

Gaelic/Irish Lessons

Introduction.

The first time I saw these lessons mentioned was in a post to a newsgroup soc.culture.irish some years ago. These lessons were originally posted to a Irish interest maillist by Neil McEwan. I looked at them, and I knew they would make a great addition to my website. I hope you enjoy them, and learn something from them.

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Gaelic/Irish Lessons

I came across an old out-of-copyright edition of the Christian Brothers' Irish Grammar (from 1902), and thought that the opening chapter on pronunciation would do well as the basis for a general introduction to Irish lessons on Celtic-L.

As source material for these lessons I'm using Teach Yourself Irish, Buntus Cainte, New Irish Grammar by the Christian Brothers, and a book on Ulster Irish called "The Irish of Tory Island". So if you see sentences or examples that come from these books, it's not a coincidence.

Armed with the pronunciation guide we can start the grammar. I won't give any more pronunciation to words because I don't think mine would be reliable anyway; after doing the lessons you can move on to tapes or download some online sound-files in Irish. These lessons are cobbled together using information and examples gleaned from a number of different Irish textbooks, so if you hear anything that sounds familiar that's why. Corrections to any of this material from Irish-speakers on the list are always welcome -- I'm neither a native-speaker or even an advanced learner and make no claims to infallibility; I summarize grammar well and that's about it.

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Gaelic/Irish Lessons

Irish Pronunciation, by the Christian Bros.

Background

Irish, like most of the languages in Europe and like many in Asia as well, is a member of the Indo-European family of languages, a family descended from a common ancestral language that was probably spoken between 3000 and 2000 B.C., and probably in the area of what is now Iran or the Caucasus. The Indo-European languages are divided up into different branches; French and Spanish belong to the Romance branch, for instance, whereas English belongs to the Germanic branch. The Irish language belongs to another branch altogether, Celtic, which is split into two parts called "P" and "Q" Celtic. "Q" Celtic contains Irish, Scots Gaelic, and Manx, collectively called the Gaelic languages; "P" Celtic contains Welsh, Cornish, and Breton, the "Brythonic" languages. Although all of the Celtic languages retain some features in common, generally the languages of "P-Celtic" are unintelligible to speakers of the languages of "Q-Celtic", and vice versa.

All of the "Q-Celtic" languages are descended from Old Irish, and still share much in common with each other.

Pronunciation

The Irish language, though in the distant past written in "ogham" characters, has used the Latin alphabet for most of its history. The Irish version of this alphabet contains five vowels - *a, e, i, o, and u* - and thirteen consonants - *b, c, d, f, g, h, l, m, n, p, r, s, and t*. But other letters such as "v" and "x" show up in foreign loan-words.

This is only intended to be a *rough* guide to pronunciation, just to give an idea and what Irish sounds like. But I highly recommend buying a tape of people speaking Irish to pick up the accent and also to pick up what I've had to leave out here.

a) Vowels

There are two classes of vowels, the broad and the slender. The broad vowels are a, o, and u. The slender vowels are e and i. (This distinction is important to the pronunciation of the consonants that surround the vowels). In addition, each vowel has a long and a short form, the long form usually being marked with an accent. The approximate pronunciations of the vowels are as follows:

<u>Vowel</u>	<u>Sounds like...</u>	<u>In the English word</u>
á	aw	saw
a	a	tap
é	ay	say [but shorter]
e	e	let
í	ee	feel
i	i	tin
ó	o	note [but shorter]
o	u	much
ú	oo	tool
u	u	bull

b) Consonants

Consonants each have two pronunciations, broad and slender, depending on whether they are next to a broad vowel (a, o, u) or slender vowel (e, i), respectively. (Because of the Irish grammatical rule "broad with broad and slender with slender", a vowel on one side of a consonant has to be the same kind as a vowel on the other side of it). In some cases, these broad and slender pronunciations are *clearly* different, and where are they I've marked it down on the table below. But a couple of letters have differences that are more subtle and not expressible in writing, and these involve sounds that will have to be picked up by listening to an Irish-speaker. Because of this, I haven't marked the different pronunciations of these letters in the table - just for the time being pronounce them as they are in English.

<u>Consonant</u>	<u>Sounds like</u>	<u>in the English word</u>
b	b	<i>bed</i>
c	c	<i>cat</i>
d (broad)	d	<i>die</i>
d (slender)	tch	<i>watch</i>
f	f	<i>fed</i>
g	g	<i>get</i>
l	l	<i>let</i>
m	m	<i>man</i>
n	n	<i>not</i>
p	p	<i>pet</i>
r	r	<i>run</i>
s (broad)	s	<i>set</i>
s (slender)	sh	<i>shin</i>
t (broad)	t	<i>top</i>
t (slender)	tch	<i>watch</i>

Diphthongs and Triphthongs

Diphthongs and triphthongs are combinations of two and three vowels, respectively. Sometimes they act as one sound (like the diphthong "au" in the English name "Paul", for instance).

Diphthongs

<u>Diphthong</u>	<u>Sounds like</u>	<u>in the English word</u>
ia	"ee-a"	<i>Maria</i>
ua	"oo-a"	<i>Kahlua</i>
eu	ai	<i>air</i>
ae	ae	<i>Gaelic</i>
ao	[cross between] ee + oo	[no English equivalent, but "oo" is close enough for now]
éo	yo	<i>yo-yo</i>
iu	ew	<i>few</i>
ái	aw + i	[no English equivalent]
éi	ay + e	[no English equivalent]
óí	o + ee	<i>Joey</i>
úi	oo + ee	<i>hooy</i>
eá	aa	[no English equivalent]
íó	ee	<i>deer</i>
ai, ea	a	<i>far</i>
ei	e	<i>eh</i>
oi	uh + ee	[no English equivalent]
io, ui	i	<i>ill</i>
eo	uh	<i>dull</i>
aí	ee	<i>feel</i>

Triphthongs

aoi	ee	<i>see</i>
eoi	oh + short i	[no English equivalent]
eái	aa + short i	[no English equivalent]
iai	eeah + ee	[no English equivalent]
uai	oo + short i	[no English equivalent]
iui	ew + short i	[no English equivalent]

Word Stress

Stress generally falls on the first syllable of the word, except when any of the other syllables contains a long vowel, in which case the stress falls on that syllable instead.

Aspiration and Eclipsis

You might have heard these dreaded words before -- they're the two reasons most often given for not learning Irish!

But they really are not very difficult at all. Aspiration and eclipsis are simply two ways in which some of the consonants in Irish can be altered to show grammatical change. This is done for exactly the same reasons that (for example) in English we put "-ed" at the end of a verb to show that it happened in the past (e.g. "walked"), or put "s" at the end of a noun to show a plural. However, in Irish, as in the rest of the Celtic languages, these changes are made not at the end of words but at the beginning of them. And these changes cause regular and predictable changes in pronunciation as well.

a) Aspiration

The consonants that can be aspirated are b, c, d, f, g, m, p, s, and t. They are aspirated by having "h" put after them.

Consonant	Aspirated Form	Sounds Like
b	bh	"w" as in "wet"
c	ch	"ch" as in "loch"
d	dh (broad)	"gh" as in "ugh"
d	dh (slender)	"y" as in "yet"; [silent at the end of a word]
f	fh	[silent]
g	gh (broad)	"gh" as in "ugh"
g	gh (slender)	"y" as in "yet"; [silent at the end of a word]
m	mh	"w" as in "wet"
p	ph	"f" as in "fit"
s	sh	"h" as in "hat"
t	th	"h" as in "hat"; [silent at the end of a word]

Note: both "dh" and "gh" have broad and slender forms, just like the regular consonants.

Here's an example of how aspiration works to show a grammatical change. In Irish the word "mo" means "my" and the word "bróg" (pronounced "brok") means "shoe". But "mo" always aspirates the first letter of a word that follows it (if that word starts with a letter that can be aspirated, of course). So if you want to say "my shoe", you say "mo bhrog" (pronounced "mo vrok").

b) Eclipsis

Eclipsis looks more difficult than aspiration, but is in fact easier because the pronunciation is always the sound of the first letter in the pair:

Consonant	Eclipsed Form	Sounds like
b	mb	m
c	gc	g
d	nd	n
f	bhf	w
g	ng	n
p	bp	b
t	dt	d

An example of eclipsis at work: the Irish word for "in" is "i" (pronounced like the "i" in "tin"), and it regularly causes eclipsis. So if we want to say "in Paris", in Irish it would be "i bParis" (pronounced "i barrish" - note how the "p" sound in "Paris" is lost and "eclipsed" by the letter "b"; also note that "s" in Paris is pronounced "sh" because it follows a slender vowel, "i".)

Similar examples would be "i dToronto", "i gCalifornia", "i bhFresno" etc. Naturally, because not all consonants are eclipsable, some would be unaffected: "i Nua Eabhrac" (in New York), "i Louisiana", etc.

Intrusive Vowel

When r, l, or m is followed by m, b, bh, or g, an unwritten vowel sound is pronounced between them. This sound is the

"schwa" we hear in English (though in English it's also unwritten); for instance, think of the word "vacancy". Although the second vowel is written "a", it isn't pronounced like the first "a"; instead it sounds like a short "uh" sound. This "schwa" sound, then, is also found in Irish, e.g. in words like "gorm" (meaning "blue"), which is pronounced like "gorruhm". You might have noticed that some Scottish people still say "filluhm" for "film", in the same way.

Miscellaneous

Short (unaccented) vowels with "gh" or "dh" make the sound you hear in the English word "eye", e.g.

staighre (stairs) -- pronounced "stire" (rhymes with "fire")

fadhb (problem) -- pronounced "fibe" (rhymes with "tribe")

And now, since we have suffered enough, let us leave the realm of pronunciation, and learn to form sentences.

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Irish Lesson 2.

A Little Review

The four ways of using "tá" that we learned were:

Tá Seán tinn.	John is ill.
Níl Seán tinn.	John is not ill.
An bhfuil Seán tinn?	Is John ill?
Nach bhfuil Seán tinn?	Isn't John ill?

Now we will leave John the invalid behind in the present tense where he is most comfortable and pass on to other things, such as the...

Verbal Noun

The verbal noun is a construction equivalent to the English form of a verb that ends with "-ing" (e.g. "running", "jumping") and which describes continuing action. In Irish, this is formed of two words, the first of which is always "ag", and the second of which is the verbal noun form of the particular verb itself. (The word "ag" means "at"; you can imagine this as being like the old English form "he is at playing" or "seven lords a' leaping"). The verbal noun is used with a form of "tá", for example:

ag dul going

which gives us --

tá mé ag dul	I am going
níl siad ag dul	they are not going
nach bhfuil tú ag dul ansin?	aren't you going there?
an bhfuil sí ag dul inniu?	isn't she going today?

Some other common verbal nouns are:

ag ithe	eating
ag ól	drinking
ag léamh	reading
ag scríobh	writing
ag obair	working
ag canadh	singing
ag imeacht	going away
ag éisteacht	listening
ag féachaint	looking
ag caint	talking
ag déanamh	doing
ag fáil	getting
ag tabhairt	giving
ag teacht	coming
ag rá	saying
ag	foghlaim learning
ag fanacht	staying
ag pógadh	kissing
ag tosú	beginning
ag smaoiniamh	thinking
ag siúl	walking
ag rith	running
ag gáire	laughing
ag gol	crying

Past Tense of "tá"

The past tense of "tá" is "bhí". The negative form is "ní raibh". As with "tá" these forms do not vary by pronoun

(although in some places "bhíomar" will be seen instead of "bhí muid").

Bhí mé sona. I was happy.
Ní raibh sé dorcha. It wasn't dark.

The positive question form is "an raibh...?" ("was/were there...?") and the negative question form is "nach raibh...?" ("wasn't/weren't there...?")

An raibh Peadar ansin inné? Was Peter there yesterday?
Nach raibh Máire ansin inné? Wasn't Mary there yesterday?

As with the present tense, the answer to a question is a repetition of the verb. A yes answer to the above questions would just be "Bhí." A no answer would be "Ní raibh."

As "bhí" is just a form of "tá", the verbal noun can be used quite handily here, for example:

Bhí Peigí ag obair. Peggy was working.
Nach raibh siad ag fanacht i bParas? Weren't they staying in Paris?

(Remember that "i" means "in" and causes eclipsis. "i" before a vowel becomes "in", e.g. "in Arizona").

Future Tense of "tá"

The future tense form of "tá" is "beidh" and the negative future tense form is "ní bheidh". The question form is "an mbeidh?" and the negative question form is "nach mbeidh?" (Notice that "an" and "nach" cause eclipsis while "ní" causes aspiration).

Beidh mé ansin. I'll be there.
An mbeidh Ciarán tuirseach? Will Ciaran be tired?
Nach mbeidh siad sona? Won't they be happy?
Ní bheidh sin maith. That won't be good.

And now, since you may be thoroughly sick of "tá" at the moment we'll move along and take up the rest of it later.

Specific Questions

Two useful question words are "cé?", who, and "conas", how:

Cé tá ag caint? Who is talking?
Cé tá ag teacht inniu? Who is coming today?
Conas tá tú? How are you?

Different from above is the word "cá", meaning "where", which is used with the relative form of the verb "tá", "bhfuil". (I've referred to in the past to "bhfuil", "raibh" etc. as the "question" form of the verb but they are usually referred to as the "relative" form, as they have other uses besides asking a question). A sentence with "cá" would therefore look like

Cá bhfuil tú? Where are you?

... which is a question you can use when it's "dorcha" outside.

Definite Article

The normal definite article (equivalent to "the") in Irish is "an". The question word "cé" used with the article becomes "cén", e.g.:

an fáth the cause; the reason
cén fath? why? (literally: what the reason?)

Gender of Nouns

Irish nouns are either masculine or feminine. While some nouns predictably fall into one category or the other, many are random and their gender has to be memorized.

However, it's generally the case that nouns denoting males are masculine:

buachaill boy
tarbh bull

mac	son
rí	king

... and that ones denoting females are feminine:

baintreach	widow
bó	cow
bean	woman
iníon	daughter

But there are exceptions even to this, most notably that the word "cailín" (young girl, origin of the word "colleen") is masculine.

According to the Christian Bros. the following are mainly feminine: names of languages; nouns to two or more syllables ending in -acht; and all nouns ending in -óg.

Article + Noun

When "an" comes before a noun the noun itself can be changed slightly. The most important thing is that all aspirable feminine nouns coming after "an" are aspirated, except those beginning with d, s, and t. So:

an bhean	the woman
an bhaintreach	the widow
an chathair	the city
an deoch	the drink
an eagla	the fear
an fhuinneog	the window
an Ghaeilge	the Irish language
an litir	the letter
an mhí	the month
an nimh	the poison
an oifig	the office
an phingin	the penny
an réalta	the star
an tír	the country

But feminine nouns beginning with "s" have "t" added in front:

sráid (street) -----> an tsráid (the street)

Masculine nouns are not aspirated after "an" but have "t-" added in front when they begin with a vowel:

an t-arán	the bread
an bóthar	the road
an ceol	the music
an doras	the door
an t-eolas	the information
an fear	the man
an gnó	the business
an leanbh	the child
an múinteoir	the teacher
an nuachtán	the newspaper
an t-ocras	the hunger
an páiste	the child
an rang	the class
an seomra	the room
an teach	the house

The above forms of the nouns and their articles are used when the nouns are the subject or direct object of a sentence.

Vocabulary

ach	but
-----	-----

agus	and
áit [f.]	place
amárach	tomorrow
amuigh	outside
ar ais	back [as in, "he's not back yet"]
árasán [m.]	flat, apartment
ard	tall
aréir	last night
arís	again
baile [m.]	town
bia [m.]	food
blasta	tasty
bliain [f.]	year
bocht	poor
bog	soft
cara [m.]	friend
cinnte	certain, certainly
crua	hard
duine [m.]	man
fada	long
fios [m.]	knowledge
fós	still, yet
freisin	also
idir	between
istigh	inside
lá [m.]	day
leabhar [m.]	book
luath	quick
mall	slow
máthair [f.]	mother
nua	new
oíche [f.]	night
rud [m.]	thing
sásta	satisfied
sean	old
sláinte [f.]	health
teanga [f.]	language
uaireanta	sometimes
uisce [m.]	water

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Gaelic/Irish Lessons

Irish Lesson 3.

Possessive Pronouns

The possessive pronouns in Irish correspond to the English pronouns, "my", "your", "his", etc. Each one can affect a following word by either aspiration or eclipsis.

<u>Pronoun</u>	<u>Meaning</u>	<u>What it does</u>
mo	my	causes aspiration on the next word; becomes "m'" before a vowel
do	your	causes aspiration on the next word; becomes "d'" before a vowel
a	his	causes aspiration on the next word
a	her	puts "h" on a word beginning with a vowel; no other effect
ár	our	causes eclipsis on the next word; puts "n-" before a word beginning with a vowel
bhur	your [pl.]	causes eclipsis on the next word; puts "n-" before a word beginning with a vowel
a	their	causes eclipsis on the next word; puts "n-" before a word beginning with a vowel

Note especially the ambiguity of "a", which can mean either "his", "her", or "their". It is the effect on the following word that will usually demonstrate which sense the pronoun has, but occasionally (e.g. before a non-aspirable and non-eclipsable consonant) there won't be any change in the following word and at those times you'll have to rely on context alone.

Here are some examples using the words "teach" (house) and "árasán" (flat, apartment):

mo	teach	-- my house	m'árasán	-- my flat
do	teach	-- your house	d'árasán	-- your flat
a	teach	-- his house	a árasán	-- his flat
a	teach	-- her house	a hárasán	-- her flat
ár	dteach	-- our house	ár n-árasán	-- our flat
bhur	dteach	-- your house	bhur n-árasán	-- your flat
a	dteach	-- their house	a n-árasán	-- their flat

etc.

Residence

To state where you live, you can use a form of "tá" along with the phrase "i mo chónaí". "Cónaí" is a masculine noun meaning dwelling or residence; "i mo chónaí" therefore means "in my residence". (The eclipsing word "i", which has been mentioned before, means "in"; it is, coincidentally, also spelt "in" when it comes before a vowel).

Tá mé i mo chónaí i dToronto.	I live in Toronto.
Bhí tú i do chónaí i mBaile átha Cliath.	You lived in Dublin.
Tá mé i mo chónaí in Arizona.	I live in Arizona.

The possessive pronoun "a" (his, her, their) and the first person plural possessive "ár" combine with "i" to form "ina" and "inar", respectively:

Tá sí ina chónaí in Éirinn.	She lives in Ireland.
Tá muid inar gcónaí i Nua-Eabhrac.	We live in New York.
An raibh siad ina gcónaí i mBoston?	Were they living in Boston?

Indefinite Article

This is a bit of a deceptive heading, as there is *no* indefinite article in Irish corresponding to English "a" or "an". So the word "teach", for example, can mean either "house" or "a house".

Some Other Uses of "i"

The preposition "i" is sometimes used for an idiomatic rendering of continuous action which involves particular verbal nouns. Instead of saying "I am sitting" -- tá mé ag suí (where "suí" is the verbal noun for "sitting") -- you instead say "I am in my sitting": tá mé i mo shuí. A similar construction can be used with nouns. For example, "tost" is a masculine noun meaning "silence"; "he is silent" is rendered as "he is in his silence", tá sé ina thost. There is no hard and fast rule for the use of this construction as far as I know; but in any case one becomes used to it when it appears in texts, conversations, etc.

Saying "in the..."

When expressing "in the", the word "i" is not used; instead, a special form called "sa" takes over. It causes aspiration except to words beginning with d, s, and t:

sa chistin in the kitchen (cistin, [f.])
sa ghairdín in the garden (gairdín, [m.])

but:

sa teach in the house
sa dorchadas in the darkness (dorchadas, [m.])
sa seomra in the room (seomra, [m.])

The Preposition "ag"

"Ag" just means "at" and, in addition to appearing sometimes in front of the verbal noun, it has a life of its own in which it serves the same functions of its English equivalent:

ag an teach -- at the house
ag an doras -- at the door

However, this combination of "ag" plus "an" causes eclipsis -- the only exceptions being, in this case, words beginning with "d" and "t", as in the examples above. The other eclispable consonants however are still changed:

ag an bhfuinneog -- at the window (fuinneog, [f.])
ag an mbanc -- at the bank (banc, [m.])
ag an gcoláiste -- at the college (coláiste, [m.])

Note that both feminine and masculine nouns are affected in the same way -- there is no distinction of gender after "an" as there usually is. This is a direct result of "ag" acting upon the noun.

Idioms with "ag"

i) "to have"

Oddly enough, Irish has no real verb that corresponds with the verb "to have" in English. To say in Irish that someone has something, you must say that something is "at" someone. This of course is where "ag" comes in:

Tá teach ag Séamas. -- James has a house.

The Irish here literally means "there is a house at James". Now, if you want to use "ag" with a personal pronoun and say that "I have", "you have", "he has", etc., you can't just put "ag" in front of "mé", "tú", "sé", etc. The word "ag" combines with each personal pronoun to form a distinct entity called a "prepositional pronoun":

ag + mé = agam Tá leabhar agam. I have a book.
ag + tú = agat Tá leabhar agat. You have a book.
ag + sé = aige Tá leabhar aige. He has a book.
ag + sí = aici Tá leabhar aici. She has a book.
ag + muid = againn Tá leabhar againn. We have a book.
ag + sibh = agaibh Tá leabhar agaibh. You (pl.) have a book.
ag + siad = acu Tá leabhar acu. They have a book.

Examples:

Tá teach mór acu. They have a big house.
An bhfuil mac aige? Does he have a son?
Bhí arán againn. We had bread. [etc.]

In Irish, if you want to say that you or someone else can speak a certain language, you have to use the above method and say that the language is "at" the person in question:

Tá Gaeilge agam. I speak ["have"] Gaelic.
Tá Béarla aici amháin. She only speaks ["has"] English.

ii) "to know"

"Ag" is also used to express the equivalent of "to know", a verb which also does not appear in Irish. The construction for "I know" is "its knowledge is at me". The word for "knowledge" is the masculine noun "fios"; the pronoun for "its" is, as we learned before, "a" which in this case aspirates "fios":

Tá a fhios ag Síle. -- Sheila knows. (lit: its knowledge is at Sheila)
Tá a fhios againn. -- We know. (lit: its knowledge is at us)
An bhfuil a fhios aici? -- Did she know? (was its knowledge at her?)

iii) "fond of"

The way to say that someone is fond of something is that "dúil" ([f.], "liking, urge") is "at" someone "in" something; for example, "I am fond of beer" becomes "Liking is at me in beer", or in Irish:

Tá dúil agam sa leann. (leann [m.], "ale, beer")

There are even more of these little ag-inspired gems but they will have to wait for another lesson.

