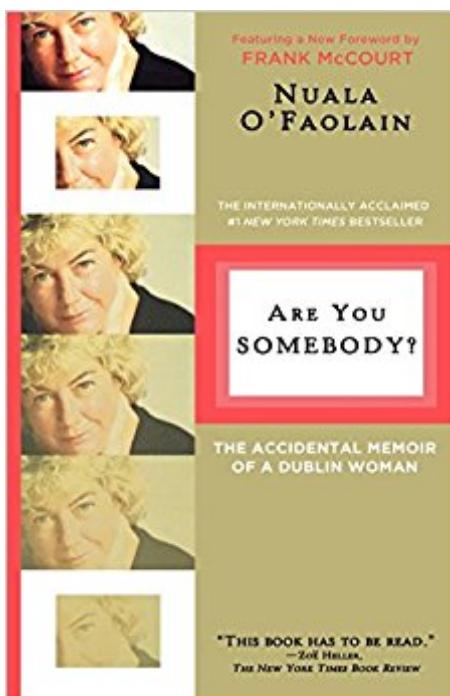


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Are You Somebody?: The Accidental Memoir Of A Dublin Woman



Synopsis

"You don't want the book to end; it glows with compassion and you want more, more because you know this is a fine wine of a life, richer as it ages." •Frank McCourt, author of *Angela's Ashes* One of nine children born into a penniless North Dublin family, Nuala O'Faolain was saved from a harrowing childhood by her love of books and reading. Though she ultimately became one of Ireland's best-known columnists, her professional success did little to ease her loneliness and longing for a deep connection to the world. *Are You Somebody?* distills her experiences into a wisdom that can only come from an obstinate refusal to shrink from life. This commemorative edition of her landmark memoir celebrates O'Faolain's remarkable life and work with a new foreword from Frank McCourt as well as additional archival materials. Strikingly vivid and starkly emotional, *Are You Somebody?* is, like O'Faolain herself, a singular example of courage, honesty, and bold living.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Self-preservation did not come instinctually to Irish journalist Nuala O'Faolain. One of 9 children--her mother had 13 pregnancies in all--she grew up in the 1940s and '50s in a defeated Dublin household. Her reporter father seems to have spent his time and money, and even love, elsewhere--and as the family grew more isolated and unable to cope, alcohol became her mother's only way out. "One of the stories of my life has been the working out in it of her powerful and damaging example in everything," the author admits, "Nothing mattered to her except passion." Some of O'Faolain's siblings emphatically didn't make it, but she was lucky to find refuge in books. They have been a defense, a comfort, and a delight. Does her memoir then follow the standard

rags-to-self-acceptance trajectory? Are you wondering if perhaps you can give it a miss, and in fact send the entire genre on a well-deserved vacation? Don't. *Are You Somebody* (the title unaccountably lost a question mark somewhere between the Irish and American editions) offers a wrenching account of childhood and a highly provocative take on the sexual and professional situation of Irish women. Though literature made O'Faolain, the male-dominated literary life and industry certainly didn't, and she now gives it more than a few body blows. It was a world in which writing and drink mattered far more than women: "The 'literary Dublin' I saw lied to women as a matter of course and conspired against the demands of wives and mistresses.... Women either had to make no demands, and be liked, or be much larger than life, and feared." Irish women didn't seem to know to look for, let alone demand, equality. O'Faolain miraculously avoided pregnancy; but others were not so blessed. "Lives were ruined at that time, thousands and thousands of them, quite casually.... They were hotly pursued, and half longed to yield, but they were not able to defend themselves against pregnancy, and they were destroyed if they got pregnant." For all her energy and ambition and good fortune (and she needed this trio to jump her family's "sinking ship" and avoid getting pregnant), O'Faolain fell for the cant that she must marry, have children, and serve. Some will be initially shocked by her assertion that she was lucky never to have had a child. "Childbearing, along with bad education, relationships that managed to be simultaneously all-absorbing and rewarding, and financial dependence--these were the enemies of promise. But that's not why I'm glad; I didn't think of myself as having promise. I'm glad because under the old system it was so easy to rear children badly. The child wouldn't have properly survived." Yet the '70s enabled her to break out of the assumptions and realities of Irish women's lives, not to mention her yearning to be like "the troubled, rich, English upper-class people in books." At the end of her memoir, O'Faolain knows she finally is, in fact, somebody. Still, those who don't recognize her see her only as a single, middle-aged woman. Like children, such individuals "aren't supposed to kick up." Thanks to this bracing book, the author gets to permanently do so. The writing exercise has answered some of her questions and some of her fears, but O'Faolain is too honest not to admit that for others there is no response or cure. She leaves us wanting to know more about her life but grateful that she has allowed us in. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"I'm not anybody in terms of the world, but then, who decides what a somebody is? How is a somebody made?" asks Irish Times columnist O'Faolain. The answer can be found in her moving and painfully honest memoir, a best seller in her native Ireland that deserves as much attention

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This is the late Nuala O'Faolain's best seller which is a warts and all account of her personal and professional life and travels. Nuala was a gifted wordsmith and was not afraid to tackle subjects that provoke interest and critical thought in the reader. This edition is expanded to include some of her articles from her time as a professional journalist, one of which borders on fiction (the term coined in the eighties to describe a mixture of fiction and fact). The book and all the articles in it held my interest intensely. Strangely, within this text, is the only place a reader may find the article, "The Gold coast of County Down". Sadly it was not included in a later collection of her selected articles of journalism that has been published. If you are interested in a contemporary Irish view of Ireland and the World this is an entertaining and essential read.

Nuala O'Faolain was complicated -- she tried to write this book to explain herself and/or life. She laid it out as she lived it -- fascinating and troubling. That she's at peace now is the consolation she deserved, and the goal she never found.

I'm as surprised at all the bad reviews, as some of you are surprised by the good ones. I would call this book one of the best I've ever read. I love books for different reasons... the quality of writing, the "story" itself, the development of the story, and/or how the book itself makes me feel - ie. how much I'm moved or entertained by it. I sobbed thru about the last 60 pages of this one. This book made me wish I knew this woman. It's incredible to me - her life, her dreams, her intelligence, her inner beauty and turmoil...everything about her. I will read this again...I will be 50 next month, and maybe this book means more to me than most - as I live alone (divorced), and never had children. We love things for different reasons. I love this book for all the right ones. Enjoy.

Was very disappointed with this book. My expectations were high following the notes by Frank McCourt and the good reviews. I am a Canadian/Irish person, in my 70s. If scholarships were publicized and available when I was young I would have applied for this valuable education. That issue made me cynical during my reading of this book. Very difficult to believe. The first 24 years of my life were in Ireland.

Love this writer - this book, too, is fantastic, especially anyone with an Irish background.

This was bought by my mom and she loves it and highly recommends it.

Fabulously written. Melancholic, nostalgic, fun and in many ways very sad. Loved her writing. A big loss. RIP

Don't care for this author who wrote one book, then wrote the next book about her writing of the first book. Redundant and silly.

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