

Dublin One City One Book 2020

Featuring *Tatty* by Christine Dwyer Hickey



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Dublin City Council



An Roinn Turasóireachta, Cultúir,
Ealaíon, Gaeltachta, Spóirt agus Meán
Department of Tourism, Culture,
Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media

The 2020 Dublin One City One Book campaign had a very successful launch event in the Mansion House in late February which featured readings and a wonderful speech by author of *Tatty*, Christine Dwyer Hickey. Details of the programme of 30 events for April, including talks, writing workshops, panels and musical events, were published online, with the printed version of the programme being made available to the audience on the day. A photo from the launch featured in the Irish Times and Christine was interviewed by Pat Kenny on Newstalk and by Henrietta McKervey in The Irish Independent.

Once it became apparent in mid-March that physical events would not be possible due to the Covid situation, the Dublin UNESCO City of Literature team set about putting other online offerings in place, in a very uncertain and unprecedented situation.



Website

It was important to create links on the Dublin One City One Book website to borrowing and buying the book, due to library and book shop closures in April. Dublin City Libraries purchased an additional 100 electronic copies of *Tatty*, available through Borrowbox, which we wanted to make sure to publicise. We engaged with readers through our social media pages as well as our online newsletter. City of Literature team member, Jackie Lynam, talked to Brian Dobson on Morning Ireland at the end of March about Dublin City Libraries' online services including the reimagined Dublin One City One Book initiative.

The Dublin One City One Book website was improved considerably, to make it a more usable landing page with more content, where previously it was used only for describing the featured book and listing the April events each year. It was necessary to remove the 2020 programme of events and add a page with links to the new Dermot Bolger introduction to the 2020 edition of *Tatty*, along with the opening chapter of the book, plus some useful book club questions to assist any groups who were able to take their book discussions online. We also posted a blog by literary critic Dorothy Allen – 'Reading *Tatty* in the Time of Coronavirus', thanks to The Irish Literary Society. Allen had been due to interview Christine in London for Dublin One City One Book. Over the course of the month the website had over 3500 unique visitors.

Videos

Seána Kerslake, one of Ireland's most talented young actors, produced four very entertaining video readings of excerpts of *Tatty*. These were shared on our social media channels, with a new video uploaded each Monday during the month. These received a very positive reaction from the public with over 3500 views on YouTube. The viewing numbers are still growing each day.

Podcasts

Author and journalist Martina Devlin produced Four Dublin One City One Book- themed podcasts for the [City of Books](#) series, where she interviews and speaks to people from different spheres of life who all believe that books matter. These new episodes of the podcasts were released online each Friday during the month of April. Guests included Finance Minister Paschal Donohoe and Christine Dwyer Hickey; writer and editor Sinéad Gleeson talked about *Tatty* – as well as her experience when *The Long Gaze Back* was the 2018 Dublin One City One Book choice; author Carlo Gébler talked about *The Country Girls Trilogy*, written by his mother Edna O'Brien, which was the 2019 Dublin One City One Book. He also spoke about children feeling powerless in an adult world and shared some life lessons from 30 years spent teaching in prisons; Sinéad Crowley spoke about the Dublin One City One Book initiative, revealed some of her favourite choices over the years, and talked about her Detective Claire Boyle crime series; Marita Conlon-McKenna talked about the magic of storytelling, why famine stories continue to grip us and the powerful use of the child's voice in *Tatty*. The City of Books podcast series has had over 10,000 downloads so far.

Other Events and Competitions

We were able to partner at short notice with a number of organisations, to help widen the newly imagined Dublin One City One Book programme, and bring the book to the attention of as many readers as possible.

Seamus Heaney- Listen Now Again at Bank of Ireland College Green did a virtual Twitter Book club on 4th April where members of the public engaged and discussed the *Tatty* book club questions that feature on our website and at the back of the book.

Over the course of the month, we ran three competitions through our social media channels where 35 members of the public won copies of *Tatty* and one of our specially commissioned Christine Dwyer Hickey notebooks, produced by At it Again. Rick O'Shea also ran a competition for copies of *Tatty* and At it Again notebooks on his online book club which has over 31,000 members.

The Little Museum of Dublin ran a virtual competition and online challenge on Twitter posting scenes from *Tatty* and encouraging the public to share their memories and drawings.

Christine Dwyer Hickey was featured on RTE's Nationwide programme on the 7th April, where she was interviewed and spoke about her writing career and the writing of her latest novel, *The Narrow Land* (Atlantic Books), Dublin One City One Book and *Tatty*.

Christine Dwyer Hickey produced a special online reading for the Dublin One City One Book website, taken from her short story collection *The House on Parkgate Street and other Stories*. The beautifully read piece also includes music by Denis Hickey. This is available to view on the Dublin One City One Book website and on SoundCloud.

Stats

From the beginning of March to the end of April, between our two Facebook pages Dublin UNESCO City of Literature and Dublin One City One Book, our followers grew by over 2,400, bringing our total number of followers between the two pages to 10,352.

From the beginning of March to end of April our Twitter followers grew by 267 to a total following of 13,087.

The Dublin One City One Book website had over 3,500 unique visits during the month of April.

There were 1700 library issues of *Tatty* nationwide from January to October 2020 – 1140 of these were in Dublin City. The majority were borrowed in February and early March (797 issues) before libraries were closed to the public.

On-street Promotion

The promotional campaign planned for April had to be re-thought very quickly when it became apparent that most physical events would have to be cancelled. At first the wording on posters and banners was changed to 'Let's Read' and 'Let's Get Dublin Reading' to reflect the fact that the



book was still available digitally or to buy and could still be enjoyed along with the digital content, but when full lockdown came it became impossible to even have the materials erected so these plans were put off till the autumn.