Adjective & Noun Agreement

You've already been introduced to sentences using "tá" to join a noun with an adjective, similar in form to "tá an oíche fuar", "the night is cold". As in English, the noun and adjective in this sentence are separated by "tá" or "is" and so they do not affect each other. But when an adjective is placed directly beside a noun (as in the English phrases "cold night", "sunny day", "big house" etc.) the adjective in Irish will be aspirated if the noun it's next to is feminine.

In the example above, "oíche" (meaning "night") is feminine, and yet "fuar" (meaning "cold") is not aspirated because "tá" separates the noun from the adjective. When they are placed together, however, "fuar" is aspirated:

oíche fhuar -- cold night

Another example of this is the phrase "Oíche mhaith!", meaning literally "good night" and corresponding to the English expression.

Masculine nouns qualified by adjectives are not affected in this way, e.g. lá fuar, a cold day.

Féin

The word "féin" is used for emphasis, and can be used in two ways. One is as a reinforcement for a personal pronoun, corresponding to the English word "-self":

Bhí mé féin ag an teach inné. I myself was at the house last night.

After a noun, it can convey the sense of one's "own":

mo theach féin -- my own house;
ár leabhar féin -- our own book

The name of the Irish political party Sinn Féin incorporates this word and literally just means, "We Ourselves" -- "sinn" is an alternative form for "muid".

Adverbs

Generally an adjective can be turned into an adverb by adding the word "go" before it:

maith -- good go maith -- well
réidh -- smooth go réidh -- smoothly

"Go" adds an "h" to any adjective beginning with a vowel:

áirithe -- particular; go háirithe -- particularly

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Gaelic/Irish Lessons

Irish Lesson 4.

Adverbs -- Clarification

In the previous lesson it was mentioned that many adjectives can be turned into adverbs by putting "go" before them, e.g. réidh (steady) ---> go réidh (steadily). However, I neglected to mention that the adjectives "maith" (good) and "dona" (bad) require "go" before them when they are used with a form of "tá", even though they are being used as adjectives, not as adverbs:

Tá sin go maith. That is good.
Beidh seo go dona. This will be bad.

(I've seen this happen with "deas" (nice) as well). With verbs other than "tá" (such as the ones you'll be learning in upcoming lessons) these behave like normal adjectives and drop the "go".

Direct Object Pronouns + Verbal Noun

In Lesson One the verbal noun was introduced using such sentences as "Tá sé ag dul" (he is going) and "bhí siad ag rith" (they were running). Verbs like "going" and "running" are known as intransitive verbs, in that they do not take a direct object -- they don't act upon something. But just as many verbs are transitive, and do act upon a direct object. When a personal pronoun like "mé, tú, sé, sí", etc., becomes the object of a verbal noun, it changes its form. Unlike in English, where we say "He is meeting me" or "I am seeing her", in Irish the direct object pronoun comes before the verbal noun, not after. In addition, the "ag" that normally forms part of the verbal noun is dropped. The direct object pronoun forms used with a verbal noun are:

mé --> do mo (do m' before a vowel)
tú --> do do (do d' before a vowel)
sé --> á
sí --> á
muid --> dár
sibh --> do bhur
siad --> á

As you may have noticed, these forms bear a strong resemblance to the possessive. And in fact they behave like possessives as well -- except instead of possessing a noun (like "mo chóta" or "do theach") they act as if they possess the verbal noun instead. Here's an example using the verbal noun "ag bualadh" -- beating:

Bhí sé do mo bhualadh -- he was beating me

As we can see, the word "me" in the above English sentence is rendered in Irish by "do mo" coming before the verbal noun. But "do mo" also acts like a possessive and, in this case, aspirates the verbal noun just as the regular possessive pronoun "mo" aspirates a noun. All the other forms listed above -- do do, á, dár, do bhur -- act like their possessive counterparts. Just as the possessive "a" can mean either "his", "her", or "their", with the only noticeable difference being the effect they have on the following word (e.g. "a" meaning "his" aspirates a word, "a" meaning "her" doesn't, and "a" meaning "their" eclipses a word), so too the object pronoun "á" can mean either "him", "her" or "them" and have the same effects on the verbal noun:

Bhí sé á bualadh -- he was hitting her (note: no aspiration)
Bhí sí á bualadh -- she was hitting him (note: aspiration)
Tá muid á mbualadh -- we are hitting them (note: eclipsis)

But we can take a break from all this violence and form a reflexive verbal noun if we like. A reflexive verb is one in which something acts upon itself: "I shave myself", "he puffs himself up", etc. In Irish we can use the same object pronouns as above and add "féin" (self) on the end as a finishing touch. Consider the verbal noun "ag náiriú" (disgracing, shaming):

Bhí tú do do náiriú féin. -- You were disgracing yourself.
Tá siad á náiriú féin. -- They are disgracing themselves.

Now we can leave such unseemly goings-on and proceed to the...

Emphatic Pronouns and Particles

One of the more agreeable things in Irish is its propensity for making emphatic statements sound beautiful. Whereas in English we can only stress a word in a sentence to make it sound important -- "No, dummy, **I** want to use the car tonight" or "it's **my** life, dammit" -- in these situations Irish uses modified and very pleasant forms so that you do not have to strain your voice.

a) Pronouns

mé --> mise (I)
tú --> tusa (you)
sé --> seisean (he)
sí --> sise (she)
muid --> sinne (we)
sibh --> sibhse (you [plural])
siad --> siadsan (they)

These emphatic pronouns replace the regular pronouns when emphasis or contrast is needed:

Tá mé réidh. -- I am ready. (plain statement of fact)

Tá mise réidh. -- **I** am ready. (i.e. as opposed to someone else)

etc.

Care has to be taken not to overuse the emphatic pronouns, which is one of the most common learner's mistakes in both kinds of Gaelic. The temptation to say "mise mise" as Joyce did on the first page of *Finnegans Wake* is understandably very great.

b) Emphatic Particles

These are little suffixes that are attached to a word that is to be emphasized; "e" after "nn", "sa" after a broad consonant (a consonant found after a broad vowel), and "se" after a slender consonant (a consonant found after a slender vowel). If we consider this with reference to the "ag + pronoun" forms we learned in the last lesson (agam, agat, etc.), we come up with contrastive sentences like:

Tá teach againne, ach tá árasán acusan.

-- "**We** have a house, but **they** have an apartment".

"Ar" -- "on"

The preposition representing the English word "on" is "ar", but like some other Irish prepositions "ar" is useful far beyond its literal meaning.

a) "on"

"Ar" before an unqualified noun (one without a definite article) aspirates where possible:

ar chrann -- on a tree (crann, [m.])

ar bhád -- on a boat (bád, [m.])

"Ar" before a qualified noun (one with a definite article) causes eclipsis where possible, except on nouns beginning with "d" or "t" (this was the same rule used for "ag" in the last lesson):

ar an gcrann -- on the tree

ar an mbád -- on the boat

but:

ar an talamh -- on the ground (talamh, [m.], ground, earth)

ar an droichead -- on the bridge (droichead, [m.])

According to the Christian Bros. there are some folks who aspirate, not eclipse, the word following "ar an" or "ag an" -- e.g. they say "ar an bhád" or "ag an bhanc" instead. Either way is OK.

b) Prepositional Pronouns

Like "ag", "ar" also combines with the pronouns to form those miracles of grammar, the prepositional pronouns:

ar + mé	= orm	(on me)
ar + tú	= ort	(on you)
ar + sé	= air	(on him)
ar + sí	= uirthi	(on her)
ar + muid	= orainn	(on us)
ar + sibh	= oraibh	(on you)
ar + siad	= orthu	(on them)

c) Emotions / Conditions

Usually in English we don't say that something is "on" someone unless it is unwelcome -- a fly, for example, or a stain. But in Irish there is a very useful and sometimes poetic range of expressions dealing with emotions and conditions that are "on" people. This often takes the place of the English "I feel..."

<u>English</u>	<u>Irish</u>	<u>Keyword</u>
I'm hungry	tá ocras orm	ocras, [m.] "hunger"
you're cold	tá fuacht ort	fuacht, [m.] "coldness"
we are thirsty	tá tart orainn	tart, [m.] "thirst"
they were tired	bhí tuirse orthu	tuirse, [f.] "tiredness"
he was afraid	bhí eagla air	eagla, [f.] "fear"
you'll be sorry	beidh brón ort	brón, [m.] "sadness"
I am happy / delighted	tá áthas orm	áthas, [m.] "happiness"
Ní bheidh áthas ar Seán. Sean won't be happy.		
An bhfuil tuirse ar Niall? Is Neil tired? (tá!)		

Note that "tá brón orm" is one way in which to say "Sorry" in Irish, despite its dramatic literal meaning.

d) Improvement / Excellence

To say something is improving you say there is improvement on it -- "improvement" being given by the masculine noun "feabhas":

Tá feabhas ar an aimsir. The weather is improving. (aimsir, [f.])
 Tá feabhas ort. You're getting better.

Or alternatively:

Tá sé ag dul i bhfeabhas -- It is improving
 (lit. "it is going into improvement")

or

Tá feabhas ag teacht air -- It is improving
 (lit. "improvement is coming onto it")

The phrase "ar fheabhas" just means "excellent":

Tá an leabhar seo ar fheabhas -- "This book is excellent".

e) "ar" with verbs

Some verbs require "ar" after them to complete their sense. A few examples will suffice for the moment -- the verbal nouns "ag féachaint" (watching), "ag freastal" (attending), "ag iarraidh" (asking):

Beidh mé ag freastal ar léacht. -- I'll be attending a lecture.
 Beidh mé ag iarraidh ar Seán. -- I'll be asking Sean.

In examples like these the "ar" is absolutely necessary, just as in English we need prepositions in verbs like "to look at", "to think of", "to prepare for" etc., since their omission would change the meaning of the verb.

Where this really becomes enjoyable is when you can use "ag" **and** "ar" at the same time. You can express the idea of knowing or being acquainted with somebody, having a question for somebody, being fond of something, remembering something, hating something or someone, loving something or someone or respecting someone. The basic construction is "Tá" + [noun] + "ag" + person A + "ar" + person B, where the noun can be "acquaintance", "love", remembering, etc., where person A is the subject, and person B the object, e.g.:

Tá eolas ag Seán ar an teach sin
[noun] [subject] [object]

= "Sean knows that house" -- literally, "knowledge is at Sean on that house". The masculine noun "eolas" means knowledge.

Another example:

Tá aithne agam ar Liam.
[noun] [subject] [object].

= "I am acquainted with Liam" -- literally, "acquaintance is at-me on Liam".

Or again:

Tá grá aici ar Pheadar.
[noun] [subject] [object]

= "She loves Peter" -- "love is at-her on Peter".

The straightforward romantic phrase "I love you" is therefore "tá grá agam ort" -- love is at-me on-you. (There are other ways of saying it, but this is simplest).

The other examples, all following this basic pattern, run as follows:

Tá ceist agam ort.	I have a question for you. (ceist, [f.] -- question)
Bhí cion aige ar Nuala.	He was fond of Nuala. (cion, [m.] -- love, affection)
An bhfuil cuimhne aig Seán uirthi?	Does Sean remember her? (cuimhne, [f.] -- memory)
Bhí fuath againn ar an mbaile sin.	We hated that town. (fuath, [m.] -- hatred)
Nach bhfuil gráin ag Liam ar fhíon?	Doesn't Liam hate wine? (gráin, [f.] -- disgust)
Tá meas mór agam oraibh.	I have great respect for you. (meas, [m.] -- respect)

And even now we have not exhausted the uses of "ar" ...
but more on that next lesson.

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Gaelic/Irish Lessons

Irish Lesson 5.

Idiomatic Uses of "ar", cont'd.

i) Debt

"Ar" can be used with "ag" and a form of "tá" to express the concept of owing money, or owing anything else for that matter:

Tá punt agam ort. You owe me a pound.

Tá punt aici orm. I owe her a pound.

"Ag" goes with the person being owed, and "ar" with the person who has to pay up. This is easier to remember if you think of the English expression "I have something on you".

ii) Obligation

"Ar" can be used to express obligation using a form of "tá" and an "infinitive" verb. The infinitive is the indefinite form of the verb which in English is preceded by the word "to" and which is used when there are two verbs in a sentence, e.g.:

I	want	to be	alone.
-	[verb 1]	- [verb 2; infinitive]	-
He doesn't know	- how	to speak	English.
-	[verb 1]	- [verb 2; infinitive]	-

The infinitive in Irish is also used as the second verb in a sentence. It is formed easily by taking the verbal noun and dropping the "ag". For example:

Tá orm...	-- I have to...
	leaving
+ ag imeacht	-- (take away "ag" to form infinitive)
= Tá orm imeacht.	-- I have to leave.
Bhí orainn...	-- We had to...
	going
+ ag dul	-- (take away "ag" to form infinitive)
= Bhí orainn dul.	-- We had to go.

As you can see, if what we are trying to say is "I have to..." then in Irish we express it as "is on-me..." Note that there is no subject pronoun as such -- we don't say "tá sé orm", for example.

Additional Idiom with "ag"

A handy "ag" expression I forgot to mention previously is "tá suim agam", which means "I am interested":

Tá suim agam i nGaeilge. -- I am interested in the Irish language.

Incidentally you should know have enough Irish to translate the following devout proverb:

Tá Dia láidir agus máthair mhaith aige.

All these words you have met before, except for "Dia", God.

Prepositional Pronouns of "i"

The combined forms for the word "i" (in) are:

i + mé	= ionam
i + tú	= ionat
i + sé	= ann
i + sí	= inti
i + muid	= ionainn
i + sibh	= ionaibh
i + siad	= iontu

Most of these forms are not very common (tho' you do see expressions like "tá suim agam inti" -- "I am interested in

her" etc.) but the masculine form "ann" is by far the most important of the lot. The reason is because it's often used idiomatically to express a kind of metaphysical quality of "being there" in certain statements. One of these idioms involves using "ann" as a replacement for English "there" (and instead of the specific Irish word "ansin"):

Bhí mé ann inné. I was there yesterday.
Tá banc agus eaglais ann. There's a bank and a church there.

"Ann" is also used to talk about the weather: instead of "it's raining", one would say "rain is in it":

Tá baisteach ann. It is raining. (báisteach [f.], "rain")

or:

Tá ceo ann. It's foggy. (ceo [m.], "fog")
Tá gaoth ann. It's windy. (gaoth [f.], "wind")

-- which is an odd expression, but then again so is "it's raining"
(*what's* raining?)

"Ann" is also often seen after the word "atá", which is a combination of "a" (a relative pronoun, not to be confused with the possessive "a") and the verb "tá". "Atá" means "which is", "who is", or "that is", as in "the man who is here", "the house that is blue", etc. For example:

an duine atá ag dul the man that is going
an leabhar atá ar an mbord the book that is on the table
an fear atá anseo the man who is here

When "atá ann" is used after a noun, however, it can't really translated into English. In one of the stage directions at the beginning of an act in an Irish play there is this sentence:

"(An tráthnóna atá ann)." (It is afternoon).

Literally this sentence means "the afternoon that is in-it". "Ann" conveys the same kind of out-there quality in this case as it does with the weather in the examples above.

"i" + possessive pronoun, part 2

A couple of lessons back phrases like "tá sé ina thost" for "he is silent" and "bhí mé i mo shuí" for "I was sitting" were introduced. The combination of "i" plus a possessive pronoun is also used to join two nouns together, for example when trying to say that thing A is thing B. From the same Irish play mentioned above ("An Giall" (The Hostage) by Brendan Behan) there are these sentences:

"Bhí a athair ina easpag." -- His father was a bishop.
"Ní raibh sé ina chorporal, ach ina ghinearál." -- He was not a corporal, but a general.

In the first example Thing A is "a athair", his father, and Thing B is "easpag", a bishop. To join them we say that "his father was in his bishop", which sounds a bit surreal or even giggle-inducing but which just means "his father was a bishop". The literal translation of the second sentence, then, is "He was not in-his corporal, but in-his general", where

Thing A is "he" and Things B are "corporal" and "general", respectively. Note how "corporal" and "ginearál" are aspirated by "ina", which refers back to "sé" and is masculine. If it were a woman being referred to, one would say "ní raibh sí ina corporal, ach ina ginearál" without the aspiration, following the rules for possessives we learned earlier.

This idiom is not confined to linking people with their professions or with their identities; in the Irish Bible there's a good example of it being used with inanimate nouns as well:

"Beidh teach Iacóib ina thine, (tine [f.], "fire")
agus beidh teach Íosaef ina lasair; (lasair [f.], "blaze")
ach beidh teach Éasau ina choinleach." (coinleach [m.], "rubble")

Notice that "tine" and "coinleach" are aspirated; this is because the "a" in "ina" is a masculine possessive pronoun, which in turn is due to the fact that "teach" (Thing A) is a masculine noun. The translation of the above passage is

"The house of Jacob will be a fire,
and the house of Joseph will be a blaze;
but the house of Esau will be rubble." (Ob. 1:18)

... but as usual, the literal meaning of the Irish version is "the house of Jacob will be in-its fire, / and the house of Joseph will be in-its blaze, / but the house of Esau will be in-its rubble."

"le"

"Le" means "with" (among other things) and is another hard-working Irish preposition like "ag" and "ar":

Tá siad sa teach le Seán. They are in the house with Sean.
An raibh tú le Tomás aréir? Were you with Thomas last night?

Note that it adds a small "h" to words beginning with a vowel:

le hEibhlín -- with Eibhlin

"Le" also means "by" when speaking of authorship:

leabhar le James Joyce -- a book by James Joyce

You can use it to express a length of time (note the use of the present tense in these examples):

tá muid anseo le bliain	-- we have been here a year (bliain, [f.])
tá Seán in Éirinn le mí.	-- Sean has been in Ireland a month. (mí, [f.])
tá Liam abhaile le seachtain.	-- Liam has been home for a week. (seachtain, [f.])

When "le" comes before the definite article "an" it changes to "leis" and, like "ar" and "ag", causes eclipsis on the noun (except with nouns beginning with "t" or "d"):

leis an gcailin -- with the girl
leis an mbuachaill -- with the boy

but:

leis an taoiseach -- with the leader (taoiseach, [m.])
leis an dochtúir -- with the doctor (dochtúir, [m.])

As with "ag an" and "ar an", some people use aspiration instead of eclipsis after "leis an".

Le + Personal Pronoun

The combined (prepositional pronoun) forms are:

le + mé	= liom (with me)
le + tú	= leat (with you)
le + sé	= leis (with him)
le + sí	= léi (with her)
le + muid	= linn (with us)
le + sibh	= libh (with you)
le + siad	= leo (with them)

Verbs with "le"

Some verbs require "le" to complete their meanings, e.g.

ag rá le	-- saying to
ag súil le	-- expecting
ag cuidiú le	-- helping (someone)
ag bualadh le	-- meeting (someone)
ag labhairt le	-- speaking to, speaking with
ag éisteacht le	-- listening to

Bhí sí ag éisteacht leis an raidió -- she was listening to the radio
Beidh siad ag bualadh léi ansin. -- They'll be meeting her there.
Nach raibh sé ag labhairt libh inniu? -- Wasn't he speaking with you today?
An mbeidh sé ag súil leat? -- Will he be expecting you?

There are oodles more idioms involving "le" but they'll have to wait until later.

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Gaelic/Irish Lessons

Irish: Lesson Six

The "Copula"

In English, forms of the verb "to be" are used both to join a noun with an adjective ("I was sick", "you're lucky", "it won't be easy" etc.) and to join a noun with another noun ("He is the King", "we were volunteers", "I'm Neil", etc.) But in Irish, only the task of joining a noun to an adjective is usually assigned to the verb "tá" and its various forms. Most of the time when we want to join a noun to a noun, to say that Thing A is Thing B, we use a different verb, called a "copula". A sentence containing a copula also consists of a subject (Thing A) and a predicate (Thing B):

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Copula</u>	<u>Predicate</u>
Liam	is	a man.
I	am	Neil.
Aoife and Bríd	are	young girls.
Cormac	was	a king.
That	is	a book? (i.e. "is that a book?")

There are two fundamental kinds of copula sentence in Irish, sentences of "classification" which tell you *what* a person or a thing is ("Seán is a poet", "that is a house") and sentences of "identification" which tell you *who* or *which* a person or thing is ("Seán is the doctor", "I am Máiréad"). Both kinds of sentence use the same form of the verb, but they have different word order. At first there might not seem to be much distinction between "Seán is a poet" and "Seán is the doctor", but in the former sentence we are starting with Seán as a topic of conversation and trying to find out more about him (e.g. *what* he is), and in the latter we are starting with "doctor" and trying to find out more about this doctor (e.g. *who* he is). Identification sentences are usually concerned with more *specific* things than classification sentences are, but in general the distinction is not always clear-cut and it is mainly used in grammars for convenience.

The present tense, affirmative form of the copula in Irish is, coincidentally enough, spelled "is". Because it is a verb, it always comes first in a sentence. When the third-person personal pronouns (sé, sí, and siad) are used with "is", they drop the "s" and become é, í, and iad respectively.

i) Classification

The word order in a "classification" is as follows:

<u>Copula</u>	+	<u>Predicate</u>	+	<u>Subject</u>	=	<u>Classification Sentence</u>
Is		fear		Liam.		"Liam is a man".
Is		leabhar		é sin.		"That is a book".
Is		peann		é seo.		"This is a pen."
Is		cailín óg		Máire.		"Mary is a young girl."
Is		Éireannach		mé.		"I am an Irishman."
Is		múinteoir		tú.		"You are a teacher."
Is		dochtúir		é.		"He is a doctor."
Is		Meiriceánach		í.		"She is an American."
Is		ollamh		í.		"She is a professor." [etc.]

To make a negative statement, "ní" is used in the place of "is":

Ní	leabhar	é.	"It is not a book."
Ní	peann	é seo.	"This is not a pen."
Ní	cailín óg	Máire.	"Mary is not a young girl."

To ask a positive question, "is" is replaced by "an". For a negative question, "nach" is used:

An	leabhar	é sin?	"Is that a book?"
An	múinteoir	tú?	"Are you a teacher?"

Nach dochtúir é? "Isn't he a doctor?"

The yes answer to a classification question is "Is ea." The no answer is "Ní hea".

ii) Identification

In identification sentences both the predicate is always a definite noun (preceded by the article) or a proper name, and the subject is either a definite noun or a pronoun.

<u>Copula</u> +	<u>Subject</u> +	<u>Predicate</u> =	<u>Identification sentence</u>
Is	mise	Niall.	"I am Neil."
Is	tusa	Peadar.	"You are Peter."
Is	tusa	mo leannán.	"You are my sweetheart."
Is	sinne	Seán agus Séamas.	"We are Sean and Seamas."
Is	sibhse	Aoife agus Máire.	"You are Aoife and Mary."

Note that the emphatic form is much more common when the subject is a first- or second-person pronoun. (Emphatic pronouns were covered in Lesson Four).

In identification sentences using the third person, a personal pronoun is always inserted after "is", even though there is already a subject in the sentence.

