



# The Rebels of Ireland

*Edward Rutherford*

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## **The Rebels of Ireland** Edward Rutherfurd

*The reigning master of grand historical fiction returns with the stirring conclusion to his bestselling Dublin Saga.*

*The Princes of Ireland*, the first volume of Edward Rutherfurd's magisterial epic of Irish history, ended with the disastrous Irish revolt of 1534 and the disappearance of the sacred Staff of Saint Patrick. *The Rebels of Ireland* opens with an Ireland transformed; plantation, the final step in the centuries-long English conquest of Ireland, is the order of the day, and the subjugation of the native Irish Catholic population has begun in earnest.

Edward Rutherfurd brings history to life through the tales of families whose fates rise and fall in each generation: Brothers who must choose between fidelity to their ancient faith or the security of their families; a wife whose passion for a charismatic Irish chieftain threatens her comfortable marriage to a prosperous merchant; a young scholar whose secret rebel sympathies are put to the test; men who risk their lives and their children's fortunes in the tragic pursuit of freedom, and those determined to root them out forever. Rutherfurd spins the saga of Ireland's 400-year path to independence in all its drama, tragedy, and glory through the stories of people from all strata of society--Protestant and Catholic, rich and poor, conniving and heroic.

His richly detailed narrative brings to life watershed moments and events, from the time of plantation settlements to the "Flight of the Earls," when the native aristocracy fled the island, to Cromwell's suppression of the population and the imposition of the harsh anti-Catholic penal laws. He describes the hardships of ordinary people and the romantic, doomed attempt to overthrow the Protestant oppressors, which ended in defeat at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, and the departure of the "Wild Geese." In vivid tones Rutherfurd re-creates Grattan's Parliament, Wolfe Tone's attempted French invasion of 1798, the tragic rising of Robert Emmet, the Catholic campaign of Daniel O'Connell, the catastrophic famine, the mass migration to America, and the glorious Irish Renaissance of Yeats and Joyce. And through the eyes of his characters, he captures the rise of Charles Stewart Parnell and the great Irish nationalists and the birth of an Ireland free of all ties to England.

A tale of fierce battles, hot-blooded romances, and family and political intrigues, *The Rebels of Ireland* brings the story begun in *The Princes of Ireland* to a stunning conclusion.

## **The Rebels of Ireland Details**

Date : Published February 27th 2007 by Ballantine Books (first published February 1st 2004)

ISBN : 9780345472366

Author : Edward Rutherfurd

Format : Paperback 863 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Fiction, Cultural, Ireland

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# From Reader Review The Rebels of Ireland for online ebook

## Irene says

This was a well-researched history book with a low-level soap-opera plot: basically the perfect recipe for a boring book. The things that annoyed me the most were the shamefully shallow characters and the physical descriptions of female characters, who all are a horrifying combination of "peachy skin", "tender breasts" and other nonsense.

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## Tim says

Nice chronicle covering three centuries of Ireland's past right up to the Easter uprising in 1916 and the island's independence in 1921.

Rutherford's history sweepers are engrossing and challenging (Sarum, Russka). This one is no exception. I knew about the Catholic and Protestant divide over the centuries, but had no idea just how convoluted, murky, and ultimately intertwined it was. Family landlords, Old English Gentry, the Ascendancy, name changes, families deliberately deciding to make some children catholic and others protestant so they will have one member at least in the "good" whatever the future holds - all playing out in Ireland as secondary effects from the same ebbs and flows on center stage in England itself.

Rutherford also provides some geographic context of the island itself, and adds the international impact of Ireland's "wild geese" (Irish who have fled or deported to other countries where a brighter future is possible - America, France, Australia.)

The most disconcerting aspect of his narratives when sweeping through 3-4 centuries, is this reader's comfort level settling in with a set of characters only to see them move quickly from young adults to grandparents, then on only in memories soon forgotten. Rutherford can develop characters but one must enjoy them for the fleeting time one has with them, as the lineages move on. Rather unsettling to see oneself in that process ...

