

The Quotable Irish



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Irish Quotes

The Irish do not want anyone to wish them well; they want everyone to wish their enemies ill.

-Harold Nicolson

When I get a very generous introduction like that, I explain that I'm emotionally moved, but on the other hand I'm Irish and the Irish are very emotionally moved. My mother is Irish and she cries during beer commercials.

- Former U.S. General Barry McCaffrey

Ireland is a peculiar society in the sense that it was a nineteenth century society up to about 1970 and then it almost bypassed the twentieth century.

- Author John McGahern

We have always found the Irish a bit odd. They refuse to be English.

- Winston Churchill

Well, it takes all kinds of men to build a railroad.

No sir, just us Irish.

- Railroad barons in "Dodge City," Warner Bros., 1939

Ireland, sir, for good or evil, is like no other place under heaven, and no man can touch its sod or breathe its air without becoming better or worse.

- George Bernard Shaw

You know it's summer in Ireland when the rain gets warmer.

- Hal Roach

There is, for whatever reason, an international tendency to be well-disposed towards Ireland - a tendency that elevates us beyond our actual standing on the world stage.

- Ivana Bacik, Irish barrister and Labour Party candidate

"The Irish gave the bagpipes to the Scots as a joke, but the Scots haven't seen the joke yet."

- Oliver Herford

I'm an Irish Catholic and I have a long iceberg of guilt.

- Edna O'Brien

The worst threat to Irish farmers is not foot and mouth disease, but a postal strike.

- Popular saying in rural Ireland, referring to Irish farmers' heavy dependence on government subsidy checks to survive.

The great Gaels of Ireland are the men that God made mad. For all their wars are merry, and all their songs are sad.

- G.K. Chesterton

Ireland, thou friend of my country in my country's most friendless days, much injured, much enduring land, accept this poor tribute from one who esteems thy worth, and mourns thy desolation.

- George Washington, speaking of Ireland's support for America during the revolution.

Rain is also very difficult to film, particularly in Ireland because it's quite fine, so fine that the Irish don't even acknowledge that it exists.

- Alan Parker, director of "The Commitments"

There is no language like the Irish for soothing and quieting.

- John Millington Synge

It's not that the Irish are cynical. It's simply that they have a wonderful lack of respect for everything and everybody.

- Brendan Behan

When I told the people of Northern Ireland that I was an atheist, a woman in the audience stood up and said, 'Yes, but is it the God of the Catholics or the God of the Protestants in whom you don't believe?

- Quentin Crisp

Being Irish is very much a part of who I am. I take it everywhere with me.

- Colin Farrell

Being Irish, he had an abiding sense of tragedy, which sustained him through temporary periods of joy.

- William Butler Yeats

But I will say that living in Ireland has changed the cadence and fullness of speech, since the Irish love words and use as many of them in a sentence as possible.

- Anne McCaffrey

Even when they have nothing, the Irish emit a kind of happiness, a joy.

- Fiona Shaw

Everything that we inherit, the rain, the skies, the speech, and anybody who works in the English language in Ireland knows that there's the dead ghost of Gaelic in the language we use and listen to and that those things will reflect our Irish identity.

- John McGahern

If one could only teach the English how to talk, and the Irish how to listen, society here would be quite civilized.

- Oscar Wilde

Irish Americans are no more Irish than Black Americans are Africans.
- Bob Geldof

Irish poets, learn your trade, sing whatever is well made, scorn the
sort now growing up all out of shape from toe to top.
- William Butler Yeats

My first thought when I came here was that I understood why there
are so many great Irish writers - because there is something mystical
in the air. There's always this cloudy, moody sky and it's challenging.
- Christopher Meloni

The Irish are the only men who know how to cry for the dirty polluted
blood of all the world.
- Norman Mailer

The Irish seem to have more fire about them than the Scots.
- Sean Connery

To marry the Irish is to look for poverty.
- J. P. Donleavy

You think the Welsh are friendly, but the Irish are fabulous.
- Bonnie Tyler

Ireland is rich in literature that understands a soul's yearnings, and dancing that understands a happy heart.

- Margaret Jackson

The problem with Ireland is that it's a country full of genius, but with absolutely no talent.

- Hugh Leonard

Only Irish coffee provides in a single glass all four essential food groups: alcohol, caffeine, sugar, and fat.

- Alex Levine

O Ireland isn't it grand you look--
Like a bride in her rich adornin?
And with all the pent-up love of my heart
I bid you the top o' the mornin!
-John Locke "The Exile's Return"

I'm troubled, I'm dissatisfied. I'm Irish.