<u>Copula</u> +	<u>Subject</u> +	<u>Predicate</u> =	<u>Identification sentence</u>
Is	é Seán	an dochtúir	"Sean is the doctor."
Is	é Liam	é	"He is Liam."
Is	í Síle	í.	"She is Sheila."
Is	iad Liam agus Síle	iad.	"They are Liam and Sheila."
Is	é an t-uachtarán	an ceannaire.	"The President is the leader."
Is	é	do bheatha.	"It's your life."

As with classification sentences, negative identification sentences use "ní" --

<u>Copula</u> +	<u>Subject</u> +	<u>Predicate</u> =	<u>Identification sentence</u>
Ní	tusa	an duine.	"You are not the man."

-- positive questions begin with "an...?" and negative questions begin with "nach...?" When "ní" comes before a third-person pronoun (é, í, or iad), "h" is added to the pronoun. For example, answering the question

<u>Copula</u> +	<u>Subject</u> +	<u>Predicate</u> =	<u>Identification sentence</u>
An	é sin	an teach?	"Is that the house?"

You can answer "yes" by saying "Is é" or "no" by saying "Ní hé." If "teach" were a feminine noun you would answer "yes" by saying "Is í" and "no" by saying "Ní hí."

More direct questions using the identification sentence can be asked using the word "cé...?" meaning "who...?", which also puts "h" before a third-person pronoun:

Cé tusa? [or] Cé hé tusa?	Who are you?
Cé hé an rí?	Who is the king?
Cé hí?	Who is she?
Cé sibhse? [or] Cé hiad sibhse?	Who are you [plural]?
Cé hé mise?	Who am I?
Cé hiadsan?	Who are they?
Cé hí an bhean sin?	Who is that woman?
Cé hé sin? [or] Cé sin?	Who is that?

iii) Copula with an Adjective

I said before that "tá" is for joining a noun to an adjective and "is" for joining a noun to a noun, and that is generally true. However, the copula can be used to join a noun with an adjective in cases where heavy emphasis is required, or where attention needs to be drawn to the sentence. Used in these sentences, the adjectives have a greater sense of permanency and importance that they would in a "tá" sentence. Think of the difference between the straightforward English sentence "the night is dark", which is merely descriptive (and which would be a "tá" sentence in Irish), and the more poetic and forceful "dark is the night" (which would be a copula sentence in Irish). Technically these are classification sentences, except that the noun in the Predicate is replaced by an adjective:

<u>Copula</u>	+	<u>Predicate</u>	+	<u>Subject</u>	=	<u>Sentence</u>
Is		dorcha		an oíche		"The night is dark."
An		deas		é?		"Is it nice?"
Ní		fíor		sin.		"That is not true."
Nach		leor		seo?		"Isn't this enough?"

Some proverbs, and other statements to which you're expected to pay particular attention, use this form:

<u>Copula</u>	+	<u>Predicate</u>	+	<u>Subject</u>	=	<u>Sentence</u>
"Is		binn		béal ina thost."		"Sweet is a silent mouth."
"Is		mór		an trua."		"It's a great pity."
"Is		bocht		an scéal."		"It's bad news." [lit: "it's a poor story"]

Sometimes a third-person pronoun is added after the subject. This pronoun is the same number and gender as the subject:

<u>Copula</u>	+	<u>Predicate</u>	+	<u>Subject</u>	=	<u>Sentence</u>
Is		breá		an lá é.		"It's a fine day."
Is		breá		an oíche í.		"It's a fine night."

To finish up, I'll give a few copula sentences extracted from Brendan Behan's play "An Giall" -- see if you can translate them.

"An Garda é?"	("Garda" [m.], Irish policeman)
"Nach fear bocht bacach mé?"	("bacach", lame)
"Nach tusa atá spleodrach?"	("spleodrach", boisterous)
"Is duine uasal é."	("uasal", noble, well-born)
"Is é sin an Fhraincis."	("Fraincis" [f.], the French language)
"Is mairg bás gan bheannacht."	("mairg" [f.], a sorrow; "bás" [m.], death; "gan", without; "beannacht" [f.], blessing; Irish proverb)

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Gaelic/Irish Lessons

Irish: Lesson Seven

The Demonstrative Adjectives

As you already know, "seo" means "this" and "sin" means "that". The third demonstrative pronoun is "siúd", which means "that" when the thing referred to is far away -- like the old English word "yonder". When any of these words qualify a noun, it comes after the noun like other adjectives and the noun itself is always definite:

an teach seo -- this house
 an eaglais sin -- that church
 an baile siúd -- that town, yonder town

Demonstrative adjectives in "tá" sentences often are accompanied by a subject pronoun, e.g.

Tá sé sin go maith. -- That is good.

-- "sé sin" is the subject even though we would expect to see "sin" on its own.

The Many Uses of "is"

The copula can be used in conjunction with the preposition "le" (with) to form several common Irish idioms.

i) Ability

There is no verb in Irish corresponding to English "can" or "be able to". To say that someone or something "can" do something in Irish we use the construction "Is féidir le..." followed by the subject of the sentence and an infinitive form of another verb. For example, "Liam can swim" in Irish would be:

Is féidir le Liam snámh. ---- (lit: it's a possibility with Liam to swim.)

The infinitive, you'll recall, was formed from the verbal noun. "Ag snámh" means swimming, so dropping the "ag" we get the infinitive "snámh", to swim.

"Le", as usual, combines with the personal pronouns where necessary:

Is féidir liom canadh. -- I can sing. (ag canadh -- singing)
 Is féidir leo dul. -- They can go. (ag dul -- going)

The normal negative and question forms of the copula apply here:

Ní féidir leat tiomáint. -- You can't drive. (ag tiomáint -- driving)
 An féidir léi léamh? -- Can she read? (ag léamh -- reading)

etc.

The "yes" answer to a question beginning "An féidir le...?" is "Is féidir." The "no" answer is "Ní féidir."

ii) Likes

There is no verb "to like" in Irish either. Again, the copula and "le" do the work instead. In this case the construction is "Is maith le.." followed by the subject and then by a noun that the subject likes.

Is maith le Niall ceol claisiceach. Neil likes classical music.
 Is maith le Peadar bia Indiach. Peter likes Indian food.
 (bia [m.] "food")
 An maith leat filíocht? Do you like poetry?
 (filíocht [f.]

Ní maith linn iománaíocht. We don't like hurling.
(iománaíocht [f.]

Related expressions are created with "breá" (fine) and "fuath" (hatred):

Is breá liom é sin. That's fine with me.
Is fuath liom snagcheol. I hate jazz.

iii) Ownership

Ownership of something by someone is expressed by saying that the thing owned is "with" someone:

Is le Seán an carr sin. That car belongs to Seán.
An leatsa an rothar seo? Does this bike belong to you? (rothar, [m.]
Ní leis an léine. The shirt doesn't belong to him. (léine, [f.]

The question "who does... belong to?" in Irish is "Cé leis...?"

iv) Preference

A preference is stated by using the phrase "Is fearr le..." (It is better with...) followed by the subject and then the thing preferred:

Is fearr liom uisce beatha Éireannach. I prefer Irish whiskey.
Is fearr le Síle beoir. Sheila prefers beer.

To make a comparison between two objects you put "ná" (than) between them, e.g.

Is fearr liom uisce beatha ná beoir. I prefer whiskey to beer.
(literally: it is better with-me whiskey than beer)
Is fearr le Máire tae ná caifé. Mary prefers tea to coffee.
(literally: it is better with Mary tea than coffee)

v) Indifference

To say that someone is indifferent or doesn't care about something, you use "is cuma le..."

Is cuma liom faoi sin. ---- I don't care about that. (faoi, "about")

Copula, Past Tense

The positive past tense form of the copula is "ba", which causes aspiration:

Ba rí Cormac. -- Cormac was a king. (classification)
Ba mhúinteoir í. -- She was a teacher. (classification)
Ba é Brian an Rí. -- Brian was the king. (identification)
Ba mise é. -- I was him. (identification)
Ba bhreá an lá é. -- It was a lovely day. (adjectival)

This becomes "b'" ("b" followed by an apostrophe) before "fh" or a vowel:

B'Éireannach é. -- He was Irish.
B'iontach an fear é. -- He was a wonderful man.
B'fheidir liom scríobh. -- I was able to write.

However, "ba" is normally written in full before "ea", "é", "í", and "iad".

A copula question in the past tense is asked by "ar", which also causes aspiration.

Ar mhaith leat é? ---- Did you like it?

"Ar" before a vowel or "fh" becomes "arbh":

Arbh fearr leat é? -- Did you prefer it?

Arbh é Brian an Rí? -- Was Brian the King?

The negative form of "ba" is "níor", which becomes "níorbh" before a vowel or "fh":

Níorbh é Brian an Rí. -- Brian was not the King.

Níor mhaith liom é. -- I didn't like it.

In the previous lesson it was explained how classification sentences can be answered "yes" by "Is ea" (sometimes abbreviated to "Sea") or "no" by "Ní hea":

An múinteoir é? Is ea. -- Is he a teacher? Yes.

An dochtúir é? Ní hea. -- Is he a doctor? No.

The past tense of these forms are "ba ea" and "níorbh ea".

Using "ba" as a conditional

"Ba" used in a sentence like "B'fhearr liom..." or "Ba mhaith liom..." can either mean "was" or "would", depending on the context. When it is used to express a desire for something, it is more like "would" in English:

B'fhearr liom tae. -- I would prefer tea. (i.e. to something else)

Arbh fhearr leat caifé? -- Would you prefer coffee?

Ba mhaith liom é sin. -- I would like that.

Ba bhreá linn é sin. -- We would love that.

"do"

"Do" is a preposition (not to be confused with the possessive "do" meaning "your") and used in a variety of different contexts to mean "to" or "for". It aspirates the following noun, and combines with "an" to form "don":

ag imeacht do Fhrainc -- leaving for France

leabhar do ghasúr -- a book for a child

ag tabhairt an t-airgead don bhocht -- giving the money to the poor

Book dedications in Irish commonly use "do...", e.g. Antoine Ó Flatharta's play "Gaeilgeoirí" is dedicated "do mo mhuintir", i.e. "to my parents".

The prepositional pronouns with "do" are as follows:

do + mé = dom

do + tú = duit

do + sé = dó

do + sí = di

do + muid = dúinn

do + sibh = daoibh

do + siad = dóibh

One of the simplest uses of "do" is with the copula to show possession by saying that someone is something "to" someone else.

Is cara dom é. -- He is a friend of mine. (cara [m.], "friend")

Ní deirfiúr dó í. -- She is not his sister. (deirfiúr [f.], "sister")

It is used to mean "for" in phrases like "is necessary for", "is right for", "is good for", etc.:

B'éigean dom imeacht. -- I had to leave. (lit: it was necessary for-me to leave).

Tá sé maith di. -- It's good for her.

Ba cheart dom dul. -- I should go. (lit: it would be right for-me to go)

Perhaps most noticeably "do" and its forms are employed in common expressions involving wishes:

Lá breithe sona duit. -- Happy birthday to you.

Nollaig Shona daoibh! -- Merry Christmas (to you!)

Dia duit! -- Hello! (lit.: "God to you")

"Dia duit" is also sometimes seen as "Dia dhuit". You may also have heard "Dia is Muire duit", God and Mary to you. The word "is" (not to be confused with the copula "is") is used to mean "and" when you're joining two items that normally go together, like "bread and water", etc.

This is will be the last Irish lesson before the new year, so Nollaig Shona daoibh.

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Gaelic/Irish Lessons

Irish: Lesson Eight

Imperative

The imperative form of the verb is what you use to order someone to do something. The imperative form of "tá" is "bí":

Bí cúramach! -- Be careful!

Bí ann! -- Be there!

The plural of this, used when issuing a command to more than one person, is "bígí":

Bígí ciúin! -- Be quiet!

These forms are made negative by putting "ná":

Ná bí mímhúinte. -- Don't be rude.

Ná bígí ag caint! -- Don't be talking!

As with the other forms of "tá", this one is irregular. But usually the second person singular form of the imperative in Irish, the one used to issue a command to one person, is very important because it can be used to form other tenses of the same verb. This is why it's commonly known as the "root" and is the form used to represent the verb in dictionaries.

For example, the 2nd person imperative form meaning "lift" is "tóg":

Tóg an bosca. -- Lift the box.

Since "tóg" is the singular command form, it's also the root and we can use it to find out how to say "lifts", "lifted", "will lift", "would lift", etc. In this lesson we will begin to find out how this is done.

Conjugations

All roots in Irish are divided into two broad categories, or "conjugations". The first conjugation consists of all roots that have one syllable. The second conjugation consists of all roots that have more than one syllable and which end in "-igh".

i) The First Conjugation

Some common first conjugation roots are:

bog	-- move	glan	-- clean
bris	-- break	líon	-- fill
buail	-- strike	mol	-- praise
caith	-- throw	ól	-- drink
ceap	-- think	póg	-- kiss
cuir	-- put	scríobh	-- write
éist	-- listen	seas	-- stand
fan	-- wait	stad	-- stop
gabh	-- go, take	tóg	-- build, lift, raise
ith	-- eat	tuig	-- understand

These roots are further subdivided into two kinds -- those whose last vowel is "i" (like "bris" or "cuir") and those whose last vowel isn't. The present tense is then formed from the roots by adding the following endings to them:

mol - "praise", "recommend" bris - "break"

molaim	-- I praise	brisim	-- I break
molann tú	-- you praise	briseann tú	-- you break
molann sé	-- he praises	briseann sé	-- he breaks
molann sí	-- she praises	briseann sí	-- she breaks
molaimid	-- we praise	brisimid	-- we break
molann sibh	-- you praise	briseann sibh	-- you break
molann siad	-- they praise	briseann siad	-- they break

Notice that the first-person forms don't have "mé" and "muid" after them. This is because, over time, the pronouns have become combined with the verb; you don't need the pronouns for these forms because it's clear who they're referring to.

Here are some examples:

Molaim an leabhar sin.	-- I recommend that book.
Briseann siad an ghloine.	-- They break the glass.
Tuigim an ceacht seo.	-- I understand this lesson.
Seasann an duine ag an doras.	-- The man stands at the door.
"Sceitheann fion fírinne."	-- "Wine brings out truth." (sceith, "divulge", "betray")

ii) The Second Conjugation

Some common second conjugation roots are:

bailigh	-- gather
beannaigh	-- bless
ceannaigh	-- buy
críochnaigh	-- finish
dúisigh	-- awake
éirigh	-- rise
fiafraigh	-- ask
imigh	-- go
oibrigh	-- work
smaoinigh	-- think
tosaigh	-- begin

These are subdivided into those roots ending in "-igh" and those ending in "-aigh". Note that the present tense is formed by dropping the "-igh" from the root before the endings are added:

<u>beannaigh</u>	- " <u>ble</u> ss"	<u>bailigh</u>	- " <u>gath</u> er"
beannaím	-- I bless	bailím	-- I gather
beannaíonn tú	-- you bless	bailíonn tú	-- you gather
beannaíonn sé	-- he blesses	bailíonn sé	-- he gathers
beannaíonn sí	-- she blesses	bailíonn sí	-- she gathers
beannaímid	-- we bless	bailímid	-- we gather
beannaíonn sibh	-- you bless	bailíonn sibh	-- you gather
beannaíonn siad	-- they bless	bailíonn siad	-- they gather

Some examples using the above:

Beannaíonn an sagart an teach.	-- The priest blesses the house.
Bailímid connadh sa choill.	-- We gather firewood in the forest. (connadh [m.], "firewood") (coill [f.], "forest")
Fiafraíonn an mac léinn ceist.	-- The student asks a question. (mac léinn [m.], "student")
Tosaíonn sí a turas i mParas.	-- She begins her journey in Paris. (turas [m.] "journey", "trip")

Direct Object Pronoun

The pronouns "sé", "sí" and "siad" when used as the object of a sentence become "é", "í", and "iad":

Beannaíonn sé í. -- He blesses her.
 Bailím iad ag an gcladach. -- I gather them at the shore.
 Molann siad é. -- They praise him.

The exception to this is when they are the object of a verbal noun, in which case we use the special forms introduced in Lesson Four.

Remember that in sentences using the imperative the subject (you) is not stated but implied.

Tóg an leabhar sin. -- Lift that book. (i.e. *you* lift it)
 --> Tóg é. -- Lift it.

Here the only stated pronoun is "é" but it's the object, not the subject, of the sentence.

Object pronouns also tend to get bumped to the end of the sentence in Irish. In the sentence "tóg é" there's nothing between "tóg" and "é", but if we want to add the word "suas" (up) then "é" is pushed aside:

Tóg é. -- Lift it.
 + suas -- up
 = Tóg suas é. -- Lift it up.

or, to take another example:

Tóg é. -- Lift it.
 + go mall -- slowly
 = Tóg go mall é. -- Lift it slowly.

Present Tense, Negative and Question Forms

Verbs of both conjugations in the present tense form their negative by having the aspirating word "ní" placed in front of them:

Tuigim. -- I understand.
 --> Ní thuigim. -- I don't understand.
 Críochnaíonn sé an obair. -- He finishes the work.
 --> Ní chríochnaíonn sé an obair. -- He doesn't finish the work.
 Molaimid é. -- We recommend it.
 --> Ní mholaimid é. -- We don't recommend it.

A question is asked using the eclipsing word "an":

Tuigeann sibh. -- You understand.
 --> An dtuigeann sibh? -- Do you understand?
 Ceannaíonn sé an nuachtán. -- He buys the newspaper.
 --> An gceannaíonn sé é? -- Does he buy it?
 Ólann tú caife. -- You drink coffee.
 --> An ólann tú caife? -- Do you drink coffee?

Relative Pronoun "a"

The pronoun "a", meaning "that", "who", or "which", was introduced briefly in Lesson Five in conjunction with "tá":

an duine atá ann -- the man who is there
 an leabhar atá ar an mbord -- the book that is on the table

With other verbs "a" doesn't combine like this, but comes before them as a separate word and, where possible, aspirates:

an bhean a bhí ag caint -- the woman who was talking
an obair a chríochnaím -- the work that I finish
an ceol a mholann sé -- the music that he recommends
an t-arán a itheann sibh -- the bread that you eat [etc.]

The negative form of this is "nach", which eclipses the following verb and adds "n-" to it if it begins with a vowel:

an rud nach dtuigim -- the thing that I don't understand
fear nach n-aontaíonn liom -- a man who doesn't agree with me (aontaigh le, "agree with")

These constructions are especially common when used with the copula to give emphasis to a sentence:

Tuigeann Seán an teanga sin. -- Sean understands that language.
Is é Seán a thuigeann é. -- It's Sean that understands it. [i.e. rather than someone else]
Nach inniu a thosaímid an ceacht? -- Isn't it today that we begin the lesson?

Imperative -- Plural

To bring the lesson full circle, the plural form of the imperative (used when issuing a command to more than one person) in the first conjugation adds "-aígí" to a root, or just "-ígí" if the last vowel in the root is "i".

Scríobhaígí arís é. -- Write it again.
Roinnígí an t-airgead. -- Divide the money. (roinn, "divide")

For the second conjugation it's slightly different. If the root ends with "-aigh", this is dropped and "-aígí" is added. If it ends with "-igh", this is dropped and "-ígí" is added:

Singular imperative: Tosaigh anois. -- Start now.
Plural imperative: Tosaígí anois. -- Start now. (tosaígí = tosaigh - aigh + aígí)
Singular imperative: Smaoinigh arís. -- Think again.
Plural imperative: Smaoinígí arís. -- Think again. (smaoinígí = smaoinigh - igh + ígí)

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Gaelic/Irish Lessons

Irish: Lesson Nine

Past Tense

The method of forming the past tense is the same for both conjugations of verbs. To form a positive past tense we simply aspirate the root where possible:

<u>root</u>	<u>past tense</u>	<u>Example:</u>
pós (marry)	-phós	-Phós sé a leannán. (He married his sweetheart.)
críochnaigh (finish)	-chríochnaigh	-Chríochnaigh sí a leabhar. (She finished her book.)
cuir (send)	chuir	-Chuir mé litir abhaile. (I sent a letter home.)
buail le (meet)	-bhuail le	-Bhuail sí le Liam. (She met Liam.)
tóg (build)	-thóg	- Thóg siad teach ann. (They built a house there.)
ceannaigh (buy)	-cheannaigh	-Cheannaigh mé carr nua. (I bought a new car.)

Roots that begin with a vowel take "d'" (d followed by an apostrophe) in the past tense, as do roots beginning with "f":

<u>root</u>	<u>past tense</u>	<u>Example:</u>
ól (drink)	d'ól	D'ól muid fíon. (We drank wine.)
ith (eat)	d'ith	D'ith siad dinnéar. (They ate dinner.)
imigh (leave)	d'imigh	D'imigh Seán go luath. (Sean left early.)
fan (stay)	d'fhan	D'fhan sí i mBaile Átha Cliath. (She stayed in Dublin.)
féach ar (look at)	d'fhéach ar	D'fhéach siad orm. (They looked at me.)

Naturally, roots that begin with an unaspirable consonant (l, n, r) remain unchanged:

<u>root</u>	<u>past tense</u>	<u>Example:</u>
léamh (read)	léamh	Léamh mé leabhar le hÓ Grianna. (I read a book by O Grianna.)
roinn (divided)	roinn	Roinn sí an t-airgead. (She divided the money.)

A question in the past tense is asked with the aspirating word "ar" (not to be confused with "ar" meaning "on"):

<u>root</u>	<u>Example:</u>
Bhuail mé leis.	-- I met him.
Ar bhuail tú leis?	-- Did you meet him?
Chuir sé an litir.	-- He sent the letter.
Ar chuir sé an litir?	-- Did he send the letter?

A negative answer to the above questions, or just a negative statement in general, uses the aspirating word "níor":

Níor bhuail mé leis. -- I didn't meet him.
Níor chuir sé an litir. -- He didn't send the letter. [etc.]

Negative questions, which in the present tense are asked with the eclipsing word "nach", are asked in the past tense with the aspirating word "nár":

Nach dtuigeann tú an ceacht? -- Don't you understand the lesson?
--> Nár thuig tú an ceacht? -- Didn't you understand the lesson?

Nach gcuireann sé an solas as? -- Doesn't he put out the light?
--> Nár chuireann sé an solas as? -- Didn't he put out the light? (cuir as, "put out")

As well as corresponding to the simple past tense in English, the past tense in Irish can cover some of the ground of

the English "perfect" tense, i.e. the tense that says things like "I have done", "he has written", "you have stopped", etc. Irish does have a perfect tense of its own (which we'll learn later) but its scope appears to be a little more narrow.

