

*TransAtlantic*  
(2013)  
by  
Colum McCann

Irish Cultural Center  
Book Discussions  
Norton Room  
September 29, 2018  
10:30 AM – 12:30 PM

Discussion Guide:

McCann's concept of writing fits nicely with our broad theme of "Exploring." In an interview with Elizabeth Strout, he spoke of exploring, of finding new territory. He also questions the categories of "fact" and "fiction," preferring a broader term, "story."

► As we explore this novel, let's begin with the following questions:

Why does he begin with the little prologue about a cottage in Ireland?

Does the ending of the novel satisfy you? (Is it appropriate?)

Book One is devoted to three historical events, but they are not in chronological order. Why does he begin with Alcock and Brown?

What relationships exist between Books One and Two and Three?

What "territory" is McCann exploring? How should we think about the title? As readers we cross the Atlantic several times. How does that affect our reading of the text?

► Last year we began our discussions with *Making History*, a play by Brian Friel. Our first novel this year also invites us to think about history. (You will want to note the opening statement to Book One.) How would you characterize McCann's views on history? In his interview he suggests that a work of fiction can actually be more illuminating than a "factual" based history.

► Book One concerns male historical figures. Books Two and Three focus on female characters who are related. Describe these women and aspects they share. Do they seem as "real" as the historical men? Why are these female figures featured in the final sections?

► McCann's techniques in telling the story (stories?) have earned him critical praise. Think about how these stories get woven together through stream of consciousness, language, sentence structure, and allusions. Select some of your favorite examples of his narrative techniques.

!!! Looking Ahead---October 27: *Felicia's Journey* by William Trevor