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## Sophie says

It was an interesting read and as always Rutherford's characters make history come alive. I feel I understand better now where Ireland is coming from, although the reader is left a bit hanging with the story finishing in the 20s.

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## Kristin says

On one hand, I really like Rutherford's style of telling history. By following the same families through hundreds of years, it's possible to see how the country changed over time and how those changes affected generations of real people from different backgrounds. On the other hand, it is so frustrating to start feeling close to a character only to suddenly shift 40 years in the future, where that character is dead and his children

are middle-aged. There were also many characters I wanted to know so much more about, particularly Garret, Conall, Deirdre, Brigid, Patrick... okay, just about everyone, really. I grew fond of the Smiths and Walshes especially. I also wanted more about many events, such as the Famine (though that part was really well written and depressing) and the Easter Rebellion. Strange to want more from such a huge book, but there you go.

I do have to also say that I didn't like this one as much as I liked *The Princes of Ireland*, and I think there's an easy explanation for that. There is something magical and fascinating about the Druids, Celts, Vikings, Welshmen, and others of 430-1533 who populate the first book. Compared to 1000 years of such diversity, I guess 325 years of Catholics and Protestants, Irish and English bickering with each other is just not quite the same. (It's not that the book isn't good, because it certainly is. My personal preference just leans toward the earlier history; religious bickering has always irritated me, I suppose. So I could see myself rereading *Princes* but probably not *Rebels*.)

Thank goodness for the detailed family tree at the front of the book. I probably flipped to it every 20 pages or so, at least! It really helps keep things straight. I also loved how often characters stopped at Glendalough on their way between Dublin and Rathconan because of the meditative peace of the place. Besides Dublin, that is the only place in Ireland that I've visited, and it was one of the most, if not the most, special days in my life. It is an incredible place, and it really got me that others felt the same connection to it 400 and more years ago, and it was already ancient then. Just wow.

So good book. I came to love and hate many of the characters, and I felt bereft when many of them passed on, until I came to know their descendants and the cycle started again. :)

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### **K.M. Weiland says**

Much more gripping than the first book in the series. I appreciated getting a solid view of Ireland's history and the causes behind much of their strife.

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### **Barbara V. Vaughan says**

#### **Fictional account of Irish History**

The book leads you through time with stirring events that take place in the lives of several fictional families. The historical content is concise. The elements of relationships make Irish history come to life.

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### **Thomas says**

Rutherford is fair and historically accurate -- even sensitive, I would say -- but the centuries-long scope of the book is too broad to support anything terribly profound. Generations come and go, and characters who are developing nicely are quickly snuffed out by time. I suppose this is simply the nature of a history-based novel that takes place over a long span of time, and I suppose I was unreasonably hoping for something with a little more depth. It's not a bad read, given the parameters Rutherford is working with, but the result is watered-down and a tad bland.

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## **Kat says**

Not bad, but a bit boring in between....

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## **Mandy says**

At times the characters' stories and interactions seemed a bit forced to be able to fit into the timeline but other than that, great stuff. Also, not as descriptive of settings/characters as I'd like.

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## **Cait says**

These books are long, but so so good.

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## **Frances says**

Simply magnificent. The convoluted, tragic history of Ireland is done justice in this epic book. Impossible to summarize so just read it.

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## **Vít says**

D?stojné pokračování Dublinu, tentokrát s p?esahem do celého Irska, by? Ulsteru se dotkneme jen okrajov?. Psáno v Ruthefordov? klasickém stylu, zábavn? a ?tiv?. Je to opravdu román, ne u?ebnice irské historie a tak je pot?eba to brát. Historické události vidíte z pohledu lidí, kte?í se jich ú?astní, ne jako historik, který zná celé pozadí a souvislosti. O nic d?ležit?ho ale p?esto nep?ijdete.

Jediná v?c m? trochu mrzela, a to, že autor nedotáhl d?j t?eba až do 70. let 20. století, ke Krvavé ned?li, IRA, boj?m v Severním Irsku atd.