Dialectical Variation

In the examples above, I gave the first person plural form of the past tense as the aspirated root followed by "muid", e.g. "chuir muid", "thóg muid", etc. This is the way it is formed in the dialects of Connacht and Ulster. However, the Official Standard ("Caighdeán Oifigiúil") of Irish follows the Munster habit of aspirating the root and adding "amar" (or "eamar" if the last vowel in the root is an "i") to form the first person plural of the past tense. For example, "phós muid" (we married) would be "phósamar" in Standard Irish, and "chuir muid" (we put) would be "cuireamar". Like

"tuigim" or "molaimid" (present tense forms we learned last lesson), words ending in "-eamar" are known as synthetic, which means that they are a combined form of verb and pronoun and so don't need to be followed by a pronoun.

Future Tense

Unlike the past tense, the future tense of a verb is determined by which conjugation it belongs to. Recall that a first conjugation verb has a one-syllable root, while a second conjugation verb has a two-syllable root ending in "-(a)igh".

i) 1st Conjugation Future

As with the present tense these roots are divided according to whether or not they have "i" as their final vowel:

<u>Root: mol</u>	<u>"praise"</u>	<u>Root: bris</u>	<u>"break"</u>
molfaidh mé	-- I will praise	brisfidh mé	-- I will break
molfaidh tú	-- you will praise	brisfidh tú	-- you will break
molfaidh sé	-- he will praise	brisfidh sé	-- he will break
molfaidh sí	-- she will praise	brisfidh sí	-- she will break
molfaidh muid	-- we will praise	brisfidh muid	-- we will break
molfaidh sibh	-- you will praise	brisfidh sibh	-- you will break
molfaidh siad	-- they will praise	brisfidh siad	-- they will break

Conveniently enough, the forms are always the same for each verb. But you'll sometimes see "molfaimid" and "brisfimid" instead of "molfaidh muid" and "brisfidh muid", respectively.

ii) 2nd Conjugation Future

These too are divided into roots whose last vowel is "i" and those whose isn't, but in this tense instead of adding future tense endings to the root (like "fidh" and "faidh" above), the "-(a)igh" is taken off the verb before the endings are added:

<u>Root: beannaigh</u>	<u>"bless"</u>	<u>Root: bailigh</u>	<u>"gather"</u>
beannóidh mé	-- I will bless	baileoidh mé	-- I will gather
beannóidh tú	-- you will bless	baileoidh tú	-- you will gather
beannóidh sé	-- he will bless	baileoidh sé	-- he will gather
beannóidh sí	-- she will bless	baileoidh sí	-- she will gather
beannóidh muid	-- we will bless	baileoidh muid	-- we will gather
beannóidh sibh	-- you will bless	baileoidh sibh	-- you will gather
beannóidh siad	-- they will bless	baileoidh siad	-- they will gather

So in this conjugation, the future tense is formed by dropping the "-(a)igh" and adding "óidh" (or "eoidh" if the last vowel in the root is "i").

The first person plural variants of "beannóidh muid" and "baileoidh muid" are "beannóimid" and "baileoimid", respectively.

A future tense question is asked using the eclipsing word "an", and the negative future tense is created using the aspirating word "ní":

Root: ceannaigh "buy"

--> ceannóidh sé "he will buy".

Question: An gceannóidh sé an leabhar? -- Will he buy the book?

Answer: Ní cheannóidh sé an leabhar. -- He won't buy the book.

Root: tuig "understand"

--> tuigfidh tú "you will understand".

Question: An dtuigfidh tú an cheist? --Will you understand the question?

Answer: Ní thuigfidh mé an cheist. --I won't understand the question.

Root: bailigh, "gather"

--> baileoidh siad, "they will gather"

Question: An mbaileoidh siad connadh? -- Will they gather firewood?

Answer: Ní bhaileoidh siad connadh. -- They won't gather firewood.

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Gaelic/Irish Lessons

Reading Number 1

You may be suffering from grammar overload at this point so perhaps we could take a break for some reading. To begin with, here are a few Irish proverbs. Unfamiliar vocabulary is at the right.

1. "Pós bean aniar (1) agus pósfaidh tú aniar." (aniar, "(from the) west")
2. "Níl aon tinteán mar do thinteán féin." (aon, "any", "one") (mar, "like") (tinteán [m.], "fireside")
3. "Imigh leis an saol agus tiocfaidh sé thart." (saol [m.], "world") (tiocfaidh, "will come" [irreg.]) (thart, "around (to you)")
4. "Ceannaigh droch rud is bí gan aon rud." (droch, "bad") (rud [m.], "thing") (is = agus) (gan, "without")

And the classic:

5. "Labhair Béarla liom agus brisfidh mé do phus." (labhair... le, "speak... to") (Béarla [m.], "English language") (pus [m.], "face", "mug")

The "irreg." after "tiocfaidh" in number three means that its an irregular verb. There are ten completely irregular verbs in Irish. I'll mark irregular forms where they come up in the reading, but bear in mind that you normally can't form one tense of the irregular by using another, e.g. "tiocfaidh" (will come) is no help in finding out the past tense of "come" (which is actually "tháinig"). We'll be learning one or two irregular verbs at a time in the upcoming lessons.

At this point we have just enough grammar to start regular readings in each lesson. In the next lesson we'll look at a 19th-century love song from Connacht.

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Gaelic/Irish Lessons

Irish: Lesson Ten

Habitual Present of "bi"

In addition to the normal present tense of "bi", which is "tá", that verb also has something called a habitual present tense to describe a state of being that extends over a period of time. For example, while we would use "tá" to translate a sentence like "I am at home now", we would use the habitual present to translate a sentence like "I work nights" or "I am often at home on Monday":

bím	-- I tend to be
bíonn tú	-- you tend to be
bíonn sé	-- he tends to be
bíonn sí	-- she tends to be
bíimid	-- we tend to be
bíonn sibh	-- you tend to be
bíonn siad	-- they tend to be

This is often used with adverbs of time like "go minic" (often), "riamh" (ever), "i gcónaí" (always), or "uaireanta" (sometimes), or with days of the week like "(An) Luan" (Monday) or "(An) Aoine" (Friday):

Bím anseo gach lá.	-- I am here every day. (gach, "each")
Bíonn an bia go deas anseo.	-- The food is good here.
Bíimid sa bhaile ar an Luan.	-- We are at home Mondays. (sa bhaile, "at home")
Bíonn sí tinn go minic.	-- She is often sick.
Bíonn céilí anseo ar an Aoine.	-- A ceilí is held here on Fridays.
Bíonn siad ag obair san oíche.	-- They work nights.

The negative is formed with "ní", which aspirates, and a question asked with the eclipsing word "an":

Ní bhíonn ocras orm ar maidin.
I don't feel hungry in the morning.

An mbíonn an aimsir go breá i gCalifornia?
-- Is the weather nice in California?

Fortunately, "bí" is the only verb with a "present habitual" tense. To express a present habitual action other verbs just use the simple present tense.

Conditional of "bi"

The conditional of "bi" expresses what would be (if some other condition were filled):

bheinn	-- I would be
bheifeá	-- you would be
bheadh sé	-- he would be
bheadh sí	-- she would be
bheimis	-- we would be
bheadh sibh	-- you would be
bheidís	-- they would be

E.g.:

Bheadh sé sin go deas.	-- That would be nice.
Is minic a bheadh sé fliuch.	-- It would often be wet.
An mbeifeá sásta leis sin?	-- Would you be happy with that?
Ni bheinn.	-- I wouldn't be.
An mbeadh toitín agat?	-- Would you have a cigarette? (toitín [m.]

Past Passive

Also called the "past impersonal", this tense is used to describe action that happened to something in the past, e.g. "the bicycle was stolen", "the key was lost". To form this tense with a 1st conjugation verb, take the root and add "-adh" to it (or "-eadh" if the last vowel in the root is "e" or "i"). For 2nd conjugation verbs, chop off the "-igh" in the usual manner and add "-íodh". When the subject of the sentence is a pronoun, it tends to get pushed to the right by other elements in the sentence:

tóg	"build", "raise"
--> Tógadh i 1900 é.	-- It was built in 1900.
--> Tógadh i nDoire mé.	-- I was raised in Derry.

goid	"steal"
--> Goideadh mo rothar.	-- My bicycle was stolen.

bris	"break"
--> Briseadh an fhuinneog.	-- The window was broken.

bronn ar	"award"
--> Bronnadh duais air.	-- He was awarded a prize. (duais [f.], "prize, gift")

bunaigh	"found, establish"
--> Bunaíodh i 1820 é.	-- It was founded in 1820.

foilsigh	"publish"
--> Foilsíodh "Ulysses" i 1922.	-- "Ulysses" was published in 1922.

An irregular verb worth mentioning here is the past impersonal of the verb "beir" (bear), which is "rugadh" (was born):

Rugadh i mBéal Feirste mé. -- I was born in Belfast.

faoi

The preposition "faoi" has a number of meanings, most notably "below" or "under" (when describing the position of an object -- e.g. "under my head" or "below the stair") and "about" (when talking about something concerning an object -- e.g. "about economics", "about the event" etc.) "Faoi" combines with the definite article to form "faoin".

faoin staighre	-- under the stair
faoi bhrón	-- sad (literally: "under sorrow")
faoi Nollaig	-- around [or] about Christmas-time
leabhar faoi Londain	-- a book about London

The prepositional pronoun forms are:

faoi + mé	= fúm
faoi + tú	= fút
faoi + sé	= faoi
faoi + sí	= fúithi
faoi + muid	= fúinn
faoi + sibh	= fúibh
faoi + siad	= fúthu

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Gaelic/Irish Lessons

The proverbs in the last lesson were the first in a series of readings that'll be appearing from now on, since we now have enough Irish grammar to read simple texts. Today's reading is a song collected by Douglas Hyde in his book "Love-Songs of Connacht", which was published in 1893. Hyde, who was born in 1860 in Roscommon, was a Protestant who founded the non-sectarian Gaelic League in 1893 to promote the Irish language. He taught first at the University of New Brunswick and, later, was the first professor of modern Irish at University College in Dublin. In 1937, when the office of President was created in the new constitution of the Republic of Ireland, Hyde became the first to occupy that office. He died in 1949.

Hyde collected the song given below, "My Grief on the Sea", from a woman named Brighid ni Chorsuaidh who was almost a hundred years old and living in a hut in the middle of a bog in Co. Roscommon. A footnote says: "Tá sí marbh anois agus a cuid amhrán léi" -- "she is dead now and her share of songs with her".

The spelling and grammar in the song have been modernized to accord with standard Irish. Unfamiliar vocabulary is given to the right. An English translation follows.

Mo Bhrón ar an Bhfarrage

Mo bhrón ar an bhfarrage (brón [m.], "grief")
 Is é tá mór, (farrage [f.], "sea") (tá = atá)
 Is é gabháil idir mé ((ag) gabháil, "going") (idir, "between")
 'S mo mhíle stór. ('s = agus) (míle, "thousand") (stór [m.], "treasure")

Fagadh san mbaile mé (déanamh = ag déanamh)
 Déanamh bróin, (gan, "without") (súil [f.], "hope")
 Gan aon tsúil tar sáile liom (tar = thar; thar sáile = "abroad") (choíche = "forever") (ná = "or") (go deo = "forever")
 Choíche ná go deo.

Mo léan nach bhfuil mise (léan [m.], "grief")
 'Gus mo mhúirnín bán (múirnín [m.], "darling") (bán, "fair")
 I gCúige Laighean (cúige [m.], "province")
 Ná i gContae an Chláir. (Laighean, "Leinster") (Contae an Chláir, "County Clare")

Mo bhrón nach bhfuil mise ..
 'Gus mo mhíle grá (grá [m.], "sweetheart")
 Ar bord loinge (ar bord, "on board")
 Triall go Meiriceá. (loinge, "of a ship") ((ag) triall go, "bound for")
 Leaba luachra (leaba [f.], "bed") (luachra, "of rushes")
 Bhí fúm aréir, (aréir, "last night")
 Agus chaith mé amach é (caith, "throw") (amach, "out")
 Le teas an lae. (teas [m.], "heat") (an lae, "of the day")
 Tháinig mo ghrá-sa (tháinig, "came")
 Le mo thaobh (le, "by") (taobh [m.], "side")
 Gualainn ar ghualainn (gualainn [f.], "shoulder")
 Agus béal ar bhéal. (béal [f.], "mouth")

Literal translation:

*"My grief on the sea
 Is that it is big
 It is it going between me
 and my thousand treasures [i.e. my love].*

*I was left at home
 Making grief,
 Without one hope [of going] abroad
 Forever or forever.*

*My grief that I am not
 and my fair darling
 in the province Leinster
 or County of Clare.*

*My grief that I am not
and my thousand loves
on board of a ship
bound for America.*

*A bed of rushes
was under me last night
and I threw it out
with the heat of the day.*

*My love came
by my side
shoulder on shoulder
and mouth on mouth.)*

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Gaelic/Irish Lessons

Irish: Lesson Eleven

Impersonal in "-ar"

In the previous lesson we learned the past impersonal. The present impersonal adds the suffix "-tar" (or "-tear" if the last vowel in the root is "e" or "i") to the root of a 1st conjugation verb. 2nd conjugation verbs take "-áitear" (or, if they end in -igh, they take "-ítear"):

root: déan, "do, make"

--> Déantar an léine seo in Éirinn. -- This shirt is made in Ireland.

root: múin, "teach"

--> Múintear Gaeilge sa scoil seo. -- Irish is taught in this school.

root: ceannaigh, "buy"

--> Ceannaítear toitíní ann. -- Cigarettes are bought there.

Relative Particle "go"

We have already encountered the relative particle "a" meaning "that", "which", or "who". "a" is used after a noun but before a verb, e.g. "the man *that* came yesterday", "the boy *who* threw the stone", etc. But the relative particle that comes after a verb and before a noun, for example in sentences like "I think *that* it is true" or "I see *that* the work has begun", is translated differently in Irish -- it is the word "go", which causes eclipsis. "Go" is used with the "dependent" form of the verb, which until now I've called the "question" form. If you take away the question word "an", what you're left with is the "dependent" form, for example:

An bhfuil sé tinn? -- Is he ill?

An raibh sin ceart? -- Was that right?

Taking away "an", we get the dependent forms "bhfuil" and "raibh". So the Irish for "that... is" and "that... was" are "go bhfuil" and "go raibh", respectively:

Cloisim go bhfuil sé tinn. -- I hear that he is ill.
(clois, "hear")

Ceapaim go raibh sin ceart. -- I think that was right.
(ceap, "think")

This is the case with other verbs as well:

Deir sé go mbeidh sé ag bualadh le Máire amárach. -- He says he will be meeting with Mary tomorrow.
(deir, "says" [irreg.])

Níl mé cinnte go dtuigeann siad. -- I'm not certain that they understand.

B'fhéidir go mbeinn sásta. -- Perhaps I would be satisfied.

The negative form of the relative pronoun "go" is "nach", which also eclipses:

Tuigim nach bhfuil sé furasta. -- I understand that it isn't easy.

"Go" and "nach" are not used for relative clauses in the past tense. Instead, the relative clauses are "gur" (positive) and "nár" (negative) are used, both of which aspirate:

-- I think that he met Mary yesterday. -- I think that he didn't meet Mary yesterday.

Ceapaim gur bhuail sé le Máire inné.

Ceapaim nár bhuail sé le Máire inné.

preposition "go"

Another use for "go" is to mean "to" or "until". "Go" used in this sense doesn't cause aspiration or eclipsis, but does add "h" to a noun beginning with a vowel:

go hÉirinn -- to Ireland
ag dul go Londain -- going to London
go maidin -- until morning
go bráth -- forever (lit: "until Judgement Day")

Before a definite noun "go" is "go dtí", which also doesn't cause aspiration or eclipsis:

ag dul go dtí an banc -- going to the bank

preposition "ó"

The preposition ó, which aspirates a following noun, means "from":

ó Dhoire go Corcaigh -- from Derry to Cork
ó thús -- from the beginning (tús [m.])
litir ó Liam -- a letter from Liam

"ó" combines with the definite article to form "ón" and causes eclipsis (or, in some dialects, aspiration) on the noun coming after -- in this way it has the same effect as "ag" and "ar" do:

ag teacht ón mbaile -- coming from the town

The prepositional pronoun forms of "ó" are:

ó + mé = uaim (from me)
ó + tú = uait (from you)
ó + sé = uaidh (from him)
ó + sí = uaithi (from her)
ó + muid = uainn (from us)
ó + sibh = uaibh (from you)
ó + siad = uathu (from them)

The verb "teastaíonn ó" means "is wanting from"; it corresponds to the English verb "want" in meaning except that in Irish the subject (the thing or person doing the wanting) follows the "ó" and the verb itself is always in the third person, e.g.:

Teastaíonn airgid ó Sheán. -- Sean wants money.
(lit: "money is wanted from Sean")
Teastaíonn cupán tae uaim. -- I want a cup of tea.
(lit: "a cup of tea is wanted from-me")

"an-" for emphasis

The Irish for very is "an-". This is placed before an adjective and causes aspiration, except when the adjective begins with d, t, or s:

maith (good) ---> an-mhaith (very good)
fuar (cold) ---> an-fhuar (very cold)

but:

sean (old) ---> an-shean (very old)
 dorcha (dark) ---> an-dorcha (very dark)

Asking Questions

So far the interrogative pronouns we've learned have been "cé" (who?), "conas" (how?), and "cá" (where?). Of these, "cá" uses the relative form of the verb:

Cé hé sin? -- Who is that?
 Conas tá tú? -- How are you?

but:

Cá bhfuil sé? -- Where is he?

Cá can also mean "what", though never when referring to people. It prefixes "h" before a noun beginning with a vowel:

Cá hainm atá ort? -- What's your name?
 (lit: "what name that is on-you?")
 Cá haois tú? -- What age are you?
 (aois [f.])

"Cé" before the definite article becomes "cén". You can ask "why" using "cén fáth?" (literally, "what the reason?") and "how" using "cén chaoi?" (literally, "what the way?"). Both are followed by the dependent form of the verb:

Cén fáth nach dtuigeann tú? -- Why don't you understand?
 Cén chaoi a bhfuil tú? -- How are you?

"Conas tá tú?" & "Cén chaoi a bhfuil tú?" are used in Munster and Connaught respectively. (Literally "how are you?" and "what way are you?".)

"Cad é mar atá tú?" is used in Ulster. (Literally "What is it you are like?")

"what"

"Cad" and "céard" are interchangeable words meaning "what":

Cad é sin? / Ceard é sin? -- What's that?

Vocative Case

The vocative case of a noun or name is used when that name or noun is being directly addressed. For instance, when the sentences "go away, Liam" or "come here, Máire" or "thank you, friend" are translated into Irish, the words "Liam", "Máire", and "friend" respectively would be in the vocative case. To put a feminine name or noun in the vocative, you aspirate it and put "a" before it:

Síle -- (a proper name)
 --> Go raibh maith agat, a Shíle. -- Thank you, Síle. (lit: "may there be good at-you")
 Máire -- (a proper name)
 --> Dún an doras, a Mháire. -- Close the door, Máire.

The same thing is done with a masculine noun or name except that an "i" is added after the final vowel of the name if that final vowel is broad (a, o, or u):

Seán	-- Sean
-Ná bac leis, a Sheáin.	-- Don't bother with it, Sean. (bac, "bother, obstruct")
Breandán	-- Brendan
-->Gabh isteach, a Bhreandáin.	-- Go inside, Brendan.

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Gaelic/Irish Lessons

Reading Number 3

This is the first part of a short play for children called "Cúchulainn", about how the legendary Irish hero earned his name. It is by Máire Uí Cheallaigh and taken from a book called "33 Drámaí Gaeilge do Ghasúir Scoile" (33 Irish Plays for Schoolchildren) published by Cló Iar-Chonnachta (West Connaught Press).

The scene in this part is a hurling field; Conchúr, the King of Ulster, is standing with two men watching children playing hurley. One of the children, the object of their special attention, is young Setanta. Stage directions are in square brackets, and the names of the speakers are abbreviated after their first appearance. Translation in English follows.

RADHARC 1

(*radharc [m.], "scene", "spectacle"*)

FEAR 1: Is docha go bhfuil an cluiche beagnach críochnaithe.

(is docha, "perhaps")
(cluiche [m.], "game")
(beagnach, "almost")
(críochnaithe, "finished")

CONCHÚR: Fanfaimid tamall beag ag féachaint air.

(tamall [m.], "a while")

FEAR 1: Tá go maith. Taithíonn cluiche iománaíochta go mór liomsa.

(taithíonn... le, "pleases")
(iománaíochta, "of hurling")

[*Cloistear na gártha ón bpáirc imeartha*]

(na gártha [f.pl.], "the shouts")
(páirc imeartha [f.], "playing field")
(ag bualadh bos, "clapping")

CONCHÚR: Féach air sin! Maith thú! Maith thú
[*ag bualadh bos*]

(an bhfaca sibh...? "did you see...?")
(sliotar [m.], "ball")

An bhfaca sibh é sin? Chuir sé an sliotar díreach isteach faoin trasnán.

(díreach, "straight")
(isteach, "in")
(trasnán [m.], "crossbar")

FEAR 2: Cé hé an buachaill sin a bhuail an liathróid isteach?

(liathróid [f.], "ball")

CONCHÚR: Is é sin Setanta. Mise a uncail.

(mise = is mise)
(uncail [m.], "uncle")
(ar fheabhas, "excellent")

FEAR 2: Tá sé ar fheabhas. Is féidir leis rith ar nós na gaoithe.

(rith, "run")
(ar nós na, "like the")
(gaoth [f.], "wind")

FEAR 1: Féach ar na cosa láidre atá faoi.

(cosa láidre, "strong legs")
(ní fhaca, "didn't see")

FEAR 2: Ní fhaca mé riamh iománaí chomh tapaidh leis.

(riamh, "ever")
(iománaí [m.], "hurler")
(tapaidh, "quick")
(chomh...leis, "as... him")

CONCHÚR: Agus ní fheicfidh tú a leithéid arís.
[*Cloistear gártha*].

(ní fheicfidh, "won't see")
(leithéid, [f.], "like, equal, counterpart")
(ar aghaidh, "forward")

Ar aghaidh leat, a Shetanta. Buail é, buail é. Hurrá! Sin cúl eile. Mo ghrá thú, a Shetanta. Maith an fear!

(buail, "strike, hit")
(cúl [m.], "goal")
(eile, "another")

FEAR 1: Sin é an deireadh, is dóigh liom. Tá sé chomh maith dúinn imeacht.

(deireadh [m.], "end, conclusion")
(is dóigh liom, "I think")
(chomh maith do, "as well for")

FEAR 2: Níl an cluiche críochnaithe fós. Sos atá ann anois.

(fós, "yet")
(sos [m.], "pause, break")

CONCHÚR: Fanaí gí nóiméad. Seo chugainn Setanta.

(nóiméad [m.], "a moment")
(chugainn, "towards us")

SETANTA: Dia duit, a uncail.

CONCHÚR: Dia is Muire duit, a Shetanta. Cén chaoi a bhfuil an cluiche ag dul?

SETANTA: Go han-mhaith. Tá trí chúl agus cúig chúilín ag ár bhfoireann.

FEAR 1: Agus céard faoin bhfoireann eile?