- Marianne Moore "Spenser's Ireland"

An Irishman can be worried by the consciousness that there is nothing to worry about.

- Austin O'Malley

Ireland is where strange tales begin
and happy endings are possible.

- Charles Haughey

Irishness is not primarily a question of birth or blood or language; it is
the condition of being involved in the Irish situation, and usually of
being mauled by it.

- Conor Cruise O'Brien

For an Irishman, talking is a dance.

- Deborah Love

I showed my appreciation of my native land in the usual Irish way by
getting out of it as soon as I possibly could.

- George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950)

Put an Irishman on the spit and you can always get another Irishman
to turn him.

- George Bernard Shaw

When Irish eyes are smiling, watch your step.

- Gerald Kersh

Ah, Ireland... That damnable, delightful country, where everything that is right is the opposite of what it ought to be.

- Benjamin Disraeli

The quiet Irishman is about as harmless as a powder magazine built over a match factory.

- James Dunne

There is an Irish way of paying compliments as though they were irresistible truths which makes what would otherwise be an impertinence delightful.

- Katherine Tynan Hinkson

Every St. Patrick's Day every Irishman goes out to find another Irishman to make a speech to.

- Shane Leslie

If you are lucky enough to be Irish, you're lucky enough.

- Grace Boyle

In order to find his equal, an Irishman is forced to talk to God.

- Stephen Braveheart

I know tolerably well what Ireland was, but have a very imperfect idea of what Ireland is.

- John Stuart Mill

Love is never defeated, and I could add, the history of Ireland proves it.

- Pope John Paul II

My Ulster blood is my most priceless heritage.

- James Buchanan, 15th President of the United States

I found Ireland on her knees, I watched over her with eternal solicitude; I have traced her progress from injuries to arms and from arms to liberty.

- Henry Grattan

Dublin university contains the cream of Ireland: Rich and thick.

- Samuel Beckett

Our Irish blunders are never blunders of the heart.

- Maria Edgeworth

Ireland is a fruitful mother of genius, but a barren nurse.

- John Boyle O'Reilly

In Ireland, the inevitable never happens and the unexpected constantly occurs.

-Sir John Pentland Mahaffy

Why should Ireland be treated as a geographical fragment of England . . . Ireland is not a geographical fragment, but a nation.
- Charles Stewart Parnell

The Irish are not in a conspiracy to cheat the world by false representations of the merits of their countrymen. No, Sir, the Irish are a fair people; -- they never speak well of one another.
- Samuel Johnson

We may have bad weather in Ireland, but the sun shines in the hearts of the people and that keeps us all warm.
- Marianne Williamson

I have never met anyone in Ireland who understood the Irish Question, except one Englishman who had only been there a week.
Keith Fraser

When the Irishman is found outside of Ireland in another environment, he very often becomes a respected man. The economic and intellectual conditions that prevail in his own country do not permit the development of individuality. No one who has any self-respect stays in Ireland, but flees afar as though from a country that has undergone the visitation of an angered Jove.
- James Joyce

Ireland is the sow that eats her own farrow.
-James Joyce

When Ireland takes her place among the nations of the earth, and not 'till then, let my epitaph be written.

- Robert Emmet

Now Ireland has her madness and her weather still, For poetry makes nothing happen.

- W. H. Auden

The Irish don't know what they want and are prepared to fight to the death to get it.

- Sidney Littlewood

St. Patrick... one of the few saints whose feast day presents the opportunity to get determinedly whacked and make a fool of oneself all under the guise of acting Irish.

- Charles M. Madigan

The English are not happy unless they are miserable, the Irish are not at peace unless they are at war, and the Scots are not at home unless they are abroad.

- George Orwell

I rather think the cinema will die. Look at the energy being exerted to revive it -- yesterday it was colour, today three dimensions. I don't give it forty years more. Witness the decline of conversation. Only the Irish have remained incomparable conversationalists, maybe because technical progress has passed them by.

- Orson Welles

What's the use of being Irish if the world doesn't break your heart?

- John Fitzgerald Kennedy

God invented whiskey to keep the Irish from ruling the world.

- Ed McMahon

"You cannot conquer Ireland. You cannot extinguish the Irish passion for freedom. If our deed has not been sufficient to win freedom, then our children will win it by a better deed."

- Pádraig Pearse

An Irishman needs three things: silence, cunning and exile.

