

Easter 1916 Key Facts

Writer: William Butler Yeats | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

Key Facts

- **Full Title:** Easter, 1916
- **Author:** William Butler Yeats (1865–1939)
- **Title of the Author:** The Last Romantic Poet & Irish National Poet
- **Prize:** Nobel Prize (1923)
- **Source:** Inspired by the Easter Rising of April 1916, a rebellion against British rule in Ireland
- **Written Time:** September 1916 (a few months after the rebellion and executions)
- **First Published:** It was first published in 1920 in the collection "Michael Robartes and the Dancer". Then in 1921, in the collection "The Wild Swans at Coole"
- **Publisher:** Cuala Press (initially); later published widely by Macmillan
- **Genre:** Political Poem, Elegy
- **Form:** Lyric poem with irregular stanza lengths (four stanzas: 16, 24, 16, and 24 lines)
- **Rhyme Scheme:** Loosely structured with no fixed rhyme scheme; occasional use of couplets
- **Tone:** Reflective, Mournful, Ambivalent, Reverent
- **Point of View:** First-Person (Yeats's personal reflections on the people and the uprising)
- **Climax:** The transformation of ordinary people into heroes through sacrifice: "All changed, changed utterly: A terrible beauty is born."
- **Significance:** A powerful meditation on nationalism, personal sacrifice, and the cost of revolution; blends personal memory with political commentary
- **Setting:**
 - **Time Setting:** April 1916 (Easter Rising)
 - **Place Setting:** Dublin, Ireland — specific places include the post office and streets associated with the rebellion

Key Notes

"Easter 1916" means the historic rebellion in Ireland during Easter Sunday of 1916. Irish nationalists took up arms against British rule. This event is called the "Easter Rising." It began on April 24, 1916, and lasted six days. The rebels captured important places in Dublin, like the General Post Office, and declared Ireland free. But the British army crushed the rebellion and executed the leaders. Though the rebellion failed, it became a turning point in Ireland's struggle for freedom. William Butler Yeats wrote a famous poem called "Easter, 1916" about this event. In the poem, he shows how ordinary people become immortal in history through sacrifice.

1916. B. Yeats's poem "Easter, 1916" was written in the early 20th century against the political unrest and nationalist movements in Ireland. At that time, Ireland was under British rule, and many people dreamed of freedom. On April 24, 1916, a rebellion known as the "Easter Rising" took place, where Irish nationalists took up arms against the British government. They captured important buildings in Dublin and declared Ireland free. Although the rebellion failed and its leaders were arrested and executed, the event marked a historic change in Ireland's history. Many of the leaders were personally known to Yeats. Before, he did not give them much importance. But after their sacrifice and death, his view changed. He realized that these ordinary people had become great by giving their lives for the country. This realization inspired him to write the poem in September 1916. However, it was first published in 1921 in the collection *The Wild Swans at Coole*.

Though "Easter, 1916" is a political poem, it also contains deep self-reflection, doubt, praise, and respect. Yeats was uncertain about the necessity of the rebellion, but he respectfully remembered the leaders' sacrifice. He wrote— "All changed, changed utterly: A terrible beauty is born." This line expresses the central idea of the poem. It means that through sacrifice, something new, terrible, yet beautiful was born. The poem is not just a record of a historic event; it reflects a nation's search for identity. Yeats not only told history but also painted a picture of a changed mindset—how ordinary people become extraordinary through revolution. "Easter, 1916" is therefore a tribute—political and historic on one side, and humane and personal on the other. It remains relevant today because it shows how sacrifice and faith can change a nation and leave a lasting mark on people's hearts.