SETANTA: Níl ach ceithre chúilín ar fad acu.

CONCHÚR: Ba mhaith liom fanacht go deireadh an chluiche ach caithfimid dul chuig an féasta i gcaisleán Chulainn.

SETANTA: Tá go maith. Rachaidh mise ar ball. Slán go fóill.

CONCHÚR: Slán. Go n-éirí an t-ádh libh.

(trí, "three")

(cúig, "five")

(cúilín [m.], "a point" (in sports))

(foireann [f.], "team")

(ar fad, "altogether")

(caithfimid, "we must")

(chuig, "to")

(féasta [m.], "feast, party")

(caisleán [m.], "castle")

(Chulainn, "of Culann")

(rachaidh, "will go")

(ar ball, "later")

(slán go fóill, "so long", "see you later";

literally: "health still")

(go... libh, "good luck"; literally, "may luck rise with you")

Translation: Scene 1

Man 1: Perhaps the game is almost finished.

Conchur: We will stay a little while watching it.

Man 1: That's good. A game of hurling pleases me greatly.

[Shouts are heard from the playing field].

Conchur: Look at that! Good for you! Good for you!

[clapping]

Did you see that? He put the ball directly under the crossbar.

Man 2: Who is that boy that hit the ball in?

Conchur: That's Setanta. I'm his uncle.

Man 2: He's excellent. He can run like the wind.

Man 1: Look at the strong legs that are under him.

Man 2: I've never seen a hurler as quick as him.

Conchur: And you won't see his equal again.

[Shouts are heard].

Forward, Setanta. Hit it, hit it. Hurray! That's another goal. You're my darling, Setanta. Good man!

Man 1: That's the end, I think. It's as well for us to go.

Man 2: The game isn't finished yet. There's a pause now.

Conchur: Stay a moment. This is Setanta (coming) to us.

Setanta: God with you, uncle.

Conchur: God and Mary with you, Setanta. How is the game going?

Setanta: Very well. Our team has three goals and five points.

Man 1: And what about the other team?

Setanta: They only have four points altogether.

Conchur: I'd like to stay until the end of the game but we have to go to the feast at Culann's castle.

Setanta: That's fine. I'll go myself later. Goodbye.

Conchur: Goodbye. Good luck.

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Gaelic/Irish Lessons

Irish: Lesson Twelve

Motion / Location

There are two Irish words for "in" and two for "out", corresponding to the distinction in English between "inwards" and "inside" and "outwards" and "outside", respectively. One describes the motion of going in or out, and the other describes the location of being in or out:

amach -- out [motion] isteach -- in [motion]
 amuigh -- out [location] istigh -- in [location]

For example:

Amach leat! -- Get out! Out with you!
but: Tá sé amuigh. -- He's out.
 Rith isteach. -- Run inside.
but: Fan istigh. -- Stay inside.

A similar distinction holds for "up" and "down":

suas -- up [motion] síos -- down [motion]
 thuas -- up [location] thíos -- down [location]

E.g.:

ag dul suas an staighre -- going up the stair
but: thuas i gcrann -- up in a tree
 ag teacht síos an rathad -- coming down the road
but: thíos ar lár -- down on the ground

In addition to these, there are also the specialized words "anuas" and "aníos". Anuas means "down (from above)" and aníos means "up (from below)":

Tar anuas! -- Come down! (tar, "come" [irreg.])
 Fás aníos! -- Grow up!

The Case System

In the last lesson it was shown how a thing or person that was being directly addressed was said to be in the "vocative case" and underwent a spelling change. Standard Irish has three cases -- the nominative, or default, case, the vocative, and the genitive, which we'll look at in a moment. There is also an important case used in the dialects of Irish and in pre-Standard writing called the dative case, which dealt with nouns that followed prepositions. When we eclipse nouns that come after "ag an" or "ar an" (e.g. ag an mbanc, "at the bank", etc.), that is a remnant of the dative case. But in Standard Irish this case doesn't officially exist, so we'll leave it aside for now.

The genitive case has a number of different functions, but the most common is to show possession by something of something else. It is often used where in English the word "of" would be found, or where a noun would take apostrophe plus "s". For instance, if the English sentences "a glass of beer", "the king's men", or even "straw man" were translated into Irish, the words "beer", "king", and "straw" would be in the genitive case ("straw man" is also "man of straw"). Now, finding the way in which a noun changes from the nominative to the genitive in Irish is one of the great difficulties in that language's grammar, along with finding out how to turn a singular noun into a plural. There are a number of different methods that are used. As a defensive measure grammarians have come up with the idea of "declensions", groups of nouns that are roughly similar in the way they form the genitive, the vocative, and the plural. There are five declensions and they may make the necessary changes a little clearer.

The First Declension

i) Genitive

Nouns of the first declension are all masculine and all end with a broad vowel (a, o, or u). This includes most names of men in Irish, such as Ciarán, Micheál, Peadar, Séamas, Seán, etc., as well as a great number of common masculine nouns for objects. Nouns in this declension form their genitive case the same way as they do their vocative -- by the process called "slenderization", which is either adding a slender vowel (e or i) to the noun, or changing broad vowels

in the noun into slender ones. Last lesson we saw how someone named "Seán" would be addressed as "a Sheáin" and someone named "Breandán" as "a Bhreandáin". These are examples of slenderization, because the slender vowel "i" is being added to the names. We do the same to first declension nouns in the genitive:

Nominative:	Seán	-- Sean
Genitive:	Sheáin	-- Sean's [or] of Sean
Example::	teach Sheáin	-- Sean's house
Nominative:	cat	-- cat
Genitive:	cait	-- cat's [or] of a cat
Example:	eireaball cait	-- tail of a cat (eireaball [m.], "tail")
Nominative:	eolas	-- information
Genitive:	eolais	-- (of) information
Example:	píosa eolais	-- a piece of information
Nominative:	leabhar	-- book
Genitive:	leabhair	-- book's [or] of a book
Example:	cumhdach leabhair	-- a book's cover (cumhdach [m.], "cover, wrapper")

However, as mentioned earlier some words instead of simply adding "i" change one or more of their vowels to "i":

Nominative:	fear	-- man
Genitive:	fir	-- man's [or] of a man
Example:	hata fir	-- a man's hat
Nominative:	mac	-- son
Genitive:	mic	-- son's [or] of a son
Example:	oidhreacht mic	-- a son's inheritance (oidhreacht [f.], "inheritance")
Nominative:	páipéar	-- paper
Genitive:	páipéir	-- of paper
Example:	leathanach páipéir	-- a sheet of paper

The definite article of a masculine noun in the genitive case is still "an", but it aspirates the noun following (unless it begins with "d" or "t"), and adds "t" to a noun beginning with "s". Nouns beginning with d, t, l, n, r, or a vowel are unaffected by "an":

Nominative:	an bád	-- the boat
Genitive:	an bháid	-- of the boat
Example:	ainm an bháid	-- the name of the boat
Nominative:	an sagart	-- the priest
Genitive:	an tsagairt	-- of the priest
Example:	teach an tsagairt	-- the priest's house
Nominative:	an naomh	-- the saint
Genitive:	an naoimh	-- of the saint
Example:	saol an naoimh	-- the life of the saint

Note that in Irish when we have a sentence expressing "the X of the Y", for instance "the name of the boat" or "the life of the saint", the first noun never has an article, even if it does in English -- "name" and "life", respectively, are left indefinite.

ii) Plural

The nominative plurals of many, but not all, first declension nouns are the same as their genitive singular:

Nom. Sing.:	cat	-- cat
Gen. Sing.:	cait	-- of a cat
Nom. Plur.:	cait	-- cats
Nom. Sing.:	ceann	-- head
Gen. Sing.:	cinn	-- of a head
Nom. Plur.:	cinn	-- heads

However there are quite a few irregulars which form plurals by adding "a", "ta", "tha", "aí", "anna", or "ra", which is quite different from how they form their genitive, and these have to be memorized separately. A few common ones are given here.

cleas	-- trick	--> cleasa	-- tricks
saol	-- world	--> saolta	-- worlds
gaol	-- relative	--> gaolta	-- relatives
scéal	-- story	--> scéalta	-- stories
glór	-- voice	--> glórtha	-- voices
samhradh	-- summer	--> samhraid	-- summers
bealach	-- way, road	--> bealaí	-- ways, roads
bás	-- death	--> básanna	-- deaths
nós	-- custom	--> nósanna	-- customs

Some of these nouns before they add a plural suffix lose their final vowel:

solas	-- light	--> soilse	-- lights
uasal	-- nobleman	--> uaisle	-- noblemen
briathar	-- word	--> briathra	-- words

Second Declension

Nouns of the second declension are all feminine, with only three exceptions: im ("butter"), sliabh ("mountain"), and teach ("house"). The article before a feminine noun in the genitive case is "na"; this adds "h" to a noun beginning with a vowel.

The genitive singular in this declension is formed in one of three ways:

i) Adding -e to nouns ending in a slender vowel:

Nominative:	coill	-- forest
Genitive:	coille	-- of a forest
Nominative:	súil	-- eye
Genitive:	súile	-- of an eye

ii) Slenderizing and then adding -e to nouns ending in a broad vowel:

Nominative:	bróg	-- shoe
Genitive:	bróige	-- of a shoe
Nominative:	lámh	-- hand
Genitive:	lámhe	-- hand's

iii) Changing an ending "-ach" into "-aí" and "-each" into "-í":

Nominative:	gealach	-- moon
Genitive:	gealaí	-- moon's
Nominative:	báisteach	-- rain
Genitive:	báistí	-- rain's

Plurals are generally formed by adding "-a":

fuinneog	-- window	--> fuinneoga	-- windows
long	-- ship	--> longa	-- ships
clann	-- family	--> clanna	-- families
póg	-- kiss	--> póga	-- kisses
cloch	-- stone	--> clocha	-- stones
gaoth	-- wind	--> gaotha	-- winds
críoch	-- end, limit	--> críocha	-- ends, limits

But there are the usual exceptions, for instance plurals ending in "-eanna" -- these are all of one syllable and end in a slender vowel:

áit	-- place	--> áiteanna	-- places
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fuaim -- sound --> fuaimeanna -- sounds

duais -- prize --> duaiseanna -- prizes

... or those ending in "-acha" or "-eacha":

craobh -- tree --> craobhacha -- trees

carraig -- rock --> carraigeacha -- rocks

... or in "-te", "-ta", or "-tha":

tonn -- wave --> tonnta -- waves

tír -- a land --> tíortha -- lands

gáir -- shout --> gártha -- shouts

coill -- forest --> coillte -- forests

A Consolation

The genitive case and, to a greater extent, the formation of plurals are indeed a wretched business in Irish, but when you start to *read* Irish you'll at least be able to recognize the word for what it is no matter what case it's in, and over time get used to seeing that word with its distinctive case-endings. A good dictionary, like the new Collins Gem Irish, lists the declension number after every noun and gives irregular genitive and plural forms in brackets, and in general attempts to make it easier to handle these things. So although we have another three declensions to learn, whatever grammar doesn't kill us can only make us stronger.

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Gaelic/Irish Lessons

Irish: Reading no. 4

"Cúchulainn" (part 2)

This is the second and final part of the mini-play "Cúchulainn", by Máire Uí Cheallaigh. After having watched Setanta at the hurling, Conchur goes on to the feast at Culann's castle without him, and arrives just as everything has been made ready:

RADHARC II

[Teach Chulainn.]

CULANN: An bhfuil gach rud réidh, a ghiolla?

(gach, "each") (rud [m.], "thing")
(giolla [m.], "servant")

GIOLLA: Tá gach rud ullamh anois, a mháistir.

(ullamh, "ready, prepared")
(máistir [m.], "master")

CULANN: Go breá. Tagaigí isteach anois agus suígí síos.

(tagaigí, "come" [irreg.])
(suigh, "sit")

[Ag glaoch ar an gclann]

INÍON: Cá suífidh mise, a Dhaidí?

(ag glaoch, "calling")
(clann [f.], "children, family")

CULANN: Suigh ansin in aice le do mháthair... Beidh na haíonna anseo i gceann tamaill.

(Daidí [m.], "Daddy")
(in aice le, "next to")
(aíonna, "guests")
(i gceann, "after, at the end of")
(tamall [m.], "a while")

GIOLLA: Éistigí. Cloisim anois iad. An ligfidh mé isteach iad?

(lig, "let, allow")

CULANN: Lig, más é do thoil é. Éist liom. Nuair a bheidh gach duine istigh lig amach an cú. Bí cúramach agus bí cinnte go bhfuil gach duine istigh sula scaoilfidh tú amach é.

(más é do thoil é, "please" lit: "if it is your will")
(nuair, "when")
(cú [m.], "dog")
(cúramach, "careful")
(sula, "before")
(scaoil, "release")

GIOLLA: Tá go maith, a mháistir.

[Tagann Conchúr agus cúpla fear isteach].

CULANN: A Chonchúir, a Chonchúir, céad míle fáilte romhat.

(tagann, "come(s)" [irreg.])
(cúpla, "a couple")
(céad [m.], "a hundred")
(romhat, "before you")

CONCHÚR: Go raibh maith agat, a Chulainn.

(tá súil agam, "I hope")

CULANN: Tá súil agam go bhfuil curaidh chalma na craobhe rua in éineacht leat.

(curaidh, "champions") (calma, "brave")
(craobh rua, "Red Branch")
(in éineacht le, "together with")

CONCHÚR: Cinnte. Beidh siad anseo i gceann cúpla nóiméad. Éist. Tá siad ag teacht.

CULANN: Ar m'fhocal! Tá siad anseo.

(focal [m.], "word")

[Cloistear banna ceoil ag seinm "Ó DOMHNAILL ABÚ". Tagann siad isteach ag máirseáil.]

(banna ceoil [m.], "music band")
(ag seinm, "playing")

CULANN: Fáilte, fáilte, romhaibh go léir. A ghiolla, deochanna. Deochanna do mo chairde.

(ag máirseáil, "marching")
(romhaibh, "before you")
(deochanna, "drinks")
(chairde, "friends")

[Tosaíonn an giolla ag dáileadh dí.]

(ag dáileadh, "giving out")
(dí, "of it" [i.e. of the drink])

CONCHÚR: Is iontach an féasta seo atá os ár gcomhair, a Chulainn.

(os ár gcomhair, "in front of us")

CULANN: Is ormsa atá an t-áthas anocht. Tá a fhios agat, a Chonchúir, go bhfuil fáilte romhat anseo i gcónaí agus roimh do mhuintir freisin.

(roimh, "before")
(freisin, "also, as well")

CONCHÚR: Go raibh míle maith agat. Sláinte.
[ag ardú a ghloinne.]

(sláinte [f.], "health, cheers!")
(ag ardú, "raising")
(gloinne [f.], "glass")

Do Chulann!

LE CHÉILE: Do Chulann!

[Leanann na haíonna ar aghaidh leis an scléip.]

(lean ar aghaidh, "continue, go on")
(scléip [f.], "merriment, fun")
(inis do, "tell")

CULANN: Inis dom a Chonchúir, an dtéann tú ag fiach na laethanta seo?

(téann, "go, goes")
(ag fiach, "hunting")
(laethanta, "days")

CONCHÚR: Ó, bíonn mé ar an sliabh gach lá anois ós rud é go bhfuil an aimsir go breá. Bhí mé ag fiach inné.

(sliabh [m.], "mountain") (ós, "since")
(aimsir [f.], "weather")

CULANN: Bhuel! Conas ar éirigh leat?

(éirigh le, "succeed, get on")
(ar dtús, "at first")

CONCHÚR: Ar dtús bhí mí-ádh orm. Ní bhfuair mé dada. Ach i ndeireadh an lae mharaigh mé dhá fhia agus sionnach.

(mí-ádh [m.], "bad luck")
(ní bhfuair, "didn't get")
(dada [m.], "anything")
(i ndeireadh, "at the end")
(maraigh, "kill") (fia [m.], "red deer")
(sionnach [m.], "fox")

CULANN: Sionnach!

(maidrín [m.], "little dog")
(rua, "reddish-brown")

CONCHÚR: Sea. Maidrín rua.

FEAR I: Maidrín rua! Há-Há-Há.

[Tosaíonn sé ag canadh:]

An maidrín rua, rua, rua, rua.

(ag canadh, "singing")

LE CHÉILE: An maidrín rua atá granna, An maidrín rua na luí sa luachair, Agus barr a dhá chluais in airde. Tally hó lena bhonn, tally hó lena --

(le chéile, "(everyone) together")
(granna, "ugly")
(luachair [f.], "rushes")
(barr [m.], "top") (cluas [f.], "ear")
(in airde, "above")
(lena, "with the")
(bonn [m.], "sole (of the foot)")
(stop, "stop") (amhrán [m.], "song")
(obann, "sudden") (glór [m.], "voice")
(uafásach, "awful, horrible")

[Stopann an t-amhrán go hobann. Cloistear glór uafásach an chú.]

FEAR II: Céard é sin?

CULANN: Is é sin mo chú. Tá naimhde amuigh is dócha. Ullmhaigh!

(naimhde, "enemies")
(ullmhaigh, "get ready!")

[Tarraingíonn siad a gclaimhte.]

(tarraing, "draw, pull")
(claimhte, "swords")

CULANN: Céard atá ort, a Chonchúir? Tá tú chomh bán le sneachta.

(céard atá ort, "what's wrong with you?")
(bán, "white, pale")
(sneachta [m.], "snow")

CONCHÚR: Setanta.

CULANN: Céard faoi Setanta?

CONCHÚR: Dúirt sé go tiocfadh sé i ndiaidh an chluiche.

(dúirt, "said" [irreg.])
(tiocfadh, "would come" [irreg.])
(i ndiaidh, "after")

CULANN: Níor inis tú dom go raibh sé ag teacht.

(ag ligean, "letting out")
(osna [f.], "sigh")

[Ag ligean osna.]

Agus lig mé amach an cú.

CONCHÚR: Rinne mé dearmad. Tá Setanta bocht marbh. Tá sé marbh.

(rinne mé dearmad, "I forgot"; lit: "I made forgetfulness")
(bocht, "poor") (marbh, "dead")

CULANN: Tá brón orm, a Chonchúir. Tá brón orm, cinnte.

[*Ritheann Setanta isteach agus é ag cur fola.*]

CONCHÚR: Setanta! Ó a chroí, tá tú beo!

CULANN: Ní thuigim é seo ar chor ar bith. Conas ar éirigh leatsa teacht chomh fada leis an doras agus mo chú breá láidir ag tabhairt aire don chaisleán?

SETANTA: Nuair a tháinig mé aníos an cosán chonaic mé an cú ag déanamh orm agus gach liú as. Bhí mo chroí i mo bhéal agam mar bhí sé chomh fíochmhar le leon agus a bhéal mór ar oscailt aige.

CULANN: Agus céard a rinne tú?

SETANTA: Léim sé orm ach d'éirigh liom éalú uaidh. Ansin rug mé ar mo chamán agus bhuail mé an liathróid siar ina scornach. Thit sé ina chnap ar an talamh.

CULANN: Agus mharaigh tú é.

SETANTA: Mharaigh. Tá brón orm, a Chulainn.

CULANN: Ní raibh cú eile in Éirinn chomh maith leis.

SETANTA: Tá a fhios agam, a Chulainn. Ach bhí orm mé féin a chosaint.

CULANN: Céard a dhéanfaidh mé anois?

CONCHÚR: Gheobhaidh mise coileán eile duit.

CULANN: Cén mhaitheas é sin? Tógfaidh sé tamall an-fhada chun cú óg a oiliúint agus cad mar gheall ar na naimhde?

SETANTA: Déanfaidh mise margadh leat.

CULANN: Cén margadh?

SETANTA: Tabharfaidh mé féin aire don chaisleán go mbeidh cú eile oilte leat. Cad é do thuairim?

CULANN: Cosnóidh tusa mo chaisleán?

SETANTA: Ar m'fhocal, tá mé i ndáiríre.

CONCHÚR: Maith thú, a Shetanta. Is agat atá an misneach agus is iontach an fear óg thú. Tá mé an-bhródúil asat.

CULANN: Molaim thú. Gan dabht ar bith tá tú cróga.

CONCHÚR: Sea, a Chulainn, agus caithfimid ainm nua a thabhairt dó.

SETANTA: Cén t-ainm é sin?

CONCHÚR: Cú Chulainn.

CULANN: Sea, go díreach. Cúchulainn!

LE CHÉILE: Cúchulainn! [Ag scairteadh.]

(rith, "run")

(ag cur fola, "bleeding")

(croí [m.], "heart")

(beo, "alive")

(ar chor ar bith, "at all")

(láidir, "strong")

(ag tabhairt aire do, "keeping watch over")

(tháinig, "came" [irreg.])

(cosán [m.], "path")

(chonaic, "saw" [irreg.])

(ag déanamh air, "making for")

(liú [m.], "howl, yell")

(fíochmhar, "ferocious")

(leon [m.], "lion")

(ar oscailt, "open, opened")

(rinne, "did" [irreg.])

(léim, "leap, jump")

(éalú [m.], "escape")

(rug, "reached" [irreg.])

(camán [m.], "hurling stick")

(siar, "back")

(scornach [f.], "throat")

(tit, "fall")

(cnap [m.], "lump, heap")

(talamh [m.], "ground, earth")

(eile, "other, another")

(a chosaint, "to defend")

(déanfaidh, "will do" [irreg.])

(eile, "other, another")

(gheobhaidh, "will get" [irreg.])

(eile, "other, another")

(coileán [m.], "pup")

(maitheas [f.], "good, benefit")

(a oiliúint, "to train")

(mar gheall ar, "about")

(margadh [m.], "agreement")

(tabharfaidh, "will give")

(go mbeidh, "until there will be")

(oilte, "trained")

(tuairim [f.], "opinion")

(cosain, "defend")

(i ndáiríre, "serious, in earnest")

(misneach [m.], "courage")

(bródúil asat, "proud of you")

(dabht [m.], "doubt")

(ar bith, "any")

(cróga, "brave")

(sea, "yes indeed")

(caithfimid, "we must")

(a thabhairt, "to give" [irreg.])

(go díreach, "exactly")

(ag scairteadh, "cheering, yelling")

Translation:

SCENE II

CULANN: Is each thing ready, servant?

SERVANT: Everything is prepared, master.

CULANN: Fine. Come in now and sit down [calling the children].

DAUGHTER: Where will I sit, Daddy?

CULANN: Sit there next to your mother. The guests will be here in a short while.

SERVANT: Listen. I hear them now. Shall I let them in?

CULANN: Yes, please. Listen to me. When every person is inside, let out the dog. Be careful and be sure each person is in before you release him outside.

SERVANT: Very well, master.

[Conchur and a couple of men come in.]

CULANN: Conchur, Conchur, a hundred thousand welcomes before you.

CONCHÚR: Thank you, Culann.

CULANN: I hope the brave champions of the Red Branch are with you.

