



ОБУЧЕНИЕ  
АНГЛИЙСКОМУ ЯЗЫКУ:  
ОТ ГЛОБАЛИЗАЦИИ  
К КУЛЬТУРНОМУ МНОГООБРАЗИЮ



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## **The Worlds of William Butler Yeats**

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One of the greatest figures of twentieth century writing, William Butler Yeats was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1923. His life was full of variety and his interests wide-ranging-from poetry to theatre, politics to spiritualism. From Celtic legends and ancient sagas, as well as his own experience, he created a world literature. But first of all, he was the son of his dear native country - Ireland. There is no other piece of land on the earth, small as it is, which gave birth to such an enormous galaxy of writers, poets and dramatists as Eire, the independent state of Ireland, which gained its independence from British colonialism thanks to these people, too. To mention but few, they are Jonathan Swift, Bernard Shaw, Oscar Wilde, James Joyce, William Butler Yeats, Sean O'Casey, Behan Brendan, Samuel Beckett [1, p. 5].

One of the brightest stars in this unprecedented galaxy is W.B. Yeats, poet, gentleman and politician whose contribution into the cultural and political life of Ireland cannot be overestimated. A closer look at his biography fills us with enchantment and, perhaps, with awe, since it was an outstanding existence of a "larger than life figure" (This word combination has been snatched by the author

of this article from a program about Shakespeare recorded on a cassette (London).

W.B. Yeats (1865-1939) was born into an Anglo-Irish Protestant family in Dublin but at the age of two moved with his family to London. In 1880 Yeats's family returned to Dublin [2, p. 1222]. They rented a thatched cottage on the cliff-top above the busy fishing village of Howth. It is important to note that it was in this house where young W.B. Yeats, who was 15 at the time, listened to the tales of the fisherman's wife, a servant in the house, that he used later on in the poem 'Village Ghosts' in *Celtic Twilight*, the first book he had published [3, p. 16].

John Yeats, W.B. Yeats's father, quitted his career of a lawyer and earned his living as a painter at a studio in York Street, near St Stephen's Green, in the centre of Dublin. He influenced his son and W.B. Yeats as a young man also took up painting. As Mary Moriarty and Catherine Sweeney point out, every morning William and his father would take the train from Howth into Dublin and have breakfast together at the studio. During breakfast John would read poetry or passages from famous plays to his son. Father and son would discuss what had been read and then William would go off to school while his father spent the day painting. In the evening they would return to Howth by train [3, p. 16].

It is clear that the father's influence on William was great. He developed the boy's imagination and broadened his knowledge. They discussed the works of Keats, Shelley, Wordsworth and Shakespeare. The father introduced him to the great works of art, pointing out the artist's different styles and techniques. It was about this time that William began to write poetry. At the time when he left high school he could not decide whether he wanted to be a painter or a writer [3, p. 18].

In 1884 Yeats entered the Metropolitan School of Art in Dublin. Influenced by the mysticism of his fellow student George Russell, Yeats turned to theosophy, spiritualism and oriental philosophy. Another early influence was the veteran Fenian John O'Leary who introduced him to Irish mythology and nationalist literature [1, p. 56]. O'Leary had a keen enthusiasm for Irish books, music and ballads, and he encouraged young writers to adopt Irish subjects. And though Yeats preferred more romantic settings and themes, soon took O'Leary's advice, producing many a poem based on Irish legends, Irish folklore, and Irish ballads and songs [7]. The poet wrote later, 'From O'Leary's conversation and from the Irish books he lent or gave me has come all I have set my hand to since.' O'Leary's love for Ireland had a lasting effect on Yeats. He used to call regularly to O'Leary's house where he met other young people and spent long hours in talk and discussion. There he met a young poet, Katherine Tynan, who later described him as 'all dreams and gentleness, beautiful to look at with his dark face, its touch of vivid coloring, the night black hair, the eager dark eyes ... he lived, breathed, ate, drank and slept poetry' [3, p. 20].