

Book Club Guide

*Includes a playlist, discussion questions, recipes,
a video from the author, and more!*



Contents

Playlist.....3

Pronunciation Guide.....3

Glossary of Terms.....4–5

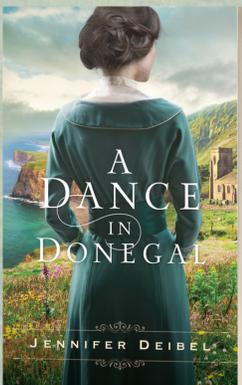
Discussion Questions.....6–7

Recipes.....8–10

What to Read Next.....11

About the Author.....12

About Revell.....13



A Dance in Donegal by Jennifer Deibel

To fulfill her mother's dying wish, Moira Doherty moves from Boston to the rolling green hills of 1921 Ireland to teach in a village school. She doesn't expect to fall in love—or to uncover a scandalous family reputation her mother left behind years ago.

Playlist

Here's a playlist of songs either mentioned or highlighted in the book, or that relate to the story and setting somehow, as well as songs that provided inspiration for *A Dance in Donegal*.

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/2CBwde7RkUBz1PG4wy1cs6>

Pronunciation Guide

Here's a pronunciation guide for the Irish Gaelic used throughout the story. Hear from author Jennifer Deibel and follow along through the glossary of terms found on the next pages or in the back of your book.

<https://youtu.be/DOWO4x4Zgwg>



Glossary of Terms

(Also found in the back of the book.)

amárach—[uh-MAH-rugh]—tomorrow

a Mhúinteoir—[uh WOON-chorr]—teacher, when addressing them directly

angelus—[ANE-geh-luss]—the national call to prayer in Ireland; church bells ring at noon and six in the evening

a thaisce—[uh HASH-kee]—a term of endearment, used when speaking to someone (not about them)

amadán—[AH-mah-donn]—idiot

anois—[eh-NISH]—now

babai—[BAH-bee]—baby; young one

beag—[BYUG]—little

Bíobla—[BEEB-luh]—Bible

bodhrán—[BOW-ronn]—a traditional Irish drum

breá—[BRAW]—handsome

cad a tharla?—[CAD uh HARR-luh]—what happened?

caoineadh—[KEEN-cheh]—keening; grieving

céilí—[KAY-lee]—a party with music, dancing, and often storytelling

ceol—[KYOHL]—music

cosa—[CUHSS-ee]—feet

craic—[CRACK]—fun, good times; often, but not always, involving music

créatúr—[KRAY-tur]—creature; often used as a term of endearment for an infant

Día dhuit—[JEE-uh DITCH]—a common formal greeting in Irish Gaelic

fáilte abhaile—[FALL-chuh uh-WAHL-yuh]—welcome home

Feabhra—[FOW-ruh]—February

footed—used to describe when turf is stacked on its end, typically to let it dry further

go raibh míle maith agaibh—[guh ruh MEE-luh MY uh-GEE]—Thank you very much, to more than one person

Gaeilge—[GAY-lih-guh]—Gaelic/Irish

gardaí—[garr-DEE]—police

Glossary of Terms

(Also found in the back of the book.)

grá mo chroí—[GHRA MOE CHREE]—love of my heart

gúna oíche—[GOO-nuh EE-huh]—nightdress

balla—hall

logb dom—[LOWG dumm]—forgive me

muinteoir—[MOON-chorr]—teacher

ní maith liom do trioblóide—[NEE MAH luhm do TRUH-bluhjuh]—traditional Irish sympathy greeting; literally “I don’t like your trouble.”