CONCHÚR: Certainly. They'll be here in a couple of moments. Listen. They're coming.

CULANN: On my word! They're here.

[A band is heard playing "O Domhnaill Abu". They come marching in.]

CULANN: Welcome, welcome, welcome before you all. Servant, drinks. Drinks for my friends.

[The servant begins handing out drinks.]

CONCHÚR: Wonderful is the feast that is before us, Culann.

CULANN: I am the one who is delighted tonight. You know, Conchur, that there is always welcome before you here and before your people as well.

CONCHÚR: Thank you. Cheers. *[Raising his glass]* To Culann!

EVERYBODY: To Culann! *[The guests continue with their merriment.]*

CULANN: Tell me Conchur, do you go hunting these days?

CONCHÚR: Oh, I tend to be on the mountain every day now since the weather is good. I was hunting yesterday.

CULANN: Well! How did you get on?

CONCHÚR: At first I was unlucky. I didn't get anything. But at the end of the day I killed two red deer and a fox.

CULANN: A fox!

CONCHÚR: Yes. A little red dog.

MAN 1: A little red dog! Ha ha ha! *[he begins to sing:]*
The little dog red, red, red, red, red,

EVERYBODY: The little red dog that is ugly
The little red dog lying in the rushes
And the top of his two ears pointing on high.
Tally-ho with the feet, tally-ho with the --

[The song stops suddenly. The terrifying noise of the dog is heard.]

MAN 2: What's that?

CULANN: That's my dog. Perhaps there are enemies outside. Get ready!

[They draw their swords.]

CULANN: What's wrong with you, Conchur? You are as white as snow.

CONCHÚR: Setanta.

CULANN: What about Setanta?

CONCHÚR: He said he would come after the match.

CULANN: You didn't tell me he was coming.

[letting out a sigh]

And I put the dog out.

CONCHÚR: I forgot. Poor Setanta is dead. He is dead.

CULANN: I'm sorry, Conchur. I'm sorry, surely.

[Setanta runs inside, bleeding.]

CONCHÚR: Setanta! O my heart, you are alive!

CULANN: I don't understand this at all. How did you manage to come so far as the door and my fine strong dog keeping watch on the castle?

SETANTA: When I came down the path I saw the dog making for me and every howl out of him. My heart was in my mouth as he was as ferocious as a lion and his great big mouth open.

CULANN: And what did you do?

SETANTA: He leaped on me but I succeeded in escaping from him. Then I reached on my hurling stick and struck the ball back into his throat. He fell in a heap on the ground.

CULANN: And you killed him.

SETANTA: Yes. I'm sorry, Culann.

CULANN: There wasn't another dog in Ireland as good as him.

SETANTA: I know, Culann. But I had to defend myself.

CULANN: What will I do now?

CONCHÚR: I will get you another pup.

CULANN: What good is that? It'll take a very long while to train a young dog and what about the enemies?

SETANTA: I will make an agreement with you.

CULANN: What agreement?

SETANTA: I myself will give watch to the castle until you (will) have another trained dog. What do you think?

CULANN: You'll defend my castle?

SETANTA: On my word, I am in earnest.

CONCHÚR: Good for you, Setanta. It's you that has courage and you're a wonderful young man. I'm very proud of you.

CULANN: I praise you. Without doubt you are brave.

CONCHÚR: Yes, Culann, and we must give another name (to) him.

SETANTA: What name is that?

CONCHÚR: Cu Chulainn -- the Hound of Culann.

CULANN: That's it exactly. Cu Chulainn!

EVERYBODY: Cu Chulainn! (cheering)

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Gaelic/Irish Lessons

Irish: Lesson Thirteen

The Third Declension

i) Genitive

Nouns of the 3rd declension can be either masculine or feminine, and they end with a consonant. Their genitive is usually formed by adding "-a", and if the last vowel in the noun is "i" then a process opposite to slenderization, called "broadening", also takes place -- the slender vowel or vowels in the noun are dropped or turned into broad ones:

Nominative:	beannacht [f.]	-- a blessing
Genitive:	beannachta	-- of a blessing
Nominative:	feoil [f.]	-- meat
Genitive:	feola	-- of meat
Nominative:	cuid [f.]	-- share, portion
Genitive:	coda	-- of a share, of a portion
Nominative:	fuil [f.]	-- blood
Genitive:	fofa	-- of blood
Nominative:	áth [m.]	-- a ford
		of a ford
Genitive:	átha	-- ("Baile Átha Cliath", literally "town of the hurdle ford" -- Dublin)
Nominative:	mil [f.]	-- honey
		of honey
Genitive:	meala	-- ("Cluain Meala", literally "meadow of honey" -- Clonmel)

Final "t" is dropped from nouns ending in "-int", and becomes "th" in words ending in "-irt":

Nominative:	imirt [f.]	-- playing; performance
Genitive:	imeartha	-- of playing
Example:	páirc imeartha	-- playing field
Nominative:	canúint [f.]	-- dialect
Genitive:	canúna	-- of a dialect

ii) Plural

Nouns of this declension ending in "-aeir", "-éir", "-eoir", "-óir", and "-úir" are all masculine and form the plural by adding "-í":

Nom. Sing.	Gaeilgeoir	-- Irish-speaker
Nom. Plur.	Gaeilgeoirí	-- Irish-speakers
Nom. Sing.	saighdiúir	-- soldier
Nom. Plur.	saighdiúirí	-- soldiers

Nouns ending in "-cht" are all feminine and have plurals in "-aí":

Nom. Sing.	mallacht	-- curse
Nom. Plur.	mallachtaí	-- curses
Nom. Sing.	eolaíocht	-- science
Nom. Plur.	eolaíochtaí	-- sciences

Masculine nouns of one syllable ending in a broad consonant have plurals in "-anna" or "-aí":

Nom. Sing.	loch	-- lake
Nom. Plur.	lochanna	-- lakes
Nom. Sing.	rud	-- thing
Nom. Plur.	rudaí	-- things

The Fourth Declension

This declension includes most nouns ending in a vowel, diminutive nouns ending in "-ín", and some masculine nouns

ending in a consonant.

i) Genitive:

The genitive form in this declension is the same as the nominative, for example

rí (king) --> mac an rí (the king's son).

ii) Plural:

Nouns ending in -ín form their plurals with -í:

Nom. Sing. cailín -- girl
Nom. Plur. cailíní -- girls
Nom. Sing. toitín -- cigarette
Nom. Plur. toitíní -- cigarettes

Nouns ending in -a or -e also form plurals with -í or -aí:

Nom. Sing. slabhra -- chain
Nom. Plur. slabhraí -- chains
Nom. Sing. file -- poet
Nom. Plur. filí -- poets

Nouns ending in -le or -ne take the plurals -lte and -nte:

Nom. Sing. baile -- town
Nom. Plur. bailte -- towns
Nom. Sing. sloinne -- surname
Nom. Plur. sloinnte -- surnames

Nouns ending in -í, -aí, -aoi, or -é, have strong plurals in -the:

Nom. Sing. croí -- heart
Nom. Plur. croíthe -- hearts
Nom. Sing. garraí -- garden
Nom. Plur. garraíthe -- gardens
Nom. Sing. saoi -- wise man
Nom. Plur. saoihe -- wise men
(in poetry "saoi" can also mean "warrior")

Nouns with plurals in -nna:

Nom. Sing. cú [m.] -- hound
Nom. Plur. cúnna -- hounds
Nom. Sing. fia [m.] -- a deer
Nom. Plur. fianna -- deer
Nom. Sing. fleá [f.] -- feast
Nom. Plur. fleánna -- feasts

The Fifth Declension

Nouns of the 5th are usually feminine; their final vowel is normally "i", or they end in a vowel. Note that the Collins Gem Irish dictionary assigns nouns to only four declensions; it usually lists fifth declension nouns as irregular.

i) Genitive

The genitive is usually formed either by adding "-each" or by dropping the final "i" and adding "-ach":

Nominative: beoir -- beer
Genitive: beorach -- of beer
Nominative: litir -- letter
Genitive: litreach -- of a letter
Nominative: cathair -- city
Genitive: cathrach -- of a city

If they end with a vowel, they may add "n" or "d":

Nominative: cara -- friend
 Genitive: carad -- of a friend
 Nominative: pearsa -- person
 Genitive: pearsan -- of a person

Or alternatively, they may just broaden their nominative form, but otherwise remain unchanged:

Nominative: athair -- father
 Genitive: athar -- of a father
 Nominative: Albain -- Scotland
 Genitive: Alban -- of Scotland
 Nominative: abhainn -- river
 Genitive: abhann -- of a river

ii) Plural

Many nouns in the declension form their plural by adding "-a" to the *genitive* form, not the nominative:

Nom. Sing. cathair -- city
 Gen. Sing. cathrach -- of a city
 Nom. Plur. cathracha -- cities
 Nom. Sing. comharsa -- neighbour
 Gen. Sing. comharsan -- of a neighbour
 Nom. Sing. comharsana -- neighbours

But important irregular plurals include

athair -- father
 --> aithreacha -- fathers
 máthair -- mother
 --> máithreacha -- mothers
 abhainn -- river
 --> aibhneacha -- rivers

And so end the declensions.

Genitive Plural

The definite article of the genitive plural is always "na", which causes eclipsis and prefixes "n-" before a noun beginning with a vowel.

The genitive plural itself is formed in one of three ways. A "weak" genitive plural is one that is the same as the nominative singular, for example:

Nom. Sing. an crann -- the tree
 Gen. Plur. na gcrann -- of the trees
 Nom. Sing. an cat -- the cat
 Gen. Plur. na gcat -- of the cats
 Nom. Sing. an bhróg -- the shoe
 Gen. Plur. na mbróg -- of the shoes
 Nom. Sing. an t-éan -- the bird
 Gen. Plur. na n-éan -- of the birds

By contrast, "strong" genitive plurals are those which are the same as the nominative plural:

Nom. Plur. na deochanna -- the drinks
 Gen. Plur. na ndeochanna -- of the drinks
 Nom. Plur. na cailíní -- the girls
 Gen. Plur. na gcailíní -- of the girls
 Nom. Plur. na haithreacha -- the fathers
 Gen. Plur. na n-aithreacha -- of the fathers

A handful of nouns are neither weak nor strong but form a genitive plural that is different from the other forms. Here

are a few common examples:

Nom. Sing.	bean	-- a woman
Gen. Plur.	ban	-- of women
Nom. Sing.	caora	-- a sheep
Gen. Plur.	caorach	-- of sheep
Nom. Sing.	súil	-- an eye
Gen. Plur.	súl	-- of eyes
Nom. Sing.	ealaín	-- an art
Gen. Plur.	ealaíon	-- of arts
Nom. Sing.	binn	-- cliff, peak
Gen. Plur.	beann	-- of the cliffs, of the peaks

Strong plurals include all nouns of the 3rd, 4th and 5th declensions, as well as many of the 2nd and some of the 1st.

Weak plurals only predominate in the 1st declension.

Conditional Tense

We learned the conditional tense of "bi" in Lesson Ten. The conditional of regular verbs falls into the usual division of two conjugations:

i) 1st conjugation -- cuir, "put"; bog, "move"

chuirfinn	-- I would put	bhogfainn	-- I would move
chuirfeá	-- you would put	bhogfeá	-- you would move
chuirfeadh sé	-- he would put	bhogfadh sé	-- he would move
chuirfeadh sí	-- she would put	bhogfadh sí	-- she would move
chuirfimis	-- we would put	bhogfaimis	-- we would move
chuirfeadh sibh	-- you would put	bhogfadh sibh	-- you would move
chuirfidís	-- they would put	bhogfaidís	-- they would move

ii) 2nd conjugation -- beannaigh, "bless"; bailigh, "gather"

bheannóinn	-- I would bless	bhaileoinn	-- I would gather
bheannófá	-- you would bless	bhaileofá	-- you would gather
bheannódh sé	-- he would bless	bhaileodh sé	-- he would gather
bheannódh sí	-- she would bless	bhaileodh sí	-- she would gather
bheannóimis	-- we would bless	bhaileoimis	-- we would gather
bheannódh sibh	-- you would bless	bhaileodh sibh	-- you would gather
bheannóidís	-- they would bless	bhaileoidís	-- they would gather

Verbs beginning with a vowel or with "f" have "d" in front of them:

D'ólfainn	-- I would drink
D'fhoghlaimedh sé	-- he would learn

Conditional Statements

There are two ways of saying "if" in Irish, depending on whether the thing being speculated about is likely to come to pass or unlikely. If it's likely, the word "má" (if) is used with the present tense:

Má bhuaileann tú leis...	-- If you meet him...
Más duine macánta é...	-- If he is an honest man...
	(más = má + is)

But if the condition is unlikely to be fulfilled, the eclipsing word "dá" (if) is used with the conditional tense:

Dá mbuailfeá leis...	-- If you were to meet him...
	-- (lit: "if you would meet with him")
Dá mba dhuine macánta é...	-- If he were to be an honest man...

Irish has a separate word meaning "if... not", which is the eclipsing word "mura":

Dá gceannófá é...	-- If you were to buy it...
-------------------	-----------------------------

Mura gceannófá e... -- If you were not to buy it...

"Mura" before the past tense of regular verbs becomes "murar", which aspirates:

Murar chaith tú é... -- If you didn't throw it...

... and when it comes before the past tense form of the copula, "ba", it combines with "ba" to become "murab":

Murab é sin é... -- If that isn't it...

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Gaelic/Irish Lessons

Irish: Reading no. 5

This lesson's reading is the song "Brighdín Bheusaidh" by the famous Irish poet Antoine Ó Reachtabhra, known in English as "Raftery". He lived from 1784 to 1835 and was one of the very last old-style folk poets whose verses were primarily transmitted orally in the form of songs, rather than being written down. However he lived late enough that his works came to the attention of the Gaelic Revivalists, and Douglas Hyde published an anthology of his songs as remembered by the local people in the West of Ireland around the turn of this century.

There are ten verses given in the Hyde version, but only six are included here, for reasons of space. The omitted verses talk at further length about Brighdín's beauty and the author's plan to go into the underworld to bring her back; he says that Charon, the ferryman of the dead in Greek mythology, will give him no help because he's a Catholic, and he wonders if he can get a card of introduction from Calvin or Cromwell! The Greek/Roman and Gaelic mythological figures introduced in the song are worth explaining briefly. Pluto was the King of the underworld; Rhadamanthus was a judge over the dead, as was Minos, his brother. The lame god Vulcan was a forger of metal and a craftsman generally. Jupiter was king of the gods, and Mentor the reliable old guide of Odysseus. In the Gaelic tradition, the Fianta, or Fenians, are a band of legendary warriors under the leadership of Fionn MacCumhaill. They include Oscar, "chief of men", the son of Oisín the poet, and Goll Mac Morna, a kind of minor deity. Cúchulainn was the terrifying warrior whose childhood was described in the previous readings.

In order to bring the song in line with standard Irish I had to hunt down modern Irish spellings for most of the words, but in a number of places I've left the old spelling or grammatical construction in for the sake of the music. A common example is the aspirating particle "do" before the past tense of a regular verb, for example, "Do phós mé", "I married". This "do" has disappeared from standard Irish but remains in some dialects. (In the standard it remains as "d'" before a verb in the past tense that begins with a vowel, e.g. "D'ith mé", "I ate"). Taking out the "do" in the song would have left some notes unaccounted for. I also, in one place, left in the old plural form "-aibh".

Starting with this lesson, irregular plurals and genitives will be indicated in the vocabulary by [pl] and [gs], respectively. For instance, "mara [pl] muir" would mean that "mara" is the irregular plural of "muir". A preposition that causes a noun following it to go into the genitive case is marked with [+g]. A word marked with [var] is an old variant spelling. An English translation follows.

Brighdín Bheusaidh

1.

	(gan, "without") (nó, "or")
	(léine [f.], "shirt")
	(troisc, "fast")
Phósfainn Brighdín Bheusaidh	(naoi, "nine")
Gan cóta, bróig nó léine;	(tráth [m.], "time")
A stóir mo chroí, dá mb'fhéidir liom,	(bia [m.], "food")
Do throiscfinn duit naoi dtráth,	(oileán [m.], "island")
Gan bhia gan deoch gan aon cuid	(fonn... bheith, "feel like being")
Ar oileán i Loch Éirne,	(a's = agus) (in éineacht, "together")
D'fhonn mé a's tú bheith in éineacht	(réidh, "settle") (cás [m.], "situation, case")
Go réidhfimis ár gcás.	(grua [f.], "cheek") (dath [m.], "colour")
A ghrua an dhath na gcaorchon!	(caorchon [f.], "dogberry")
A chuachín barr an tsléibhe!	(cuach [f.], "cuckoo")
Do ghealladh ná déan bréagach,	(barr, "on top of" + g)
Ach éirigh leis an lá,	(sléibhe [gs] sliabh, "mountain")
'S é d'ainneoin dlí na cléire	(gealladh [m.], "promise") (déan, "make")
Go dtógfainn thú mar chéile,	(bréagach, "false, lying") (éirigh, "arise")
'S a Dhia, nár dheas an scéal sin,	(d'ainneoin [+ g], "in spite of")
Duin' ag éalú lena ghrá.	(dlí [m.], "law") (cléir [f.], "clergy")
	(céile [m.], "spouse") (deas, "nice, sweet")
	(duin' = duine) (ag éalú, "eloping") (lena, "with his")

2.

	(geit, "leap, jump")
	(buarthaí [pl] buairt [f.], "care, worry")
	(scanraigh, "take fright")
	(uair [f.], "time")
	(úd, "yonder") (chuala, "heard")
Do gheit mo chroí le buarthaí,	(romham, "before me")
Agus scanraigh mé naoi n-uaire,	(le fáil, "to be found")
An mhaidin úd do chuala mé	(lia [m.], "great many, multitude")
Nach raibh tú romham le fáil,	(suairceas [m.], "merriment, joy")
'S a lia lá faoi shuairceas	(caith, "spend") (uaigneas [m.], "solitude")
Chaith mise 's tú in uaigneas	(neach ar bith, "anybody")
'S gan neach ar bith d'ár gcúmhdach	(dár gcúmhdach, "protecting us")
Ach an crúiscín 's é ar an gclár.	(crúiscín [m.], "water-jug")
Dá bhfaighinn amach do thuairisc	(clár [m.], "table, sideboard")
Dá rachfá go bonn Cruaiche,	(dá bhfaighinn, "if I could find")
Rachadh an scéal seo chruaidh orm	(tuairisc [f.], "news, story, account")
Nó leanfainn do mo ghrá,	(dá rachfá, "if you went" [irreg.])
'S go b'fhearr liom sínte suas leat	(bonn [m.], "foot") (Cruaich, "the Reek", i.e. Croagh Patrick)
'S gan fúinn ach fraoch 's luachair	(rachadh, "would go") (cruaidh, "hard")
Ná bheith 'g éisteacht leis na cuacha	(lean do, "follow") (sínte, "stretched out")
Bheas ar siúl ag éirí lae.	(suas leat, "beside you")
	(gan fúinn, "nothing under us")
	(fraoch [m.], "heather")
	(ná, "than") (bheith, "to be")
	(bheas, "that are") (ar siúl, "stirring")
	(éirí lae, "break of day, dawn")

3.

	(ábhar [m.], "cause, reason")
	(osna [f.], "sigh")
	(éagaoin [f.], "lamenting, moan")
	(moch, "early")
	(cúil(ín) [m.], "fair-haired girl")
	(lúb [f.], "curl")
	(péarla [m.], "pearl")
'S é ábhar m' osna 's m' éagaoin	(dán [m.], "destiny, fate")
Gach maidin moch d'á n-éirighim	(iarr, "ask")
A cúil na lúb 's na bpéarla	(féirín [m.], "gift")
Nach tú bhí dom i ndán,	(éigin, "some")
'S ní iarrfainn leat mar fhéirín	('n ár n-aonar, "alone")
Ach mé a's tú bheith in éineacht	(leag, "lay down")
In áit éigin 'n ár n-aonar,	(seinn, "play (music)")
Go leagfainn ort mo lámh.	(téad [f.], "string, cord")
Seinnfinn ceol ar téada	(binn, "sweet")
Go binn, le barr mo mhéara,	(méar [f.], "finger")
Thréigfinn mná na hÉireann ort,	(tréig, "abandon")
A's leanfainn thú 'san tsnámh,	(mná [pl] bean)
'S dá mbeinn im' rí na Gréige	(Éireann [gs] Éire, "Ireland")
Nó im' phrionsa ar na céadta	(snámh [m.], "the sea")
Do bheárfainn suas an méad sin	(im' = i mo)
Do pheárla an bhrollaich bháin.	(an Ghréig [f.], "Greece")
	(prionsa [m.], "prince")
	(céad [m.], "a hundred")
	(bheárfainn, "I would give")
	(méad [m.], "amount, whole")
	(brollach [m.], "breast")
	(bán, "fair, white")

4.

Dá bhfeicfeá Réalt' an Eolais
 'S i 'teacht i mbéal an bhóthair,
 Déarfá go mbeadh seoid uait
 Do thógfadh ceo a's draíocht,
 A grua dearg mar rósaibh
 'S a súil mar drúcht an fhómhair,
 A béalín tana ró-dheas
 'S a bráid ar dath an aoil.
 Bhí a dá chóch corra chomh-chruinn,
 Mhol mé iad 's ní mór liom,
 'N a seasamh ag déanamh lóchrainn
 'S iad ceartha os cómhair a croí.
 Tá mé i mbrón 's i ndobrón
 Ó sciarr tú uaim tar teorainn,
 Cé g'is fada ó fuair mé comhairle
 Go gearróchá ar mo shaol.

(feicfeá, "you would see" [irreg.])
 (réalta [f.], "star")
 (eolas [m.], "knowledge, information")
 (bóthar [m.], "road")
 (déarfá, "you would say" [irreg.])
 (seoid [f.], "jewel")
 (uait, "before you")
 (draíocht [f.], "enchantment")
 (dearg, "red")
 (rós [m.], "rose")
 (drúcht [m.], "dew")
 (fómhar [m.], "harvest, autumn")
 (tana, "thin")
 (bráid [f.], "neck")
 (aol [m.], "lime")
 (cíoch [f.], "(woman's) breast")
 (corr, "peaked")
 (chomh-chruinn, "equally round")
 (ní mór liom, "I want to, I ought to")
 (lóchrann [m.], "lamp")
 (ceartha, "shaped")
 (os cómhair [+ g], "in front of")
 (dobrón [m.], "grief, affliction")
 (ó, "since") (sciarr, "slip")
 (teorainn [f.], "boundary, edge")
 (cé go, "although")
 (fuair, "got" [irreg.])
 (comhairle [f.], "advice")
 (gearróchá [var?], "you would shorten")

5.