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## **Jo says**

After reading hundreds of pages in a sprawling, unhurried hand, the ending seemed rushed and jerky. It almost seemed that the book could have been longer (Did I really just say that about an eight hundred page book?). I've thoroughly enjoyed my time wandering through Rutherford's Dublin. I learned so much about Irish history and mindset. They are to be greatly admired, and I count myself lucky that I am of Irish descent.

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## **Bridget says**

Finally finished! This was another fantastic look at over 500 years of history. The first book, *The Princes of Ireland*, starts in 430AD, and follows six Irish families through the reign of King Henry VIII. This was the second book in the series, following the same six families from the the 1500s through the Easter Rising of 1916. Highly recommended!

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## **Glyn Longden says**

Rating: 7/10. The second book of 'The Dublin Saga; the first was 'The Princes of Ireland' which I read in Feb./06. I also read Rutherford's 'London' which was excellent. In this fictional account the English take over Ireland lock, stock, and barrel. After reading the accounts of British oppression you can understand completely why the Irish hate the English so much. Rutherford's style is like Micheners...a story at each level or time period. Very effective. I enjoyed both books in this series although I rated the first one higher.

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## **Katherine Coble says**

I'd set this aside several times, and was determined that I'd read it this year for St. Patrick's Day. I think it's safe to say that this is my second-favourite Rutherford, after *Sarum*. The characters' stories that we follow through the river of Ireland's history are good ones; they are compelling enough to keep you coming back even through the darker historic times.

Still, this is an intense book. I recommend it for anyone interested in brushing up on Ireland's history from 1500-1900, yet I caution you these are not the best and brightest years for Ireland. Turbulent wars and famine and ever-present politics take center stage, while the romances and life dramas of fictional bloodlines serve as the sugar that makes the bitter history easier to swallow.

The book is better in the first two-thirds; by the time we get to the Irish Potato Famine much of the narrative consists of political lectures and diatribes against the British. Which, don't get me wrong, the racism toward the Irish led the British government to make some AWFUL decisions regarding food and aid. Still, the book dwells on them to a depressing degree.

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## **Shawn says**

This was a terribly sad but fascinating novel regarding a number of families, Protestant, Catholic, and Quaker on the Emerald Island. It covers nearly five centuries of tumultuous history from the Age of Elizabeth until the Irish Civil War. This is the first Edward Rutherford book I have read and because of its epic nature and focus on specific times and places, I can only compare him to James Michener. That is high praise. I do wish that Rutherford would have included some of the main historical personalities in the story line. For example, Oliver Cromwell, Roger Emmet and Eamon DeValera are only sketched out as part of the background. Even Ben Franklin as a character is more developed in this novel! Still, it is a worthy read and

truly heartbreaking in parts. It is hard to watch the seemingly endless succession of Irish Rebels and Patriots, both Catholic and Protestant, fail so miserably and create such confusion and hardship. The chapters on the Potato Famine was particularly difficult to read. It was also interesting to read about how all the rebels, Catholic, Socialist, Protestant, were devoted idealists, only differing in their causes and the degrees of ruthlessness in achieving their ends. The British are not demonized in this book and, more often than not, they appear as a moderating power as Ireland descended into the sectarian violence of The Troubles. This is an amazing and complicated story and it is an excellent book.

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## Jaline says

Religious wars are rampant throughout history. They are still happening today, even though they are subtler in some ways. None of our countries in the world will experience real peace until people and governments can agree to live and let live.

In this second of the two books Edward Rutherford wrote about Dublin, we are invited to visit many other areas of Ireland as well. Some of these were touched on in the previous book, and this is expanded into a bigger picture point of view that takes in more of the country in *The Rebels of Ireland*. The book picks up roughly where the first left off; it is 1597 and the time of "Plantation". The idea being, if enough Protestants from England and Scotland were to transplant themselves in Ireland, eventually the country would be taken over and peace would reign.

