

## Summer Reading for 20<sup>th</sup> Century Irish Literature, Mr. Selfridge

Welcome to the beginning of our exploration of 20<sup>th</sup> century Irish literature. In anticipation of our first day of class, I ask that all students read two works this summer:

The first work is the novel *A Star Called Henry*, by Roddy Doyle. We will look closely at Doyle's work toward the end of the semester, but it will be useful for you read this novel before beginning the course because the life of its protagonist, Henry, runs closely parallel with the political and social history of 20<sup>th</sup> century Ireland, the backdrop of all the Irish literature we will read together in the fall. This novel offers readers a sense of the grit and grind of 20<sup>th</sup> century Irish life and the particular struggles that both created and defined Ireland as a modern nation. Although I'm confident that you will enjoy this novel, I thus ask that you read it also for the historical details and perspectives it offers. There is only one edition (Penguin) available in the U.S.A., so that is the one to purchase or borrow from a library.

The second work is a collection of poetry titled *Field Work*, by Seamus Heaney. We will delve deeply into Heaney's work about mid-way through the semester, and you will only be prepared to do so if you live with these poems during the summer. Indeed, on the first day of class and thereafter, I will assume that all students have much more than a passing acquaintance with the poems in *Field Work*. So please read them, read them again, and develop your own responses to them, jotting down some notes for each if that will help you recall your ideas come the fall. I suggest reading *Field Work* from beginning to end at a comfortable pace and then, after a break, starting over, working through the collection more slowly, perhaps one poem per day, giving each a deeper consideration. Please spend time with all of the poems of *Field Work* except Heaney's version of the "Ugolino" episode from Dante's *Inferno*, which I ask that you skip. Postings regarding the poems in *Field Work* are numerous online; please feel free to explore the Internet to become acquainted with the ideas of others. I've seen two editions of *Field Work*—Faber and Knopf—in the States; they are the same, so either will be fine. *Field Work* is generally available new, and students will also find used, very inexpensive copies available in used book shops and on the internet. Please bring your copy of *Field Work* to class on our first day.

If during the summer you have any questions about the reading or what is expected, please feel free to contact me via email ([jselfridge@earthlink.net](mailto:jselfridge@earthlink.net)) and be patient as you wait for my response.

Have a great summer!