'S é Pluto an prionnsa clamprach
 Sciob uaim mo grá agus m'ansa,
 É féin agus Radamantus
 Ní caraid dom an dias,
 Bhulcan bruite, dóite,
 'S a leath-chos briste breoite,
 Minos nach dtug trócaire,
 Na trustaigh an gadaí choích'.
 Is iomaí abhainn báighte
 Sin agus contúirt cráite,
 Toirneacha ag carnadh
 Agus ag loscadh ar gach taobh,
 Ach triallfaidh orra amárach
 Agus mur' admhaigh siad mo grá dom,
 Gheobhaidh cúnamh láidir
 Nach n-éileoidh orm pingin.

(clamprach, "disorderly, disputatious")
 (ansa, "most beloved")
 (dias [f.], "couple, pair")
 (bruite, "bruised")
 (dóite, "scorched")
 (leath-chos, "one foot")
 (briste, "broken")
 (breoite, "sick, injured")
 (tug, "gave")
 (trócaire [f.], "mercy")
 (trustaigh, "trust")
 (gadaí [m.], "thief")
 (choích' = choíche, "ever, forever")
 (iomaí, "many")
 (báighte, "drowning")
 (contúirt [f.], "danger, peril")
 (cráite, "tormented")
 (toirneach [f.], "thunder")
 (carn, "heap up")
 (ag loscadh, "burning")
 (taobh [m.], "side")
 (triall ar, "journey")
 (mur' = mura)
 (admhaigh do, "admit, let in")
 (gheobhaidh [mé], "I will get" [irreg.])
 (cúnamh [m.], "help")
 (éiligh, "claim, demand of")
 (pingin [f.], "penny")

6.

	(Fianta Fionn, "the Fenians of Finn")
	(níor mhór dom, "I would want")
	(laoch [m.], "hero")
Fianta Fionn níor mhór dom,	(cróganta, "brave")
Osgar 's Goll na Mórna,	(clis, "fail")
'S Cúchulainn, an laoch cróganta	(cath [m.], "battle")
Nár chlis i gcath ariamh.	(ariamh, "ever")
Clann Uisnigh, dúirt go leor liom,	(dúirt, "said" [irreg.])
Do bhainfeadh ar claíomh lóchrann,	(go leor, "enough (people)")
Agus Hector, an laoch mór-chruth	(bain ar, "extract from")
Fuair foghlaim bhreá 'san Traoi.	(claíomh [m.], "sword")
Chluinneá i dTír na hÓige	(mór-chruth, "well-built")
Gníomh na bhfear móra,	(foghlaim [f.], "learning")
An tráth thosóidís a stróiceadh	(An Traoi [f.], "Troy")
Ag gearradh rompu síos.	(chluinneá, "you would hear" [irreg.])
Ach Jupiter níor mór dom	(óige [f.], "youth")
Chuir Mentor, an fear eolais, liom,	(gníomh [m.], "action, deed")
Nár leig amú in aon bóthar mé,	(ag stróiceadh, "tearing up")
Go dtug mé abhaile Brigid.	(ag gearradh, "cutting")
	(rompu = roimh + siad, "before them")
	(leig amú, "lead astray")

Translation:

1. I'd marry Brighdin Bheusaidh / Without coat, shoes, or shirt; / O treasure of my heart, if I could, / I would fast for you nine times, / Without food without drink without anything, / On an island in Loch Erne. / Hoping that you and I could be together, / Until we could settle our case. / O cheek the colour of the dog-berry! / O cuckoo on top of the mountain! / Your promise don't make false, / But rise up with the day. / And in spite of the law of the clergy, / I'd take you for my spouse, / and oh God! what a charming tale that would be, / a man eloping with his love.
2. My heart leapt with trouble, / and I took fright nine times, / The morning that I heard / That you were no longer to be found. / And all the days of merriment / That you and I spent in solitude, / Without anyone watching over us / But the jug, and it on the table. / If I could find out your story / If you would go to the foot of Croagh Patrick, / The story would go very hard with me, / Or I should follow my love. / Better for me to be stretched out beside you / Nothing under us but the rushes and heather / Than to be listening to the cuckoos / That are stirring at the break of the day.
3. The reason for my sigh and lamenting / Every early morning that I rise, / O fair one of the curls and the pearls, / Is that you were not destined for me; / And I would not ask you as a gift / But you and I to be together / In some place by ourselves, / That I would lay on you my hand. / I would play music on strings, / Sweetly, with the tips of my fingers, / I would forsake the women of Ireland for you, / And I'd follow you into the ocean, / And if I were king over Greece / Or a prince over hundreds, / I would give up all of that / To the pearl of white breast.
4. If you were to see the Star of Knowledge / and she coming in the mouth of the road, / You would say that there was a jewel before you / That would banish the mists and enchantment; / Her cheek red like the roses, / And eye like the dew of the harvest, / Her little thin mouth so pretty, / And her neck like the colour of lime. / Her two pointed, equal- round breasts, / I praised them, as well I might, / And they standing making a lamp / And they shaped in front of her heart. / I am in sorrow and in anguish / Since you slipped from me across the edge, / Though it is long since I got the advice / That you would shorten my life.
5. It is Pluto the contentious prince / Who swept from me my love and my darling, / He himself and Rhadamanthus / No friends to me that pair, / Vulcan bruised and burnt / And his one foot broken and injured, / Minas that gave no mercy, / Do not ever trust that thief. / Many is the drowning river / That, and the tormenting danger, / Thunder overwhelming / And burning on every side; / But I shall journey tomorrow, / And if they do not admit my love to me, / I will receive strong help, / And no penny will be required of me.
6. The Fenians of Finn I would want, / Oscar and Goll Mac Morna, / And Cuchulainn the brave hero / Who never failed in battle. / The Children of Uisneach, many have told me, / Would strike flame from the sword, / And Hector, the well-shaped hero, / Who got his fine learning in Troy. / You would hear in the Land of Youth / The deeds of the great men, / The time they began tearing / And cutting down before them. / But Jupiter I needed, / (Who) sent Mentor, the wise man, with me, / Who would not lead me astray in any road, / Until I took home my Brighid.)

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Gaelic/Irish Lessons

Irish: Lesson Fourteen

Genitive After Prepositions

As well as indicating possession, the genitive case of a noun is used after certain specific prepositions such as "chun" (to), "cois" (beside), "dála" (by), "fearacht" (like, as), "timpeall" (around) and "trasna" (across):

An Róimh	-- Rome
--> chun na Róimhe	-- to Rome
an domhan	-- the world
--> timpeall an domhain	-- around the world
an pháirc	-- the field
--> trasna na páirce	-- across the field

The genitive is also used after all "compound" prepositions (prepositions of more than one word), e.g. "ar fud" (throughout), "ar son" (for the sake of), "i ndiaidh" (after), "os cionn" (above) etc.

This will be discussed more fully in another lesson.

Plural of Adjectives

Adjectives agree with nouns in case and number, which means that when a noun is plural its adjective is plural, when a noun is genitive its adjective is genitive, and so on. As mentioned in Lesson Three, this only applies when the adjective directly qualifies the noun.

The most common way to form the plural of an adjective is to add "-a" to it:

teach mór	-- big house
--> tithe móra	-- big houses
cailín óg	-- young girl
--> cailíní óga	-- young girls

If the adjective's final vowel is slender, "-e" may be added instead:

áit ciúin	-- quiet place
--> áiteanna ciúine	-- quiet places

Adding these final vowels can cause the loss of the previous final vowel:

duine láidir	-- strong man
--> daoine láidre	-- strong men

Adjectives ending in "-úil" change to "-úla" in the plural:

duine leisciúil	-- lazy man
--> daoine leisciúla	-- lazy men

Some common irregular plurals are

álainn (beautiful)	--> áille;
tirim (dry)	--> tiorma;
uasal (noble)	--> uaisle;
te (hot)	--> teo;
breá (fine)	--> breátha.

You've learned that adjectives following a singular feminine noun are aspirated e.g. "eaglais mhór" (big church). In the plural, adjectives following feminine plural nouns are not aspirated, but they *are* aspirated if they follow a masculine plural noun whose ending is slender, i.e. whose last vowel is a slender one (e or i). Contrast the feminine word "súil" (eye) with the masculine word "bád" (boat). We want to apply the word "gorm" (blue) to both of them in the plural:

Singular:	súil ghorm	-- a blue eye
Plural:	súile gorma	-- blue eyes

but:

Singular: bád gorm -- blue boat
 Plural: báid ghorma -- blue boats

Because the plural of "bád", which is "báid", has the slender vowel "i" at the end, it aspirates the adjective that comes after it, whereas the feminine plural leaves the adjective unaffected -- almost the opposite to what happens in the singular.

Genitive Singular of Adjectives

The behaviour of adjectives when they follow nouns in the genitive is as haphazard as that of the nouns themselves, but luckily the Christian Bros. managed to isolate the nine different kinds of adjective and describe their genitive forms depending on whether they're following a masculine or feminine noun. Note that feminine adjectives are never aspirated in the genitive singular or in the plural, but masculine ones are:

<u>Adjective</u>		<u>Gen. Sing. Masc.</u>	<u>Gen. Sing. Fem.</u>	<u>Nom. Plural</u>
1. bán, "white"	bháin	báine	bána	bána
2. díreach, "straight"	dirigh	dirí	díreacha	díreacha
3. bacach, "lame"	bacaigh	bacaí	bacacha	bacacha
4. leisciúil, "lazy"	leisciúil	leisciúla	leisciúla	leisciúla
5. mall, "slow"	mall	maille	malla	malla
6. maith, "good"	maith	maithe	maithe	maithe
7. buíoch, "grateful"	buíoch	buíthí	buíocha	buíocha
8. gnách, "usual"	gnách	gnáthaí	gnácha	gnácha

The usual disclaimer applies: there's little point in memorizing these forms or worrying about them; as long as you can generally recognize them when they appear in an Irish text you'll get used to them over time.

Genitive Plural of Adjectives

How an adjective is declined in the plural depends on the noun it's qualifying. In Lesson 13 we learned the difference between a strong-plural noun and a weak-plural noun. Weak nouns have the same genitive plural and nominative singular, but strong nouns have the same genitive plural and nominative plural. If an adjective follows a strong-plural noun, it has the same form for all cases of the plural, e.g.:

Nominative Plural: na cailíní óga -- the young girls

Genitive Plural: na gcailíní óga -- of the young girls

But if an adjective follows a weak-plural noun, it has the same form in the genitive plural as it does in the nominative singular:

Nominative Plural: na fir óga -- the young men

Genitive Plural: na bhfear óg -- of the young men

Infinitive with Object

Previously, we learned that the infinitive form of the verb is just the verbal noun without "ag" in front of it:

ag dul -- going

--> Ba mhaith liom dul abhaile. -- I'd like to go home.

ag caitheamh -- smoking

--> An féidir liom caitheamh? -- May I smoke?

There is no direct object in these sentences. When one is added, the infinitive changes in form slightly -- it is aspirated when possible and is prefixed by "a". If we change the second sentence in the example above and add "toitín" (a cigarette) as the direct object, we get

An féidir liom toitín a chaitheamh? -- May I smoke a cigarette?

Note how the infinitive then gets pushed to the end of the sentence. Some other examples:

ag fáil -- getting

--> Bhí sé ag iarraidh radharc maith a fháil. -- He was asking to get a good view.
 (lit: he was asking a good view to get)

ag díol -- selling

--> Ba mhaith léi an teach a dhíol.

She would like to sell the house.
-- (lit: she would like the house to sell)

Subjunctive Tense

The present subjunctive is a tense that isn't even covered in some Irish textbooks, but is one that learners find very useful, because it covers the idea of wishing something and so appears in some famous Irish proverbs and blessings. It's considered an old-fashioned tense for daily speech (except in set phrases) but still appears often in print.

The subjunctive is normally formed from "Go" (which eclipses, and adds "n-" to a verb beginning with a vowel), plus the subjunctive form of the verb, plus the subject, plus the thing being wished for. For instance, the subjunctive form of "teigh" (go) is "té":

Go dté tú slán. -- May you be well.
(lit: may you go well)

Or again, the subjunctive of "tabhair" (give) is "tuga":

Go dtuga Dia ciall duit. -- May God give you sense.

Or to take a third example, sometimes the wish is also a curse, like this one from Tory Island in Donegal: Go ndéana an Diabhal toirneach de d'anam in Ifreann. -- May the Devil make thunder of your soul in Hell.

The Irish phrase for "thank you" -- go raibh math agat -- uses the subjunctive of "bi" and literally means "may there be good at-you".

The subjunctive of regular verbs is as follows:

1st Conjugation:

- a) "mol": mola mé, mola tú, mola sé, mola sí; molaimid; mola sibh, mola siad.
b) "bris": brise mé, brise tú, brise sé, brise sí; brisimid; brise sibh, siad.

2nd Conjugation:

- a) "beannaigh": beannaí mé, beannaí tú, beannaí sé, beannaí sí; beannaímid; beannaí sibh, beannaí siad.
b) "bailigh": bailí mé, bailí tú, bailí sé, bailí sí; bailímid; bailí sibh, bailí siad.

E.g. "go mbeannaí Dia thú" -- May God bless you.

Three Irregular Verbs

Over the next few lessons I'll gradually give the forms for the ten Irish verbs that are at least partly irregular. The three I'll give today are feic, "see", tabhair, "give", and abair, "say".

1) Root: "feic"; Verbal Noun: "ag feiceáil"

<u>Present Tense:</u>	feicim;	feiceann tú, feiceann sé/sí;	feicimid;	feiceann sibh,	feiceann siad.
<u>Past Tense:</u>	chonaic mé,	chonaic tú, chonaic sé/sí;	chonaic muid,	chonaic sibh,	chonaic siad.
<u>Past Tense, Negative:</u>	ní fhaca mé,	ní fhaca tú, ní fhaca sé/sí;	ní fhaca muid,	ní fhaca sibh,	ní fhaca siad.
<u>Future Tense:</u>	feicfidh mé,	feicfidh tú, feicfidh sé/sí;	feicfidimid;	feicfidh sibh,	feicfidh siad.
<u>Conditional Tense:</u>	d'fheicfinn;	d'fheicfeá; d'fheicfeadh sé/sí;	d'fheicfimis;	d'fheicfeadh sibh;	d'fheicfidís.
<u>Present Subjunctive:</u>	feice mé,	feice tú, feice sé/sí;	feicimid;	feice sibh,	feice siad.

Past Passive: chonachthas
was seen").

2) Root: "tabhair"; Verbal Noun: "ag tabhairt"

<u>Present Tense:</u>	tugaim;	tugann tú,	tugann sé/sí	tugaimid;	tugann sibh,	tugann siad.
<u>Past Tense:</u>	thug mé,	thug tú,	thug sé/sí	thug muid,	thug sibh,	thug siad.
<u>Future Tense:</u>	tabharfaidh mé,	tabharfaidh tú,	tabharfaidh sé/sí	tabharfaimid;	tabharfaidh sibh,	tabharfaidh siad.
<u>Conditional Tense:</u>	thabharfainn;	thabharfá;	thabharfadh sé/sí;	thabharfaimis;	thabharfadh sibh;	thabharfaidís.

Present Subjunctive: tuga mé, tuga tú, tuga sé/sí tugaimid; tuga sibh, tuga siad.

Past Passive: tugadh ("was given").

3) Root: "abair"; Verbal Noun: "ag rá"

Present Tense: deirim; deir tú, deir sé/sí deirimid; deir sibh, deir siad.
Past Tense: dúirt mé, dúirt tú, dúirt sé/sí dúirt muid, dúirt sibh, dúirt siad. (Also "dubhairt").
Future Tense: déarfaidh mé, déarfaidh tú, déarfaidh sé/sí déarfaimid; déarfaidh sibh, déarfaidh siad.
Conditional Tense: déarfainn; déarfá; déarfadh sé/sí déarfaimis; déarfadh sibh; déarfaidís.
Present Subjunctive: deire mé, deire tú, deire sé/sí; deire deirimid; deire deire sibh, deire siad.

Past Passive: dúradh ("was said")

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Gaelic/Irish Lessons

Irish: Reading no. 6

Úna Bhán

This is part one of a short story by one of the foremost short story writers in Irish this century, Séamus Ó Grianna (1891 - 1969), who wrote under the pseudonym "Máire". He lived in the Tír Chonaill area of the Donegal Gaeltacht (Irish-speaking area) and his writing is strongly based on the the Donegal dialect of Irish; this, coupled with Ó Grianna's fierce opposition to the "Caighdeán" (Standard Irish), makes his work a good way to get acquainted with the living language as it is spoken by native speakers.

No changes have been made to the text; some vocabulary appears on the right followed by an "=" sign to mark an equivalent to a standard form that you've already learned, but in most cases the correspondences should be obvious.

A synopsis of the story so far appears in English at the end of the passage, but for reasons of space, no complete translation is given. However, I'll be happy to translate any section of the text that gives you difficulty -- just clip it and send it to me at mcewan@supercity.ns.ca.

Ba dóigheamhail a' cailín Úna Bhán Shéarluis Chonchubhair. Acht i n-a dhiadh sin ní raibh fonn ar aon fhear de fhearaibh óga an bhaile ceileabhar pósta a chur uirthí. Bhí eagla ortha roimpí. Eagla go raibh an droch-dheor inntí. Ba anoir as Mín na gCliobóg a máthair. Agus bhí sé amuigh ar mhná Mhín na gCliobóg go gcoinnigheadh siad a gcuid fear faoi shlait.

Bhí an dearcadh ag Mághnus Eoghain Óig a bhí ag an chuid eile de mhuintir a' bhaile, riamh nó go dtug sé searc is síor-ghrádh do Úna. Chonnacthas do Mháchnus nach raibh leithéid Úna ar a' tsaoghal le deise is le sgéimh.

Rud eile a chonnachtas dó: go raibh sí suaimhneach so-chómhairleach agus nach dtabharfadh sí iarraidh choidhche smacht dá laghad a chur air.

Dubhairt sé sin le n-a mháthair ag iarraidh chómhairle a chur air.

"Bréaga atáthar a chur ar mhná Mhín na gCliobóg," ar' seisean. "Ní thug aon bhean ariamh aca iarraidh a fear a choinneáil faoi shlait."

"Mur' dtug", ars' an mháthair, "Nach iongantach a rud é go bhfuil a ngáir gach aon áit ar fud na dtrí bpobal."

"Ní fhuil ann acht bréaga," arsa Mághnus a' dara h-uair.

"Beidh a fhios sin agat má bhíonn sé de mhí-fhortún ort a ghabháil a bhfastódh ionnta," ars' an mháthair. "Ní raibh aon bhean de'n dream ariamh nár choinnigh a fear faoi shlait. Agus máthair Úna Báine ar a' bhean a ba mheasa de'n iomlán aca. Ar ndóighe tá a fhios sin ag an phobal. Bhí aithne againn uilig ar Shéarluis Chonchubhair sul ar phósadh é. Fear a raibh dúil i gceol is i gcuideachta aige. Acht comh luath is pósadh é bhuail sé a cheann faoi. Ní fhacaidh aonduine ar banais ná ar baisteadh ó shoin é, ná a' siubhal leis a' droma Lá Fheil Pádrúig. Níorbh' é sin a mhian acht ghéill sé ar mhaithe leis a' tsuaimhneas. Sin a' rud céadna éireóchas duit-se má phósann tú Úna. Ní leigfe sí amach thar doras thú acht do leigean go teach a' phobail

(dóigheamhail, "respectable, handsome")
 (i n-a dhiadh, "despite; following")
 (fonn [m.], "desire")
 (ceileabhar [m.], "greeting")
 (ortha = orthu)
 (droch-dheor [m.], "bad temper")
 (anoir, "from the east")
 (bhí sé amuigh, "it was said")
 --literally: "it was out"
 (coinnigh, "keep, hold")
 (faoi shlait, "in check")
 --literally: "under the rod")
 (dearcadh [m.], "opinion")
 (muintir [f.], "people")
 (riamh, "ever, always")
 (searc [f.], "love")
 (síor-ghrádh [m.], "eternal love")
 (chonnacthas do, "saw")
 (saoghal = saol)
 (deise [f.], "neatness, handsomeness")
 (sgéimh [f.], "beauty")
 (suaimhneach, "peaceful, gentle")
 (so-chómhairleach, "docile")
 (iarraidh [f.], "attempt")
 (choidhche = choíche, "never")
 (smacht [m.], "control")
 (dá laghad, "the least")
 (bréag [f.], "lie, falsehood")
 (atáthar, "that are")
 (ar' = arsa, "said" [literary])
 (aca = acu, "of them")
 (ag coinneáil, "keeping")
 (iongantach, "surprising")
 (gáir [f.], "rumour, report")
 (ar fud, "throughout")
 (pobal [m.], "community, parish")
 (fhuil = bhfuil)
 (dara, "second")
 (uair [f.], "time, occasion")
 (mí-fhortún [m.], "misfortune")
 (fastódh ionnta, "bound up with them")
 (dream [m.], "crowd, group of people")
 (measa, "worst")
 (iomlán [m.], "all, total; the lot")
 (ar ndóighe, "of course")
 (uilig, "all, every one")
 (sul ar, "before")
 (cuideachta [f.], "party, gathering")
 (ceann faoi, "subjection")
 (ní fhacaidh, "didn't see")
 (banais [f.], "wedding")
 (baisteadh [m.], "baptism")
 (ó shoin, "ever since, since then")
 (a' siubhal = ag siúl, "walking")
 (droma [gs] druum [m.], "ridge, hill")
 (Lá Fheil Pádrúig, "St. Patrick's Day")
 (mian [f.], "desire")
 (géill, "yield")
 (ar mhaithe le, "in accordance with")
 (céadna, "the same")
 (éireóchas, "will happen")
 (thar, "across")
 (leigean [m.], "permission")
 (teach an phobail, "church" --
 literally "the community house")

Dia Domhnaigh, nó 'un 'aonaigh nuair bhéas beathadach eallaigh le díol nó le ceannacht agat. Agus beidh sí féin cos ar chois leat ar an aonach, ar eagla go mbeannóchthá i dteach na beorach."

"Ní chreidim é," arsa Mághnus. "Ní fhuil ann acht sgéal bréagach a chum lucht mailíse."

"Maith go leor," ars' an mháthair. "Bíodh do chómhairle féin agat. Tiocfaidh an lá a mbeidh a fhios agat cé aca bréag no fírinne a cuireadh ar mhná Mhín na gCliobóg. Acht nuair thiocfas a' lá sin beidh tú ró-mhall. Fan go bhfeice tú. Ní chreideann tú anois é. Acht creidfe tú é nuair bhéas tú istuigh a' nighe na soitheach is a' bogadh an chliabháin lá saoire nó Dia Domhnaigh."

Tháinig mothughadh feirge ar Mhágus. "Ní leigfinn-se de bhean ar bith súgán droma a dhéanamh díom," ar seisean.

"Sin a' manadh céadna a bhí ag Séarlus Chonchubhair sul ar phósadh é," ars' an mháthair, "acht ní raibh sé i bhfad gur leigeadh an gaoth as."

