

Peig: The Autobiography of Peig Sayers
Of the Great Blasket Island

By

Peig Sayers
(1874-1958)

McClelland Library Book Discussion

Saturday, February 25
10:30 AM – 12:30 PM
Norton Room

Masks are not required, but participants should feel free to wear them to maximize their comfort level.

Discussion Guide:

Peig Sayers (born Máiréad Sayers) is remembered as an Irish writer and seanchaí (a storyteller). She spoke and wrote in Irish and those works were translated into English. Her autobiography was a seminal text in Irish courses. It has been suggested that an early translator may have “improved” the text, but this may simply be a chauvinistic view. (You can see a fuller discussion of this in the Wikipedia article on Sayers.) We do know that she left the Great Blasket Island in 1942. If you search her name, you will discover additional information about her and the Blasket Islands.

1. Regarding the autobiography as a first-hand account of life in the West of Ireland, what do you discover about the way of life in this region during the first half of the 20th century?
2. Consider the life of Peig. What can you say about her values? How did she view her “lot” in life? Did you notice changes in her outlook as she aged?
3. Note some of the uses of language in the work. How do you account for the poetry and stories that are included?
4. Remember that we are trying to develop a definition or description for “Irish Literature.” How would this autobiography fit into such a definition?

→→Looking Ahead: In March, we will be discussing The Silent People by Walter Macken.