

Early Life

Born in 1879 at 25 North Main Street, Terence MacSwiney was educated at the North Monastery School in Cork City. He left school at 15 to help support his family. He became an accountancy clerk and proved his determination by successfully obtaining a degree from UCC (then Queens College), in Mental and Moral Science in 1907, while still maintaining full time employment. Terence was heavily influenced by his mother, Mary Wilkinson, who had very strong opinions on Irish culture and identity. His father was a school teacher who moved his tobacco business to Australia when Terence was young. This was a major factor in Terence's decision to leave school early.

Political and Cultural Life

In 1901 he helped to found the Celtic Literary Society, and in 1908 he founded the Cork Dramatic Society with Daniel Corkery and wrote a number of plays for them. He was a playwright, poet, and writer of pamphlets on Irish history. His first play, *The Last Warriors of Coole* was produced in 1910. His fifth play, *The Revolutionist* (1915) took the political stand made by a single man as its theme.

He was one of the founders of the Cork Brigade of the Irish Volunteers in 1913, and was President of the Cork branch of Sinn Féin. He founded a newspaper, *Fianna Fáil*, in 1914, but it was suppressed after only 11 issues.

Picture (right): MacSwiney at a meeting of the Irish Volunteers

MacSwiney the Writer

Terence MacSwiney was an avid writer and wrote many literary pieces including poems and plays. One of his best works was "Principles of Freedom" which inspired a number of world leaders including Mahatma Gandhi and Ho Chi Min.



Death

On the 20th October 1920 Terence MacSwiney lapsed into a coma and died five days later after 74 days on hunger strike. His body lay in St George's Cathedral, Southwark in London where 30,000 people filed past it. Fearing large-scale demonstrations in Dublin, the authorities diverted his coffin directly to Cork, and his funeral in the Cathedral of St Mary and St Anne on the 31st October attracted huge crowds. Terence MacSwiney is buried in the Republican plot in Saint Finbarr's Cemetery in Cork. Arthur Griffith delivered the graveside oration. Food was often placed near MacSwiney to persuade him to give up the hunger-strike in prison and attempts at force-feeding MacSwiney were undertaken in the final days of his strike.

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Terence MacSwiney

*The North Monastery's
Republican Martyr*

1879 – 1920