- James Joyce

Luck of the Irish? They have had 300 years of occupation, 2 famines and 30 years of civil war. Next stop, Vegas.

- Danny Bhoy

I find that I sent wolves not shepherds to govern Ireland, for they have left me nothing but ashes and carcasses to reign over!

- Elizabeth I

If Ireland is to become a new Ireland she must first become European.

- James Joyce

In some parts of Ireland the sleep which knows no waking is always followed by a wake which knows no sleeping.

-Mary Wilson Little

Ireland is a great country to die or be married in.

-Elizabeth Bowen

Out of Ireland have we come, great hatred, little room, maimed us at the start. I carry from my mother's womb a fanatic heart.

-William Butler Yeats

Some mornings you wake up and think, gee I look handsome today. Other days I think, what am I doing in the movies? I wanna go back to Ireland and drive a forklift.

- Liam Neeson

We are bound to lose Ireland in consequence of years of cruelty, stupidity and misgovernment and I would rather lose her as a friend than as a foe.

- William E. Gladstone

If it was raining soup, the Irish would go out with forks.

-Brendan Behan

"I'm Irish. I think about death all the time."

Jack Nicholson

I liken Ireland to whiskey in a glass – a cone of amber, a self-contained passage of time, a place a part, reaching out to the world with sometimes an acrid taste, a definite excess of personality, telling her story to all whom will listen, hauling them forward by the lapels of their coats until they hear, whether they want to or not. But always, always the story is the teller and the teller is the story.

- The Storyteller Frank Delaney's IRELAND

"Eternal is the fact that the human creature born in Ireland and brought up in its air is Irish. I have lived for twenty years in Ireland and for seventy-two in England; but the twenty came first, and in Britain I am still a foreigner and shall die one."

- George Bernard Shaw

I'm bidding you a long farewell,
My Mary, kind and true,
But I'll not forget you, darling,
In the land I'm going to.
They say there's bread and work for all,
And the sun shines always there;
But I'll not forget old Ireland,
Were it fifty times as fair.
- Helen Selina - Lament of the Irish Emigrant.

During the 1920s, a young student named Samuel Beckett reported seeing a fairy-man in the New Square of Trinity College Dublin; and two decades later a Galway woman, when asked by an American anthropologist whether she really believed in the "little people", replied with terse sophistication: "I do not sir – but they're there anyway."

- Declan Kiberd Inventing Ireland

Irish Proverbs

You can't kiss an Irish girl unexpectedly. You can only kiss her sooner than she thought you would.

A handful of skill is better than a bagful of gold

A cabin with plenty of food is better than a hungry castle

It is often that a person's mouth broke his nose.

It is better to be a coward for a minute than dead the rest of your life.

A goose never voted for an early Christmas.

A little fire that warms is better than a big fire that burns.

There is no tax on talk

Enough and no waste is as good as a feast.

It is easy to halve the potato where there is love.

Wisdom is the comb given to a man after he has lost his hair.

Everyone lays a burden on the willing horse.

God is good, but never dance in a small boat.

Don't be breaking your shin on a stool that's not in your way.

An old broom knows the dirty corners best.

God made time, but man made haste.

Get down on your knees and thank God you're still on your feet.

You'll never plough a field by turning it over in your mind.

If it's drowning you're after, don't torment yourself with shallow water.

Lose an hour in the morning and you'll be looking for it all day.

If you want praise, die. If you want blame, marry.

Beauty won't make the kettle boil.

Better good manners than good looks.

Forgetting a debt doesn't mean it's paid.

If you come up in this world be sure not to go down in the next.

Who gossips with you will gossip of you.

Hunger is a good sauce.

A heavy purse makes a light heart.

No two people ever lit a fire without disagreeing.

There's nothing so bad that it couldn't be worse.

God prefers prayers to tears.

The river is no wider from this side than the other.

One must pay health its tithe.

There are two things that cannot be cured: death and the want of sense.

The friend that can be bought is not worth buying.

He who can follow his own will is a king.

Better fifty enemies outside the house than one within.

Man is incomplete until he marries. After that, he is finished.

It is sweet to drink but bitter to pay for.

Good luck beats early rising.

Beware of the anger of a patient man.

A diplomat must always think twice before he says nothing.

The Irish forgive their great men when they are safely buried.

A good word never broke a tooth.

Drink is the curse of the land. It makes you fight with your neighbor.
It makes you shoot at your landlord and it makes you miss him

A spender gets the property of the hoarder.

Put a beggar on a horse and he'll ride it to hell.

