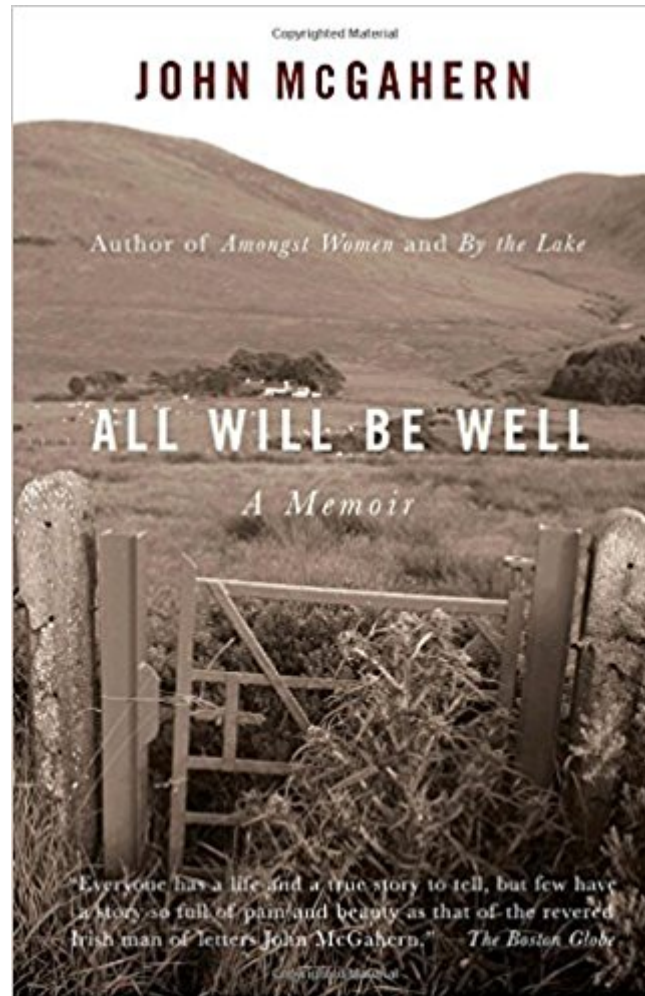




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# All Will Be Well: A Memoir



## Synopsis

From award-winning author John McGahern, a memoir of his childhood in the Irish countryside and the beginnings of his life as a writer. McGahern describes his early years as one of seven children growing up in rural County Leitrim, a childhood was marked by his father's violent nature and the early death of his beloved mother. Tracing the memories of home through both people and place, McGahern details family life and the beginnings of a writing career that would take him far from home, and then back again. Haunting and illuminating, *All Will Be Well* is an unforgettable portrait of Ireland and one of its most beloved writers.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Now in his early 70s, award-winning novelist McGahern grew up in rural Ireland, the oldest of seven children in a dysfunctional, devoutly religious family. He adored his schoolteacher mother, who died of breast cancer when he was nine, and he writes of her with awe and tenderness. The young McGahern set his sights on the priesthood, a dream tied up with his love of his mother: "We'll live together in an old presbytery close to the church, and when you die I'll say so many Masses for you that you'll hardly have to spend any time in purgatory." She was the opposite of his coldly calculating father, Frank, who was suspicious, secretive, miserly and fueled by a need to dominate everyone in his life. The kind of husband who prayed for his dying wife, but didn't sit by her bedside, and the kind of father who didn't attend his children's weddings, Frank was the obvious inspiration for the patriarch of McGahern's most famous work, *Amongst Women*. The writing is lyrically beautiful and rich in details of Ireland of the '40s and '50s. Yet the memoir is also hard to penetrate

because of its digressions and the unfortunate editorial choice to run the text together without chapter breaks. (Feb. 13) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

An interesting critical discourse arises from Irish writer John McGahern's new memoir. Reviewers who don't count it among his best write as if they've been cheated. By allowing readers a peek behind his fictional scrim, they feel McGahern, who died this past March, at age 71, handicapped their enjoyment of his well-regarded novels by revealing his emotional mother lode of sources. The majority of critics disagreed with that assessment, casting *All Will Be Well* as a fascinating glimpse into "the fragments of the life that lies scattered across his remarkable novels and stories" (New York Times Book Review). His memoir is no jocular yarn in the tradition of *Angela's Ashes*; McGahern has no chapter breaks and his style is often dense with description. But critical appraisal tips in favor of McGahern for his thoughtful rendering of a difficult childhood. Copyright © 2004 Phillips & Nelson Media, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

I am only a few years younger than John McGahern and my maternal grandparents grew up in County Leitrim prior to coming to the US in the early 1890's. McGahern chose to focus on his early years for most of this book because, in many ways, it is an ode to his mother. The author's Mom was an educated woman who taught in the local schools, but sadly, she died from cancer when the author was 9 years of age. From then on, he and his 4 younger siblings were raised by several "hired girls" and his father, who was a Sargeant in the Garda (the Irish Republic national police). McGahern, who died around the time this book was published, was an excellent writer who captures what life in County Leitrim was like as he was growing up in the late 30's and 40'. He describes how he rode his little bicycle for miles at a very young age in order to spend the weekend with his father where he was stationed. We are also told how his demanding father had him cutting turf from the bog from an early age and that his father seldom, if ever, uttered a word of praise or encouragement to him or his siblings. Later in the book, we learn that some of McGahern's writings were banned in his native country. It is to his credit, that McGahern never engages in tirades against his tyrannical father or the Catholic Church in Ireland. However, from this book and his writings in general, it is clear that he stood up to both his father and the Church.

Irish literature is justly recognized as some of the most remarkable in any language. John McGahern's Memoir *ALL WILL BE WELL* was a revelation. It is an account of his life from the

perspective of adulthood, focusing upon his childhood and specifically the early death of his Mother. But more than that it is an intimate story of one family that attains a kind of universality in its particularity.

Excellent memoir about the author's childhood. He shows a very interesting picture of the Catholic Church in Ireland and how they influenced all walks of life. He paints a sad picture of his father. He is an amazing author telling about the day to day life in Ireland.

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John McGahern's memoir summarises the leitmotifs of his fictional works, where recurring themes of abused children, put-upon wives, and dominating, "old-school" husbands are echoed here. Indeed, one can trace the genesis of the themes of his novels from the people, places, and circumstances that provide the unity of his prose in "All Will Be Well". And the kind of man and writer into which McGahern matured is elegantly presented in this quote (p. 87): "I am sure it is from those days that I take the belief that the best of life is life lived quietly, where nothing happens but our calm journey through the day, where change is imperceptible and the precious life is everything".

McGahern delves into his source material. This autobiography is as gracefully written as his novels. He reveals his courage as a writer and as a person who somehow had the strength to invent himself.

The painful childhood of this gifted Irish writer will demonstrate how beauty can spring from suffering

I love reading memoirs, but I found this one not easy to get through - not a terrible book, just not for me.

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