September saw the appearance of a giant banner on Liberty Hall, which was a huge positive statement to the people of Dublin about the campaign. This was accompanied by street banners on lamp posts along the quays and on Stephen's Green. We commissioned photographs of the author on the street in front of the banners for use on social media.

Autumn Events:

The New Theatre staged five performances of *Tatty* in early September, funded by Dublin UNESCO City of Literature. Excerpts from the novel were adapted by Audrey Devereaux and performed by Felispeaks in front of a socially distanced audience in the New Theatre. These were some of a very small number of live events in the city in the autumn and were gratefully appreciated by their audiences.

Bray Literary Festival hosted an online Zoom event with Christine Dwyer Hickey and Billy O'Callaghan, chaired by Dermot Bolger. This event was due to take place in front of an audience in The Mermaid Theatre in Bray but was changed at the last minute to an online event because of travel restrictions. Dublin UNESCO City of Literature also sponsored this event.

Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Libraries hosted two events with Christine Dwyer Hickey in November, with journalist and author Martina Devlin interviewing Christine in the Lexicon Library. Both these events were recorded in advance and broadcast online on November 12th (Turning Ideas into Books) and 26th (Dublin as a Literary Location).

Mount Carmel Secondary School organised readings of *Tatty* with TY students. We sent them 30 complimentary copies of the book, which they read in September and October. The teacher used resources on the DOCOB website, including Seána Kerslake's videos and the book club questions, to facilitate students' understanding of the book.

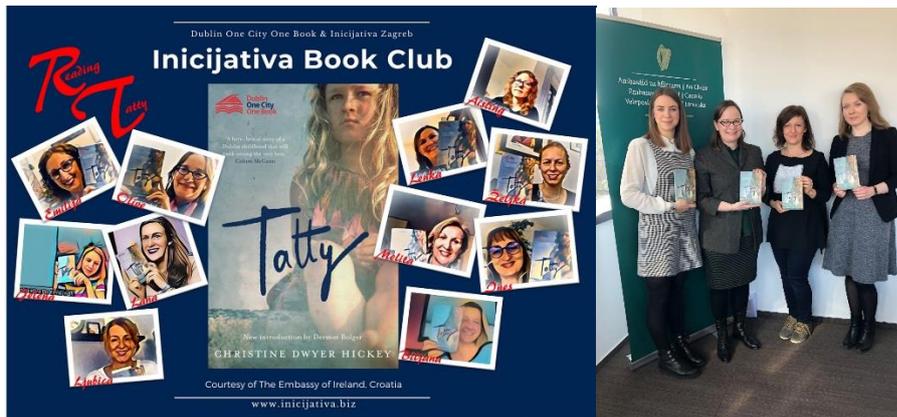
Oversees Engagement:

Poland

The Irish Embassy in Warsaw ran a pilot project called "Dublin Book Club" in early 2020, with reading and discussion as part of the project running during the month of April, in parallel with Dublin One City One Book. Eleven book clubs from all over the country participated in the project. Although the coronavirus pandemic put paid to physical meetings, online discussion groups took place in a private Facebook group. About half of the project participants had never participated in a book club before. Half read the book in English, half read the book in the Polish translation, which made *Tatty* a great choice on this occasion and accessible to all readers. Embassy staff were delighted to be able to conduct bilingual online discussion of the book and the City of Literature team hopes to partner with them again in 2021.

Croatia

Copies of *Tatty* were sent to the Inicijativa Book Club in Zagreb, through the Irish Embassy in Croatia. Their book club members read *Tatty* during lockdown in Croatia and held Zoom Book Club meetings to discuss it. On 24th September they watched our main online event with Christine and commented that ‘it was a great way to stay connected and support their book club members in uncertain times’



London

Following last year’s successful partnership with The Irish Literary Society in London, Gavin Clarke organised a discussion event with Christine to be chaired by Dorothy Allen, a former BBC journalist. This was postponed when it became clear that Christine couldn’t travel to the UK. ILS published a blog by Dorothy Allen titled *Reading Tatty in the Time of Coronavirus* which we shared on the DOCOB website and on social media.

Argentina

The book club of the Irish Embassy in Argentina read *Tatty* ahead of their first virtual meeting in October. Members watched the flagship event in September online, including Ambassador of Ireland to Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay and Uruguay Jackie Bernstein, who promoted the event to their local audiences via her personal and the Embassy’s Twitter accounts.

Flagship Event:

A decision was made to collaborate with Dublin Book Festival for a special online version of our main Dublin One City One Book event, which had originally been planned on a grand scale for the theatre in Liberty Hall and would have attracted up to 400 people.

The collaboration with DBF had the benefit of increasing our audience and the festival team looked after the logistics of filming the event, which was funded by Dublin UNESCO City of Literature. The process wasn’t straightforward due to Covid-19 restrictions regularly changing but the quality of the final product was to a very high standard and this was a great learning experience for all. Christine

was interviewed by Niall MacMonagle in Kevin St library and accompanied by three musicians. Donnacha Dwyer was filmed in Kevin St Library and two other musicians – Leonora Carney and Colm Byrne - were filmed in Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane. The event was broadcast on Thursday 22nd September and over 350 people from around the world watched live via Dublin Book Festival Crowdcast. RTE Culture online also streamed the event and afterwards it was made available on the Dublin UNESCO City of Literature YouTube channel.

Following the live showing, there were subsequently an additional 652 viewings of this event, bringing the entire total to over 1000 - well over twice the number we might have had at the live Liberty Hall event originally planned.

Dublin UNESCO City of Literature and Dublin City Libraries wish to sincerely thank the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sports and Media for their ongoing support with this important reading initiative.