrust, confusion and extreme feeling of losing control.
- Loss of beliefs, mistrust, confusion, and extreme feeling of losing control.
- Guilt (for surviving when so many others died)
- Flashbacks (often very vivid, can be triggered by loud noises, strong odors and other reminders of war).

“Symptoms ranged from uncontrollable diarrhea to unrelenting anxiety. Soldiers who had bayoneted men in the face developed hysterical tics of their own facial muscles. Stomach cramps seized men who knifed their foes in the abdomen. Snipers lost their sight. Terrifying nightmares of being unable to withdraw bayonets from the enemies' bodies persisted long after the slaughter.”

— Prof. Joanna Bourke, from *Shell Shock in World War I*

British military doctors were the first to identify the so-called “shell shock” phenomenon during World War I. As they scrambled to understand the cause, diverse symptoms, and ideal treatment for this psychiatric disorder, British officers and soldiers’ attitudes towards shell shock victims were often harsh and unforgiving. Some men showing signs of trauma were sent back into battle immediately. Others were court-martialed as deserters, or executed for cowardice.

By the onset of World War II, attitudes toward psychological suffering and injury (now called “Battle Fatigue) were far more empathetic and forgiving. Battle fatigue

victims were sent away from the front lines for treatment and recovery. Measures were put into place to educate both enlisted men and officers about the pervasiveness and seriousness of the disorder.

In spite of these positive changes, the number of British battle fatigue victims skyrocketed, due to the never-before-experienced levels of gruesome violence experienced by the Allies during World War II. And in spite of advances in the diagnosis and treatment of psychologically scarred soldiers, many British servicemen, conditioned to “keep a stiff upper lip,” still perceived battle fatigue as a personal weakness.

The West Family Home: Life in Bunrana, County Donegal

The West Family lives in the port town of Bunrana in County Donegal, on the coast of the Atlantic Ocean. Donegal is home to mountains, glens, staggering fjords, heather-dusted moors and rocky cliffs. But the Donegal town of Bunrana is best known for its sandy beaches and wave-carved ocean cliffs.

Situated on the Inishowen Peninsula and just miles away from the Northern Ireland town of Derry, County Donegal is one of only three independent Irish counties in the otherwise British province of Ulster. Because Donegal is surrounded on three sides by Northern Ireland, it is somewhat isolated from the rest of the Irish Republic. Donegal residents speak with a distinct accent in both English and Irish Gaelic.

Bunrana’s precarious geographic position within County Donegal (surrounded by the ocean and British-controlled Northern Ireland) made it particularly vulnerable to attack during World War II. As a result, Irish defensive forces maintained a constant presence in the town during the war. Friendly Allied forces (largely American) also visited and patrolled Bunrana quite frequently, in an effort to survey and protect the exposed Inishowen Peninsula coastline from Axis invasion.

Glossary of Special Terms from the Script

A long way to Tipperary

A popular turn-of-the-century music-hall tune first adopted as a marching song by an Irish regiment during World War I. The song spread throughout the British Army. Its popularity grew several decades later with the onset of World War II. Tipperary is a county in the province of Munster in the Republic of Ireland. See song lyrics appendix for the words.

A Little Bit of Heaven

A popular sentimental tune about the creation of Ireland. See song lyrics appendix for the words.

Amusant

French for amusing, droll, entertaining.

Baker's Dozen

A dozen plus one more for luck, or thirteen in total.

The Battle of Lepanto

A 1571 Venetian naval victory against the Turks in the Ottoman-Venetian Wars.

De Valera

Eamon de Valera was the prime leader of Ireland's fight for independence from Great Britain in the twentieth century. De Valera served in public office from 1917 to 1973 (including terms as the President and Prime Minister of Ireland). He also wrote the Constitution of Ireland in 1937, at the end of the Irish Civil War. During World War II, as Prime Minister, De Valera enacted and maintained Ireland's stance of (Allied forces-friend) neutrality.

Dulse

A reddish-purplish seaweed found on the Irish coast and popular as both food and medicine. High in vitamins and minerals, dulse is consumed raw, dried, pan-fried, and stewed. It is also used as a seasoning in bread and soups. Medicinally, dulse is eaten to cure headaches and constipation and applied externally to skin ailments and open wounds.

Dunrea Fort

Dunrea (or Dunree) Fort is an 18th century stone fort on the Inishwen peninsula in Northern Ireland. During World War II, Irish forces were stationed there to prevent Axis navies from landing on the peninsula.

“Enjoy your milk bath, Cleopatra”

An allusion to Cleopatra’s decadent practice of bathing in tubs of donkey milk to soften her skin.

“God save Ireland, said the heroes. God save Ireland, said the men.”

Part of the lyrics to the folk song *God Save Ireland*. You can listen to the song’s melody online at:

http://www.traditionalmusic.co.uk/song-midis/God_Save_Ireland.htm

Green Glens of Antrim

Another traditional folk song. You can read listen to it online at:

http://www.kinglaoghaire.com/site/lyrics/song_163.html

Irish National Anthem:

The Soldier’s Song was written in 1907, but first became well-known during the Easter Uprising of 1916, and formally adopted as the national anthem of the Irish Republic in 1926, replacing *God Save Ireland*. You can listen to it online at:

<http://www.detroitirish.org/anthem.html> (click on the top right link).

