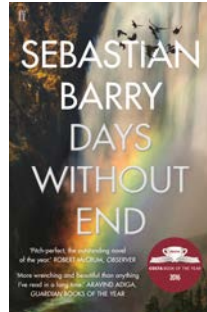


THE WALTER
SCOTT PRIZE
FOR HISTORICAL
FICTION **10 YEARS**



Readers' Guides



2017 Winner

Days Without End Sebastian Barry

Faber

About the author

Sebastian Barry was born in Dublin in 1955. His novels and plays have won amongst others the Costa Book of the Year award, the Kerry Group Irish Fiction Prize, the Irish Book Awards Novel of the Year, the Independent Booksellers Prize, the Walter Scott Prize and the James Tait Black Memorial Prize. He had two consecutive novels, *A Long Long Way* (2005) and *The Secret Scripture* (2008), shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize, and he is the only author to have won the Walter Scott Prize twice – the first time for *On Canaan's Side* in 2012, and the second for *Days Without End* (2017). Sebastian lives in Wicklow with his wife and three children.

About the book

Thomas McNulty, aged barely seventeen and having fled the Great Famine in Ireland, signs up for the U.S. Army in the 1850s. With his brother in arms, John Cole, Thomas goes on to fight in the Indian Wars—against the Sioux and the Yurok—and, ultimately, the Civil War. Orphans of terrible hardships themselves, the men find these days to be vivid and alive, despite the horrors they see and are complicit in.

Moving from the plains of Wyoming to Tennessee, Sebastian Barry's latest work is a masterpiece of atmosphere and language. An intensely poignant story of two men and the makeshift family they create with a young Sioux girl, Winona, *Days Without End* is a fresh and haunting portrait of the most fateful years in American history and is a novel never to be forgotten.

Discussion Questions

The McNulty family has featured in several of Barry's novels - including *The Secret Scripture* and *The Temporary Gentleman* - how do you feel about the continuous thread between the books?

Thomas escapes famine in Ireland for war and horror in the US. However, at times he finds moments of happiness and safety. How well did Barry balance these contradictions?

Thomas and John were part of both the Indian Wars and the Civil War - how did the descriptions of these differ in the narrative?

The relationship between Thomas and John is central to the novel - how different would their experience be in the US military today?

How does the introduction of Sioux child Winona, into the complicated relationship of Thomas and John, challenge our preconceptions of the family dynamic?

Both Thomas and John work in their youth, as cross-dressing entertainers. How does this experience impact their lives going forward?

(Questions adapted from The Reading Agency)