oh, Mbaidean—[oh WHY-jahn]—an exclamation of dismay; literally “Oh, Virgin!” referring to the Virgin Mary

oíche mbaith, a mbac—[EE-huh WAH uh WAHK]—good night, son

peat—[PEET]—a type of moss, found on the bog, used as solid fuel; also called turf

peata—[PA-the]—pet; a term of endearment

poitín—[PAH-cheen]—Irish moonshine

rógair—[ROH-gerd-uh]—rogue

scuab—[SKOO-uhb]—broom

seafóid—[SHAH-fooj]—nonsense

seanchaí—[SHAWN-hee]—a storyteller

sean nós—[SHAWN OHS]—a form of traditional Irish dancing or singing

shillelagh—[shih-LAY-lee]—a traditional Irish club or walking stick

sláinte—[SLAHN-chuh]—an Irish toast of blessings and health

stad—[STAHD]—stop

tá brón orm—[taw brone OR-uhm]—I’m sorry

tá sé ceart go leor, gach duine! Tá sí go álainn!—[taw shay cart go lore gak DINN-yuh!]

Taw shee go HAW-linn]—It’s okay, everyone! She’s lovely!

uilleann pipes—[UHL-uhn PIPES]—the Irish form of bagpipes, played by pumping a bag using one’s elbow rather than blowing into a mouthpiece

Discussion Questions

- 1. Moira leaves all she's ever known and moves to a foreign land, because she believes God is calling her to do so. When has God called you to do something unfamiliar and uncomfortable? Did you do it? How did it turn out? If you didn't do it, do you wish you had?**
- 2. Moira journeyed to Ballymann with the intention of becoming a teacher—but that was just the beginning of her story in Ireland. How did you see her grow throughout all she experienced in this novel?**
- 3. Irish Gaelic is the first language of the people of Ballymann, and Moira struggles to learn it. Have you ever learned a foreign language? If so, what was your experience like?**
- 4. What did you think of the Irish Gaelic sprinkled throughout the novel? Did you learn any new words?**
- 5. For a long time after she arrives, Moira only has two friends—Bríd and Sinead. How do you feel Moira handled the lack of community? Have you ever experienced something similar? If so, how did you handle it?**
- 6. Do you think Moira was foolish for agreeing to treat Áedach? If so, how could she have made a better choice? If not, why do you think others were so bothered by what she did?**

Discussion Questions

7. To follow up on the previous question, Áedach was considered dangerous by Moira and others, yet Moira followed God's leading in treating him nonetheless. Can you relate an event in the Bible when someone followed God's leadership even though it could've been dangerous or considered unacceptable/unwise by others?

8. Colm teaches Sean that a man who lives according to a higher purpose is following the calling to do rightly, love compassionately, and walk respectfully with his God. It doesn't matter who you are, but if you love the Lord with all your heart, soul, and mind, you'll make a difference in the world. How did you see the characters in this book living out that message?

9. As an apprentice thatcher, Sean had a built-in mentor in Colm. However, Colm and Peg went beyond just a professional mentorship and took Sean under their wing. Did they do the same for Moira? If so, in what ways? Do you think being a mentor to someone is a specific calling? Or is it merely choosing to invest in someone else?

10. Rumors, gossip, lies, and grudges play a big part in this story—and manage to take on a life of their own, as they often do in our own lives as well. What has this story taught or shown you about the power of those things? How do you handle them when they surface in your own life?

How to Brew a Proper Cuppa

by Jennifer Deibel

Tea is a huge part of the Irish lifestyle. In many ways, all their home life and social events are organized around tea. When you join a club, or a choir, or go to a PTA meeting, there is always, always a break for tea and biscuits.

When you go to someone's house, the first thing they will ask is if you want a cuppa. (The polite thing to do, by the way, is to refuse the first time they offer...and maybe the second. Then accept).

Had a hard day? Have a cuppa! Have something to celebrate? Put the kettle on! Over the years, I learned from the very best how to brew a proper Irish cup of tea.

1. Start with the right tea. My favorites are Lyons Gold Blend, Barry's Gold Blend, and Bewley's. You can typically find those brands at import shops like World Market or a local Irish gift and supply store. You can often find them in the imports section of your grocery store, and can even find them online at places like Amazon, etc. If you can't find it, a good Irish Breakfast tea will suffice.