(Dia Domhnaigh, "Sunday")
 (aonaigh [m.], "fair; gathering"
 -- also spelled "aonach")
 (bhéas, "will be")
 (beathadach eallaigh [m.], "cattle")
 (cos ar chois, "beside")
 (beannóchthá, "you will be greeted")
 (teach na beorach, "beer-hall, pub")
 (creid, "believe")
 (sgéal = scéal, "story")
 (cum, "invent, make up")
 (lucht mailíse [m.], "malicious people")
 (go leor, "enough")
 (bíodh = bheadh)
 (cé aca, "which of them")
 (fírinne [f.], "truth")
 (thiocfas, "will come")
 (ró-mhall, "too late")
 (ag nighe, "washing")
 (na soitheach [m.pl.], "the dishes")
 (ag bogadh, "rocking")
 (cliabhán [m.], "cradle")
 (lá saoire [m.], "holiday, free day")
 (tháinig, "came")
 (mothughadh = mothú [m.], "feeling")
 (feirge [gs] fearg [f.], "anger")
 (súgán droma [m.], "harness, bridle")
 (manadh [m.], "attitude")
 (sul ar, "before")
 (i bhfad, "a long time")
 (leig gaoth as, "let the wind out of")

Synopsis:

Una Bhan the daughter of Searluis Conchubhar was a handsome girl, but none of the men in the village wanted to marry her. They were scared because her mother was from Min na gCliobog, and it was said that all the women from Min na gCliobog kept their husbands under their thumbs.

However, Maghnus the son of Eoghan Og fell in love with Una on account of her great beauty. To him she seemed to be as pleasant and agreeable as anyone could want, and would never try to control anybody. He told his mother that he suspected the stories told about the women from Min na gCliobog were all lies.

His mother disagreed. If they were lies then why did everybody say so? He would find out himself if he ever married Una Bhan. Una's mother had been the worst of the lot. After she had married Searluis Conchubhar, a man who liked music and company, he was never again seen in public, not at a wedding or a baptism, or even on St. Patrick's Day.

The same thing would happen to Maghnus if he married Una -- she would be beside him everywhere.

Maghnus again said he didn't believe it. His mother, in reply, tells him to suit himself. He'd find out the truth, but too late. He'd end up washing the dishes and rocking the cradle soon enough.

At this Maghnus grew angry and said that no woman would ever put a harness on him. Which, as his mother pointed out, is just what Searluis Conchubhar said before he got married.

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Gaelic/Irish Lessons

Irish: Lesson 15

Verbal Adjective

In English we can make an adjective out a verb by "adding "-ed" to the end of it, and we call this adjective the verbal adjective. For example, if we take the verb "stop", we can form the adjective "stopped", e.g. "the clock was stopped". (Of course there are a number of verbal adjectives in English that don't end with "-ed", such as "broken", "lost", "drawn" etc.)

In Irish too there are a couple of different endings for a verbal adjective:

i) 1st Conjugation:

If the verb ends in "t" or "th", only "e" is added to the root, and "h" is dropped:

caith (spend)
--> caite (spent)
loit (destroy)
--> loite (destroyed)

If the verb is one of the majority which ends in "b", "c", "f", "g", "m", "p" or "r", the verbal adjective endings are "tha" and "the", depending on whether the final vowel in the root is broad or slender, respectively:

lúb (bend)
--> lúbtha (bent)
glac (take, accept)
--> glactha (accepted)
loisc (burn)
--> loiscthe (burnt)
scaip (scatter)
--> scaipthe (scattered)

Verbs ending in "bh" or "mh" lose these endings and take the ending "fa":

gabh (catch)
--> gafa (caught)
scríobh (write)
--> scríofa (written)

ii) 2nd Conjugation

These verbs, which typically end in "&aigh;igh", "eoigh" etc., drop the "gh" and usually add "te" or "the":

beannaigh (bless)
--> beannaithe (blessed)
luaigh (mention)
--> luaite (mentioned)
báigh (drown)
--> báite (drowned)

There is also a handful of verbs which take "ta" as their verbal noun ending, among them the irregular verb "déan" (do, make); hence the title of the traditional song "Tá Mo Chleamhnas Déanta" (My Match is Made).

Compound Prepositions

Apart from "go dtí" (to), all prepositions of two words are called "compound prepositions" and put the noun following into the genitive case. The most common of these are:

ar aghaidh	-- opposite	i gcaitheamh	-- during
ar chúl	-- behind	i gceann	-- at the end of
ar feadh	-- for (the extent of)	i gcuideachta	-- in the company of
ar fud	-- throughout	i lár	-- in the middle of

ar nós	-- like	i láthair	-- in the presence of
ar son	-- for the sake of	i measc	-- among
d'ainneoin	-- in spite of	i ndiaidh	-- after
de bharr	-- as a result of	in aghaidh	-- against
de chois	-- near	in aice	-- near
de réir	-- according to	in éadan	-- against
i bhfianaise	-- in the sight of	os cionn	-- above
os mhair	-- before	tar	-- after

Examples:

doras	-- door
--> an aghaidh an dorais	-- against the door
Dia	-- God
--> ar son Dé	-- for God's sake
teach	-- house
--> os cionn an tí	-- above the house
dinnéar	-- dinner
--> tar éis na dinnéir	-- after the dinner

One distinguishing feature of the compound preposition is that they can't be followed by a normal object pronoun like "mé", "thú", "é" etc. Instead, the possessive adjective corresponding to the pronoun is placed in between the two parts of the preposition. (The reason for this is because only the first part of the compound preposition is really a preposition; the second part is just a noun that has become trapped into accompanying it wherever it goes).

For example, suppose I want to say "after you". "After" is "i ndiaidh". Instead of using "thú" I have to use the corresponding possessive, which in this case is "do", and put it between "i" and "ndiaidh". Now, the reason why "diaidh" is eclipsed in "i ndiaidh" is because it comes after "i". If I put "do" between them, "diaidh" is no longer followed by "i" but by "do", which causes aspiration. So "after you" becomes "i do dhiaidh", e.g. "tháinig an madra i do dhiaidh" -- "the dog came after you". ("Diaidh" is an old obsolete word meaning "wake" or "rear". So the literal translation of "i do dhiaidh" is "in your wake").

To take another example, suppose I want to say "above us". "Above" is "os cionn". Instead of using "muid", we use the possessive "ár" (our). "Ár" causes eclipsis on nouns, and "cionn" is a noun (it's a form of "ceann", meaning "head"). So "above us" is "os ar gcionn" (meaning literally "above our head").

Numerals

When counting aloud, the numbers one to twenty in Irish are as follows:

0. - náid	11. - a haon déag
1. - a haon	12. - dó déag
2. - a dó	13. - a trí déag
3. - a trí	14. - a ceithear dúag
4. - a ceathair	15. - a cúig déag
5. - a cúig	16. - a sé déag
6. - a sé	17. - a seacht déag
7. - a seacht	18. - a hocht déag
8. - a hocht	19. - a naoi déag
9. - a naoi	20. - fiche
10. - a deich	21. - fiche a haon;
	22. fiche a dó, etc.
30. - tríocha	40. - daichead
50. - caoga	60. - seasca
70. - seachtó	80. - ochtó
90. - nócha	100. - cead
101. - cead a haon	120. - cead is fiche
230. - dhá chead is tríocha	231. - dhá chead tríocha a haon
1,000 - míle	3,972. - trí mhíle, naoi gcéad seachtó a dó
10,000 - deich míle	1,000,000 - milliún

The prefix "a" (which puts "h" before a numeral beginning with a vowel) is used when counting aloud, in arithmetic, in telling the time, in naming telephone numbers, in betting, and as ordinals after nouns (e.g. seomra a dó -- Room 2; ceacht a cúig déag -- Lesson Fifteen etc.)

This prefix is omitted in card games ("an t-aon hart", the ace of hearts), in denoting frequency ("thit sé faoi dh&oeacute;", he fell twice), to specify a definite number ("scrios amach an ceathair", cross out the 4), or to indicate a choice of two numbers ("lá nó dhó", a day or two).

Before a noun, all the numbers are as above (except for "dó", which becomes "dhá", and "ceithear", which becomes "ceithre") and leave out the "h". No matter what the number is, the noun following it is always in the singular, e.g. "aon chapall", one horse, "dhá chapall", two horses, etc. (Adjectives modifying these nouns, however, are always plural). Numbers one to six cause aspiration on the noun and numbers seven to ten cause eclipsis (e.g. "seacht gcapall", seven horses). In higher numbers, the noun is placed between the two parts of the number, e.g. "trí chapall déag", thirteen horses, "ocht gcapall déag", eighteen horses. The exception to this is the multiples of ten like "fiche", twenty, "trí&ieacute;ocha", thirty, etc.; these are single words and have no effect on the following noun.

An older, more traditionally Celtic form of counting is by multiples of "fichid", twenty:

"trí chapall ar fhichid", 23 horses,
 "trí fichid capall", 60 horses,
 "sé fichid capall" 120 horses, etc.

Ordinal Numbers

The ordinal numbers are as follows:

an chéad -- the 1st
 an dara -- the 2nd
 an tríú -- the 3rd
 an ceathrú -- the 4th
 an cúigiú -- the 5th
 an séú -- the 6th
 an séachtú -- the 7th
 an t-ochtú -- the 8th
 an naoú -- the 9th
 an deichiú -- the 10th

As with the cardinal numbers, ordinals after "tenth" put a noun in between two parts of the number, and in ordinals ending in "1st" or "2nd" have different forms. For example "the eleventh day" is "an t-aonú lá déag", "the twelfth day" is "an dóú lá déag", "the thirteenth day" is "an tríú lá déag", etc.

Normally the possessive adjective isn't used with an ordinal -- instead of saying "mo chéad mhac", for instance, you would say "an chéad mhac aige".

Personal Numerals

A feature unique to Irish is the existence of numbers referring to people alone. One person can be referred to as "duine" or "aon duine amháin", but for higher numbers of people there are special numerals:

beirt / dís	= two people
triúr	= three people
ceathrar	= four people
cúigear	= five people
seisear	= six people
seachtar	= seven people
ochtar	= eight people
naonúr	= nine people
deichniúr	= ten people
aon duine dhéag	= eleven people
dáréag	= twelve people

For numbers of people higher than twelve, the ordinary system of numbering is used:

"13 people" is "trí dhuine dhéag", etc.

These personal numerals can qualify a personal noun, or stand alone, e.g.:

beirt	-- two people
beirt fhear	-- two men
bhí triúr ann	-- there were three people there
bhí triúr ghasúr ann	-- there were three boys there

The personal numerals can't be used in front of impersonal nouns at all, but can be used standing alone to refer to impersonal objects in counting, e.g.:

Q. Cá mhéad leabhar atá agat? -- How many books do you have?
A. Ceathrar. -- Four.

"Ceann" in counting

The Irish equivalent of the English word "one" in counting (as used in phrases like "ten big ones", etc.) is "ceann", literally "head". The cardinal numeral two has the effect of aspirating it and numbers seven to ten eclipse it. Unlike regular nouns following numbers, "ceann" is put in the plural ("cinn") from number three up:

Q. Cá mhéad? -- How many?
A. Dhá cheann. -- Two.
A. Trí cinn. -- Three.
A. Seacht gcinn. -- Seven.

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Gaelic/Irish Lessons

Irish: Reading no. 7

Reading no. 7 - Úna Bhán, part 2

Ní raibh Mághnus cinnte cé aca bhí an chliú sin tuillte ag bean Shéarluis Chonchubhair nó nach raibh. Acht bhí rud amháin a raibh sé cinnte dó: ní thabharfadh Úna Bhán iarraidh choidhche ar eisean a chur fá smacht. Níorbh' é sin a' cineál nádúire a bhí inntí. Bhí sí laghach deagh-chroidhtheach. Bhí sí socair suaimhneach. Bhí a croidhe agus a h-anam istuigh ann. Agus a' té a bhfuil tú i ngrádh leis ní bheidh tú ag iarraidh smacht a chur air!

(cliú = clú [m.], "reputation")
(tuill, "deserve, earn")
(amháin, "alone, only")
(tabhair... ar, "force, compel")
(fá = faoi)
(cineál [m.], "kind, variety")
(nádúr [m.], "nature, character")
(laghach, "pleasant, agreeable")
(deagh-chroidhtheach, "good-hearted")
(socair, "calm")
(anam [m.], "soul") (istúigh, "within")
(an té, "whoever")

Ar feadh tamaill bhí loinnir iongantach sa tsaoghal. Annsin tráthnóna amháin samhraidh bhí gruaim bheag le h-aithne a' teacht air. Ní raibh ann ar tús acht mar bheadh dlaoi de néall bheag éadtrom thiar ag bun na spéire. Acht sin mar thig a' caochlódh ar an aimsir. Sin mar thig a thús ar na h-aislingí bhíos againn. Bhí átharrach de chineál éigin a' teacht ar Úna. Ní tostach d'éirigh sí. Bhí neart le rádh aici, acht nár luaithe ar sgéal ná ar sgéal eile í. Bhí sí mar bheadh duine ann a bheadh a' cainnt i n-a chodladh.

(loinnir [f.], "light, brilliance")
(iongantach = iontach, "wonderful")
(samhradh [m.], "summer")
(gruaim [f.], "gloom")
(aithne [f.], "recognition")
(ar tús, "at first")
(dlaoi [f.], "wisp, strand")
(neall [m.], "cloud") (éadtrom, "light")
(thiar, "westerly")
(bun [m.], "base, bottom")
(spéir [f.], "sky")
(caochlódh [m.], "change")
(aimsir [f.], "weather")
(aisling [f.], "dream")
(átharrach [m.], "change, alteration")
(éigin, "some")
(tostach, "silent")
(éirigh, "become, grow")
(neart le rádh, "plenty to say")
(luaithe [m.], "quickness")
(ag cainnt, "talking")
(codladh [m.], "sleep")

Chuidh Mághnus 'un a' bhaile an tráthnóna sin agus gan é saor ó imnidhe. Bhí rud éigin a' déanamh buadhartha do Úna! Caidé a bhí uirthí? ... B'féidir gur mí-shásamh a cuireadh uirthí sa bhaile. Ba dóigh go mbeadh sí mar bhí sí riamh a' Domhnach sin a bhí chugainn.

('un = chun)
(agus gan é saor, "without being free")
(imnidhe = inní [f.], "worry")
(déan buadhartha, "disturb, cause worry")
(míshásamh [m.], "displeasure")
(dóigh [f.], "hope, trust")
(Domhnach [m.], "Sunday")

Acht ní raibh. Ní ba mheasa a bhí sí: i bhfad ní bamheasa. Bhí na néallta ag éirghe aníos ó'n fhairrge agus a' leathnughadh ar fud na spéire -- tharla an aimsir mar shamhail againn. Thoisigh Úna a chainnt ar mhnaoi mhuinteardha díthe a chuidh go Meiriceá cúig nó sé de bhliadhnaibh roimhe sin agus ar a' dóigh a raibh an saoghal ag éirghe léithe thall. Sa deireadh ar sise, "Sí a rinne i gceart é. 'Sé Dia a bhí léithe an lá a smaointigh sí ar a ghabháil go Meiriceá. Ní fhuil a dhath annseo acht a' t-anródh is a' t-ocras. Ní fhuil a fhios agam cad chuige a ndéarna aonduine riamh cómhuidhe ann. Ní dhéanfainn sin."

(measa, "worse")
(i bhfad, "far (from it)")
(leathnughadh = leathnú, "spreading")
(tharla, "happened")
(samhail [f.], "image, allegory")
(bean mhuinteardha, "female relation")
(Meiriceá [m.], "America")
(bliadhnaibh = blianta, "years")
(dóigh [m.], "way, manner")
(thall, "over there, beyond")
(deireadh [m.], "end")
(i gceart, "right, properly")
(smaointigh ar, "think of")
(ní fhuil = ní)
(a dhath, "anything")
(anródh = anró [m.], "hardship")
(ocras [m.], "hunger")
(cad chuige, "why")
(aonduine, "anybody") (riamh, "ever")
(déan cómhuidhe, "dwell, live")

Baineadh an anál de Mhágnus. Faoi Dhia caidé a bhí a' teacht uirthí? Nach raibh lámh is focal eatorra. Nach raibh áit a' toighe socair aca. Ar léana dheas ós cionn a' chladaigh, ar imeal báighe Ros Sgaithe -- an áit a b'áilne ar dhroim a' domhain. Nár mhinic a chonaic Mágnus (agus ar ndóighe a dhá shúil druidthe) é féin is Úna i n-a suidhe taobh amuigh de'n doras tráthnóna Samhraidh, aoibhneas a' tsaoghail i n-a dtimcheall agus séan a' tsaoghail i n-a gcroidhe. Agus anois tá an aisling bheannuighthe seo ag imtheacht uaidh, mar d'imtheóchadh ceo maidne nuair thiocfadh teas na gréine air.

"Agus caidé atá tú a' brath a dhéanamh?" arsa Mágnus nuair tháinig a' chainnt leis. "A' brath ar a ghabháil go Meiriceá i ndeireadh an fhóghmhair seo chugainn, le cuidiughadh Dé," arsa Úna.

"Fan bliadhain eile is beidh mise leat," arsa Maghnus.

"Ní fhanfadh," arsa Úna. "Ró-fhada d'fhan mé," ar sise.

"Barraidheacht de mo shaoghal a chuir mé amudha ar na creagacha ocracha seo." Thost Mágnus tamall. Sa leis a ghabháil go Meiriceá go mb'ionnann a' cás i mbliadhna ná ar a' bhliadhain seo chugainn.

"Maith go leor," ar seisean. "Imtheóchaimid i ndeireadh an fhóghmhair. B'féidir gurbh' é an t-ádh é. Siud is go mbeidh cumaidh orm a' fágail Rinn na mBroc."

Annsin b'éigean an fhírinne a innse dó. Ní raibh rún ar bith pósta ag Úna thall ná i bhfos, adubhairt sí. B'fhéidir, adubhairt sí, go n-áthróchadh a h-intinn nuair a bheadh sí tamall i Meiriceá. "Ní fhuil a fhios agam", ar sise. "Ní fhuil fios a chinneamhainte ag aonduine againn. Tá an méid sin ceilte orainn... Acht cad chuige a rachthá thusa go Meiriceá? Tá mé cinnte gur fearr leat annseo ná i n-áit ar bith eile ar a' domhan. Fan sa bhaile, i n-ainm Dé."

Dubhairt Mágnus na rudaí amaideacha adeirtear ar ócáid de'n chineál. Cá bith áit a mbeadh Úna sin an áit a mb'fhiú bheith beo. Chuirfeadh sí maise ar a' tsaoghal áit ar bith a mbeadh sí, dá mba amuigh i bhfásach na h-Aifrice é. Bheadh na Rosa fuar folamh an lá d'imtheóchadh sí. Thiocfadh ceo ar an Eargal. Thiocfadh gruaim ar ghnúis a' tsaoghail!

Ní raibh gar a bheith leis. Bhí sé diúlta aici má diúltadh aon fhear ariamh. Acht do réir chosamhlachta ní raibh sin tuigte aige. Sa deireadh dubhairt sí leis é gan fiacail a chur ann. "Is fearr dúinn, i n-ainm Dé, "ar sise, "lámh a chrathadh le chéile agus dhá chúl ár gcinn a thabhairt le chéile. Ní fhuilimid a' fóirstean dá chéile. Agus a' lánamhain nach bhfuil a' fóirstean dá chéile ní fhuil i ndán dóbhfha acht saoghal corrach. Buidheach de Dhia ba choir dúinn a bheith gur tuigeadh linn i n-am é."

(Synopsis: Maghnus dismisses the rumours he has heard about the women in Una's family. He feels happy to be in love, but grows more worried as a change comes over Una; she seems distracted all of a sudden. One day Una tells Maghnus about a relation of hers who went to America and says that she did the right thing -- nobody, including Una herself, would want to stay and live in hardship and hunger. Maghnus is astonished; they're betrothed and have already picked out a spot for a house overlooking the bay. This has been his dream, and now she wants to leave? She tells him that she's going to go to America at the end of autumn. Maghnus asks her to stay another year, but she

(bain de, "take away from")
(anáil [f.], "breath")
(faoi Dhia, "for God's sake")
(ag teacht uirthí, "coming over her")
(focal [m.], "word")
(toigh = teach) (socair, "settled")
(léana [m.], "meadow")
(cladaigh [gs] cladach [m.], "beach")
(imeall [m.], "edge, coast")
(báighe = bá [f.], "bay")
(b'áilne, "most beautiful")
(domhan [m.], "the world, universe")
(minic, "often")
(ar ndóighe, "of course")
(druidthe, "shut")
(Samhradh [m.], "Summer")
(aoibhneas [m.], "happiness")
(séan [m.], "luck, happiness")
(ag imtheacht, "departing, escaping")
(maidne [gs] maidin [f.], "morning")

(ag brath, "intending")
(caint [f.], "speech")
(i ndeireadh, "at the end of")
(fóghmhar = fómhar [m.], "autumn")
(cuidiughadh = ciudiú [m.], "help")

(fan, "stay")

(barraidheacht = barrafocht [+gs], "too much")
(amudha = amú, "wasted")
(ocracha, "hungry")

(cumaidh [f.], "partnership, wedlock")

(éigean, "necessary")
(ar bith, "any")
(thall, "yonder, abroad")
(i bhfos, "here, on this side")
(áthróchadh, "would change")
(intinn [f.], "mind")
(ní fhuil = níl)
(cinneamhain [f.], "fate, destiny")
(an méid sin, "that much")
(ceilte orainn, "hidden from us")
(rachthá = rachfá)

(amaideach, "foolish")
(ócáid [f.], "occasion")
(cineál [m.], "kind")
(fiú, "worthwhile")
(maise [f.], "adornment")
(fásach [m.], "desert")
(na h-Aifrice [gs] an Aifric [f.], "Africa")
(folamh, "empty, bleak")
(gruaim [f.], "gloom")
(gnúis [f.], "face")

(gar [m.], "good, benefit")
(diúlta, "refused, spurned")
(do réir [+gs], "according to")
(cosamhlacht = cosúlacht [f.], "likeness")
(tuigte, "understood")
(gan... ann, "without mincing words")
(crath, "shake")
(le chéile, "(with) each other")
(ag fóirstean, "suing, fitting")
(lámhain [f.], "married couple")
(i ndán, "in store, destined")
(dóbfha = dóibh)
(corrach, "unsettled")
(buidheach = buíoch, "thankful")
(tuigeadh linn, "we understood")

refuses, adding that she has already wasted too much of her life. Maghnus thinks for a moment, then agrees to go to

America with her in the autumn after they're married. Una then has to tell him the truth: she has no intention of marrying him at home or abroad, and she urges him to stay and forget about her. Maghnus makes the usual protests of the jilted lover, but Una tells him plainly that they aren't suited to each other, would never be happy together and should part amicably, thankful that they found out in time.)

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