Jean Harlow

Harlow was a popular Hollywood screen siren in the thirties. She was the first movie star to be dubbed a “Blond Bombshell,” in reference to her famous platinum curls. Harlow starred in Howard Hughes’ war epic, *Hell’s Angels*,” as well as a string of other hits, before dying at 26 in 1937.

“The King sits in Dunfirmline town, drinking the blood red wine.”

The first lyric of a Scottish ballad called *Sir Patrick Spens*. The song tells of Sir Patrick, a brave sailor sent by an impetuous king to retrieve a Norwegian princess for the king to wed.

Lundy

Lundy is the largest island of the British Channel, and lies between England and Wales.

Malin Head

Malin Head is the most northerly point of the Republic of Ireland. Located in the province of Ulster, on the tip of the Inishowen peninsula in County Donegal. During WWII, Irish defense forces were stationed at Malin Head to protect Irish neutrality.

Molly Malone

Molly is the mythic heroine of the popular Dublin tune *Molly Malone*, which tells of the pretty young fishmonger's early death by fever. Also known as "Cockles and Mussels," the bawdy song's tragic conclusion is balanced by double entendres in the lyrics that hint at Molly's true work as a prostitute.

Morille

The Irish spelling of morel, a delicious mushroom that thrives in the damp Irish countryside.

Ravenna Church mosaics

Located in Italy, the many intricate sixth century mosaics in churches and chapels throughout Ravenna are some of the finest examples of Christian Byzantine art. Ravenna was a popular tourist destination in the 1930s, especially for Catholic travelers like Dolly.

Siege of Derry

An epic battle in Northwestern Ireland led by Protestants William of Orange and his wife, Mary Queen of Scots, to oust her father, Catholic King James II from his throne. The siege lasted 105 days, during which half of the town's population died.

St. Therese of Lisieux

A nineteenth century Carmelite nun from Lisieux, France known by her followers as the "Little Flower" and canonized after her early death of tuberculosis.

Urris

A township in the west corner of County Donegal. Urris is home to beautiful beaches and several Catholic shrines as well as Dunrea Fort. Dunrea Fort was used as a staging area by American forces and Irish defensive forces during WWII.

To Learn More About the Play

Novels

The Irish Century Series by Morgan Llywelyn, including *1916*, *1921* and *1949*. This historical fiction trilogy explores three pivotal years in Irish history through the lives and conflicts of both imagined and historical characters.

Blood on the Shamrock by Cathal Liam. Okay, overlook the lurid title, and this is a pretty interesting novel about the civil war.

Biography

De Valera and his Times by J.P. O'Carroll. A very readable biography of Eamon de Valera that deals extensively with the years of "The Emergency."

Non-Fiction

Step Together: The Story of Ireland's Emergency Army as Told By Its Veterans by Donal MacCarron and G. J. McMahon. Really great first-person stuff here. Especially interesting for Justin and Ned, but paints a great picture of life in wartime Ireland for civilians as well as Irish soldiers.

The Lost Years: The Emergency in Ireland from 1939-1945 by Tony Gray. Great account of life in Ireland during WWII, lots of interesting details and anecdotes.

Plays

The Irish and How They Got That Way by Frank McCourt (who wrote Angela's Ashes). A musical walk through Irish history.

Translations by Brian Friel. The events of the play precede World War II, but Friel (McGuinness's contemporary) does a great job of depicting the reclamation by the Irish of the Irish language and their indigenous culture.

Movies

The Wind that Shakes the Barley. Centers on the 1920's Irish-Anglo War.

Michael Collins. Biopic that tells the story of Michael Collins' life. Historically, covers the period from the 1916 Easter Rebellion through the mid-1920s.

Saving Private Ryan. The D-day sequence at the start of the film is an incredibly accurate depiction of the storming of Normandy (for which American soldiers like Marco and Jamie prepared while stationed in Northern Ireland).

The Longest Day. Another cinematic recreation of the Normandy invasion. (Includes the perspective of British Allied troops, like Alec).

Web sites

WWII: The People's War. An archive of World War II memories written by the British people and gathered by the BBC. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar/>

BBC History. Great pages on World War II in Britain and the history of Ireland. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/>

Discussion Questions

- Do you feel hopeful or pessimistic about the future of the West family and their loved ones at the end of the play?
- *Dolly West's Kitchen* certainly isn't a musical, yet several of the characters sing songs during the play. How do these songs affect the tone of the scenes they are in? What is their purpose in the play?
- Almost every character in the play is burdened by contentious relationships with one or both of their parents. How do these troubled bonds manifest themselves in the characters' actions?
- Rima West loves to tell stories and jokes. How do these anecdotes reveal her character and highlight important ideas in the play?
- Why do you think the play is entitled *Dolly West's Kitchen*? What are the different ways the West family's kitchen is used during the play?
- *Dolly West's Kitchen* is an ensemble drama with nine characters. Did you find some characters more compelling than others? Did you get angry at any of the characters during the play? Who made you laugh? Did any of the characters make you cry?
- The play takes place in a neutral nation during World War II. How do the characters struggle with the concept of neutrality in their personal lives?
- Dolly finds a sense of renewed purpose after seeing the Ravenna mosaics in Italy. Have you been moved in a similar way by experiencing an artwork? If so, how?

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