A.A. 2023-2024 **Reading Comprehension TEXT 8**

**Shane MacGowan bows out as thousands line streets on a rainy day in Nenagh**

*Town turns out to welcome singer home for the last time as wife Victoria Mary Clarke delivers eulogy*

It was a rainy day in Nenagh and the wind was whispering threats as well as charms.

But the people of [Shane MacGowan’s](https://www.irishtimes.com/tags/shane-macgowan/) hometown more than compensated for the dampness, presenting a warm front to welcome him back one last time and turning the funeral into a rousing celebration of his life.

At times it was more like a \*Pogues concert than a requiem Mass. Such was the demand for seats and standing room in St Mary of the Rosary Church that, at one point, there were doubts whether even the star attraction would get in.

Repeated announcements urged those without a seat to clear the aisles and allow the MacGowan family enter in comfort. As one plea put it, alarmingly: “At the moment, Shane himself is not going to be able to access the church.”

But the former frontman’s entry, when it came, was a dramatic one: his coffin draped in a tricolour, a distinction usually reserved for soldiers of the Republic, official and otherwise.

Then what followed was mostly music and religion, in a combination rarely seen. The Mass may have made history by including Fairy Tale of New York: “You’re a bum, you’re a punk/You’re an old slut on junk”: sentiments not normally heard in a church.

But there was also a cameo appearance by the Buddha, one of many symbols brought to the altar to represent the dead man’s life. “Is this the first time the Buddha has been in a Catholic Church?” wondered MacGowan’s wife, Victoria Mary Clarke.

The symbols were a short story in themselves, but a complex one, worthy of James Joyce. Joyce was of course included, via a copy of Finnegans Wake, as was Flann O’Brien (\*\*An Béal Bocht).

In his homily, Fr Pat Gilbert entered the spirit of the occasion, mixing the musical with the spiritual.

“I grew up listening to the music of [Thin] Lizzy, the Horslips, the Rats, the Undertones and the Pogues,” he recalled, saying that such bands had alerted his generation “to what was happening around us” but had also given them pride in being Irish.

“Shane and the Pogues made it international and cool to play the tin whistle, banjo or accordion,” he said, adding to laughter: “And for a young \*\*\*fella struggling to play the button accordion, *that*was salvation.”

Johnny Depp raised eyebrows and iPhone cameras when delivering one of the prayers of the faithful, expressing hope that we could all learn to “feel the pain of others... and reach out to all who suffer in any way with the continuous love that is rooted in faith and peace”.

Nick Cave sang A Rainy Night in Soho, poignantly dropping the word “nearly” from the original line, “Now the song is nearly over/We may never find out what it means,” while playing up the optimistic conclusion: “Still there’s a light I hold before me/You’re the measure of my dreams.”

But the show (and Mass) stopper was Fairytale of New York, with Glen Hansard and Lisa O’Neill deputising for Shane and Kirsty MacColl and the whole congregation joining in.

It finished to a roar of applause more usual in \*\*\*\*Vicar Street than at Mass. But nobody disagreed with Siobhán MacGowan, when she said of her brother: “I think Shane would have enjoyed that. That was some send-off.”

Victoria Mary Clarke spoke at length about her husband, describing virtually every aspect of the late singer’s character and makeup.

In her eulogy, she explained his spirituality, his care for the poor and disadvantaged, his creativity, often influenced by various substances. At times she spoke candidly about his indulgences and their effects – how he had once carried an encyclopedia of pharmacology to learn them.

“His physical body lasted a very long time considering what he did to it,” she said, perhaps verbalising what many had long thought.

“Music could take us places that were so heavenly that it was like God. I think music in a way was like God to Shane.”

And in describing his deep religious sensibilities, of all creeds, there were lighter moments too.

He prayed constantly but was the “only man ever busted” by a priest for taking Holy Communion on a daily basis, she recalled fondly.

In a personal eulogy, MacGowan’s sister, Siobhán, recalled that his life had begun against the backdrop of a \*\*\*\*\*“hooley” on Christmas Day 1957, when his mother’s labour pains competed for attention with a nurses’ party. And almost 65 years later, thanks to his family, friends and many admirers, Shane MacGowan went out against the backdrop of a hooley too.

\***The Pogues** were an Anglo-Irish [Celtic punk](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celtic_punk) band fronted by [Shane MacGowan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shane_MacGowan)

\*\* (The Poor Mouth) - a 1941 novel in Irish by [Flann O'Brien](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flann_O%27Brien" \o "Flann O'Brien), published under the pseudonym "Myles na gCopaleen"

\*\*\*[Non-standard](https://www.google.com/search?sca_esv=589398076&rlz=1C1GCEA_enIT770IT770&q=non-standard&si=ALGXSlaVHN-2QMLnZeLOkIlLjnKybX0JjW9ns07wlkmGXHo3mpaTK3ZvEG0bTo07aqGFUViXFeZo73fhbpdzvidbWGdX_LUgg6Okdqkhz-bNim7bSyJWB4Q%3D&expnd=1) spelling of [fellow](https://www.google.com/search?sca_esv=589398076&rlz=1C1GCEA_enIT770IT770&q=fellow&si=ALGXSlZs_yOcjbcvFwhB4E04oe9YtElZ5XuYVvuMM_85UqWndG4LK_msOUfp9S5DLInU7wernStd1oZLiddTgZ7wQzjYbIp0RA%3D%3D&expnd=1), used in representing speech in various [dialects](https://www.google.com/search?sca_esv=589398076&rlz=1C1GCEA_enIT770IT770&q=dialects&si=ALGXSlaYxyllm14_NEvUA9w95SVctQnKifIGSFmWBNCSKBWO7Bytk_RvdOFZ5Rj7lRxHQtmayRbSfE5E5bSd03GJ65eTD9eVhrpyyEySzkB63U9Mvgd6IeA%3D&expnd=1)

\*\*\*\*Live music venue in Dublin

\*\*\*\*\*A wild or noisy party (Hiberno-English; informal)

*Adapted from The Irish Times 08.12.2023*

**Now read the following statements and write TRUE or FALSE after each of them.**

1. During the homily at the funeral Mass the celebrant confused the musical with the spiritual.

1. According to the text, many people were surprised Shane MacGowan did live so long.