2. Boil the water. You can boil it in a pan on the stove, a stovetop kettle, or—the way most Irish folk do it—using an electric kettle.

Whatever you do, please do not microwave the water. It's just not...proper.

How to Brew a Proper Cuppa

3. Prepare the teabags. If you have a teapot, swirl some hot water around in the it and dump it out. Then place one teabag for each person who will be partaking in it. If you don't have a teapot, place one teabag in a mug for each person.

4. Once boiled, pour the water over the teabags. Note: If using a kettle to boil the water, make sure not to use re-boiled water. It de-oxygenates it and changes the taste.

Let the tea bags steep. If using a teapot, it will need to steep longer than just a teabag in a mug. How long to steep, of course, depends on your taste. The Irish mostly like it strong. For myself, I let it steep about a minute, maybe a little more.

5. Once steeped to your strength preference, add any sugar and/or milk you'd like. Note this difference from the traditional British way: they typically add the sugar and milk to the cup before adding the tea.

6. Enjoy! I also love to savor my tea with a beloved biscuit (cookie). Some of my favorites are McVitties Digestives, Custard Creams, and Tea Cakes.

Irish Brown Bread

from the kitchen of Jennifer Deibel

1 3/4 Cup all purpose flour

1 3/4 Cup whole wheat flour (you can use all whole wheat if desired)

3 Tbs toasted wheat bran (If you can't find this, it will work without it)

3 Tbs toasted wheat germ

2 Tbs old fashioned oats

2 Tbs packed dark brown sugar

1 tsp baking soda

1/2 tsp salt

2 Tbs chilled butter, cut into pieces

2 Cups buttermilk (or 2 cups plain milk with 1 Tbs vinegar added; let sit for 5 min)

Preheat oven to 420° F (215° C). Combine first 8 ingredients in large bowl; mix well.

Add butter, rub in with fingertips until mixture resembles fine meal. Stir in enough

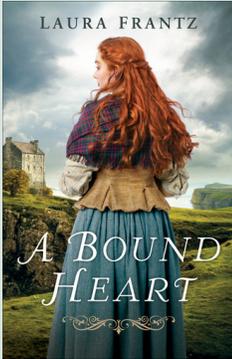
buttermilk to form a soft dough (you may or may not use all 2 cups). Transfer dough

in a pan that has been lightly greased and floured. Bake 40 minutes, or until bread is

dark brown and the tester comes out of the center clean. Turn bread out of the pan

and cool on wire rack. Best served with fresh butter.

What to Read Next



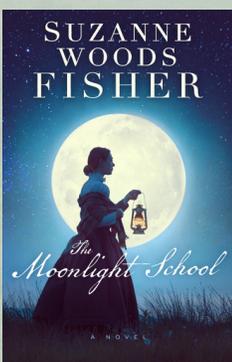
[A Bound Heart by Laura Frantz](#)

Their stations could not have been more different: a Scottish laird and a simple lass. When a tragedy forces both to colonial Virginia as indentured servants, can a love thwarted by tradition come to life in a new land?



[A Life Once Dreamed by Rachel Fordham](#)

A schoolteacher in the Dakota Territory must face her past—and her shameful secret—when a familiar doctor arrives in town and threatens to unlock the heart she's guarded so tightly.



[The Moonlight School by Suzanne Woods Fisher](#)

Based on true events, a young woman used to the finer things in life arrives in small town Appalachia in 1911 to help her formidable cousin combat adult illiteracy by opening moonlight schools.

About the Author

Jennifer Deibel is a middle school teacher whose work has appeared on (in)courage, on *The Better Mom*, in *Missions Mosaic* magazine, and others. With firsthand immersive experience abroad, Jennifer writes stories that help redefine home through the lens of culture, history, and family. After nearly a decade of living in Ireland and Austria, she now lives in Arizona with her husband and their three children.



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