

Border Literatures



The National Library of Ireland Border Literatures:

Books and Questions for Discussion

Border Literatures is a reading and conversation series designed to share diverse literary perspectives on the experience of living in, crossing through, and reflecting on the century that has passed since the partition of the island of Ireland.

Beginning with an opening discussion, *Border Literatures; A Conversation* on the 22nd of September 2021 and closing with a panel event *New Horizons* on the 23rd of March 2022, *Border Literatures* is designed to build discussion of literature into the rich historical conversations that have framed the Decade of Centenaries.

The series will begin with a comparative conversation about borders in other places than Ireland, with a view to sharing multiple perspectives on borders in different cultural contexts. It will continue with readings of four authors, Eugene McCabe, Andrea Carter, Sue Divin, and Seamus Heaney, with discussion of literary fiction, noir, young adult literature, and poetry. Each reading will be hosted by a three writers and critics, who will lead discussion and take questions from the virtual audience. The series will close with a conversation with four contemporary writers on their work and the border.

Below you will find the information for our third reading discussion event on Sue Divin's *Guard Your Heart* and the three discussion questions that our panellists will focus on during this event.

To register for all events click [here](#) and follow the instructions to register for your chosen event.

Reading 3 - Guard Your Heart by Sue Divin

19th of January 2022 Online Zoom Webinar Event at 7pm click [here](#) to register

Derry. Summer 2016. Aidan and Iona, now eighteen, were both born on the day of the Northern Ireland peace deal.

Aidan is Catholic, Irish, and Republican. With his ex-political prisoner father gone and his mother dead, Aidan's hope is pinned on exam results earning him a one-way ticket out of Derry. To anywhere.

Iona, Protestant and British, has a brother and father in the police. She's got university ambitions, a

strong faith and a fervent belief that boys without one track minds are a myth.

At a post-exam party, Aidan wanders alone across the Peace Bridge and becomes the victim of a brutal sectarian attack. Iona witnessed the attack; picked up Aidan's phone and filmed what happened, and gets in touch with him to return the phone. When the two meet, alone and on neutral territory, the differences between them seem insurmountable.

Both their fathers held guns, but safer to keep that secret for now.

Despite their differences and the secrets they have to keep from each other, there is mutual intrigue, and their friendship grows. And so what? It's not the Troubles. But for both Iona and Aidan it seems like everything is keeping them apart, when all they want is to be together.

This book is available through public library services in Ireland or can be purchased at your local independent bookshop.

The questions we will be considering in our discussions of this book are:

Q1 How does the novel's specific temporal setting in 2016 frame the narrative? How do the book's 'post-conflict' themes and shifting definitions of 'peace' complicate the storyline?

Q2 How does the novel's location in the border city of Derry/Londonderry/Doire shape the characters' identities and their understanding of history and cultural traditions?

Q3 In what ways is this book a new kind of 'love across the divide' story?

Q4 How does it compare to, or differ from, previous work exploring this Troubles trope?

This event will be chaired by Nicholas Allen and the panel will consist of Sue Divin and Dr Dawn Miranda Sherratt-Bado.

Throughout our discussions during the Border Literatures programme we will be gathering titles for a suggested reading list on the topic of fiction that centres on the idea of borders. If you would like to suggest a title for this reading list on border literatures please email us at learning@nli.ie

If you would like to receive the complete reading list after the culmination of our events, please sign up for our mailing list by clicking [here](#).

If you or your book club is taking part in reading along or attending our online events you can let us know by tagging us on social media using #BorderLiteratures on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).