As history has taught us, that is not a viable nor a desirable solution. During the 1640's when Cromwell's armies were called upon to settle the situation using force if necessary, many of his soldiers refused to go to Ireland. "*A man's religion is a matter of personal conscience. Why should we force the Irish to be Protestants?*" Interestingly, while the Catholic population of Ireland were dismissed as ignorant, lazy, and adversarial in all things, they were far better educated than their Protestant "overseers". Education was considered a birthright by Catholics – for both boys and girls.

All the highlights of the decades and centuries are covered in this novel, and the impact of the times upon the people of Ireland is brought into our hearts through the families we meet along the way. The traces of many of these families – both Catholic and Protestant, both English and Irish, and every combination of these imaginable – are tied back to the very beginnings of recorded history, which was so well done in the first book. Some of these families were descended from the Vikings (Scandinavia in general), some from the Welsh, some from the Mediterraneans, some from the Scottish and of course, the English.

As more time passes the complexities grow. There is even a time when families would have some sons raised Protestant and others raised Catholic in an attempt to ensure that the family would survive no matter who was in power. We travel through the time of King James, William of Orange, Queen Ann, and King George, noticing as we go the loss of power for the Kings and Queens to change anything as power becomes transferred to Parliament.

We meet Doctor Thomas Sheridan and the Dean of Saint Patrick's, Jonathan Swift, along with many other fascinating historical figures. We witness how the American War of Independence and the French Revolution splintered Irish politics yet again. During these times, roughly four-fifths of the Irish population were Catholic, yet they had no part in politics except experiencing the wrong side of crippling penal laws.

Over time various Acts of Parliament were passed to mitigate the problem as Ireland kept up the pressure. At



times, it seemed as though the English Parliament just wanted them to go away. The Irish Ascendancy was yet another blow where self-appointed aristocrats and the Troika took over to run the country. Two steps forward and one and three-quarters back; reversal after reversal continued to plague the small island.

The early 1800's brought a devastating famine where easily a million souls died. The ones who survived were so weakened that many of them didn't make it either. Mass migrations, especially to America, began at this time. Evictions from property ran rampant and the homeless were a multitude. Workhouses and soup kitchens couldn't keep up to the need, and even the Quakers had to give up.

This book and the people's stories within it continues through to the 1920's, and although tragedy marks so many of the decades in one way or another, the author always writes from a position of hope. Ireland is not a country that gives up easily, and as each generation makes heroic attempts to leave it a better place for their children we can't help but cheer them on and hope that sooner or later peace will reign in this ancient and beautiful land.

In my review of the first book, *The Princes of Ireland*, I posted an excerpt from Mr. Rutherford's website regarding his views of the responsibility of historical authors to be as accurate as they can be via research from as many sources as possible. In this second book, his integrity continues to shine brightly and I recommend these two books to anyone who is interested in learning more of Ireland's history and its path of evolution throughout centuries of time.

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### **Patsy says**

This sweeping (and I mean sweeping) epic of Irish history is the 2nd in a series. It's very ambitious covering a period from the late 16th century to the early 20th century. Great writing and interesting history make it an enjoyable read but it's almost too ambitious! I'm in the last 50 pages and am looking forward to being done! The most interesting angle of this history - one which I never fully understood - is how and why the religious rifts occurred in Ireland. I also learned the "old English" families or those that settled in Ireland in the 1600's really considered themselves Irish and were champions for the Irish Catholics through the years of Cromwell, William of Orange, King George, etc. A great historical romp that gets a bit dry at times.

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### **Charlotte says**

I loved this book! In fact, I loved the two book series. As one who studies Irish culture and history, I found this series of books to be not only entertaining, but educational, as well. Though not as dearly loved as *Trinity* by Leon Uris (lets face it, no one can beat Conor Larkin as an Irish hero,) this book covers that same period of time with a few additional centuries thrown in. I did find that I had to review the family tree on several occasions, as the multiple family connections became complicated, but not untenable. It is this intermingling of families that makes the history of the Irish people come alive.

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