You've got to do your own growing, no matter how tall your father was.

Both your friend and your enemy think you will never die.

A drink precedes a story.

A friend's eye is a good mirror.

A lock is better than suspicion.

A trade not properly learned is an enemy.

He who comes with a story to you brings two away from you.

He who gets a name for early rising can stay in bed until midday.

If you want to be criticized, marry.

Instinct is stronger than upbringing.

Lack of resource has hanged many a person..

The hole is more honourable than the patch.

The man with the boots does not mind where he places his foot.

The wearer best knows where the shoe pinches.

The well fed does not understand the lean.

There is hope from the sea, but none from the grave.

There is no fireside like your own fireside.

There is no need like the lack of a friend.

Two shorten the road.

Two thirds of the work is the semblance.

Everyone is sociable until a cow invades his garden.

A silent mouth is sweet to hear

Choose your company before you go drinking.

The old pipe gives the sweetest smoke.

A trout in the pot is better than a salmon in the sea.

Every patient is a doctor after his cure.

Patience cures many an old complaint.

Patience can conquer destiny.

Pity the man who does wrong and is poor as well.

The thief is no danger to the beggar.

Firelight will not let you read fine stories, but its warm and you wont see the dust on the floor.

Irish Blessings

May the road rise up to meet you.
May the wind always be at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
and rains fall soft upon your fields.
And until we meet again,
May God hold you in the palm of His hand.

May God give you...
For every storm, a rainbow,
For every tear, a smile,
For every care, a promise,
And a blessing in each trial.
For every problem life sends,
A faithful friend to share,
For every sigh, a sweet song,
And an answer for each prayer.

May neighbours respect you,
Trouble neglect you,
The angels protect you,
And heaven accept you.

May the rains sweep gentle across your fields,
May the sun warm the land,
May every good seed you have planted bear fruit,
And late summer find you standing in fields of plenty.

If God sends you down a stony path,
may he give you strong shoes.

May the best day of your past
Be the worst day of your future.

May you live to be a hundred years
With one extra year to repent.

May those who love us, love us
And those who don't love us,
May God turn their hearts
And if he can't turn their hearts,
May he turn their ankles
So we will know them by their limping!

May you live as long as you want,
And never want as long as you live.

Dance as if no one were watching,
Sing as if no one were listening,
And live every day as if it were your last.

May you have the hindsight to know where you've been
the foresight to know where you're going
and the insight to know when you're going too far.

May the roof above us never fall in, and may the friends gathered
below it never fall out.

May you have warm words on a cold evening, a full moon on a dark
night, and the road downhill all the way to your door.

May your doctor never earn a dollar out of you
and may your heart never give out.
May the ten toes of your feet steer you clear
of all misfortune, and before you're much older.

May you be poor in misfortunes,
and rich in blessings,
May you know nothing but happiness,
from this day forward,
May good luck be your friend,
In whatever you do,
And may trouble be always,
A stranger to you.

May you have nicer legs than yours under the table before the new
spuds are up.

We drink to your coffin. May it be built from the wood of a hundred
year old oak tree that I shall plant tomorrow.

Here's to being single...
Drinking doubles...
And seeing triple!

May the lilt of Irish laughter
lighten every load.
May the mist of Irish magic
shorten every road...
And may all your friends remember
all the favours you are owed!

Always remember to forget
The troubles that passed away.
But never forget to remember
The blessings that come each day.

May you always have a clean shirt, a clear conscience, and enough
coins in your pocket to buy a pint!

Here's to a temperance supper,
With water in glasses tall,
And coffee and tea to end with--
And me not there at all!

I drink to your health when I'm with you,
I drink to your health when I'm alone,
I drink to your health so often,
I'm starting to worry about my own!

Here's to women's kisses,
and to whiskey, amber clear;
Not as sweet as a woman's kiss,
but a darn sight more sincere!

May your glass be ever full.
May the roof over your head be always strong.
And may you be in heaven half an hour before the devil knows you're dead.

May your enemies never meet a friend.

May you live long,
Die happy,
And rate a mansion in heaven.

May your troubles be less
And your blessings be more.
And nothing but happiness
Come through your door.

May there be a generation of children
On the children of your children.

Bless you and yours
As well as the cottage you live in.
May the roof overhead be well thatched
And those inside be well matched.

May you have length with your days,
and strength with your step,
and may each season have a reason
to celebrate your faith in mankind!

To live above with the Saints we love,
Ah, that is the purest glory.
To live below with the Saints we know,
Ah, that is another story.