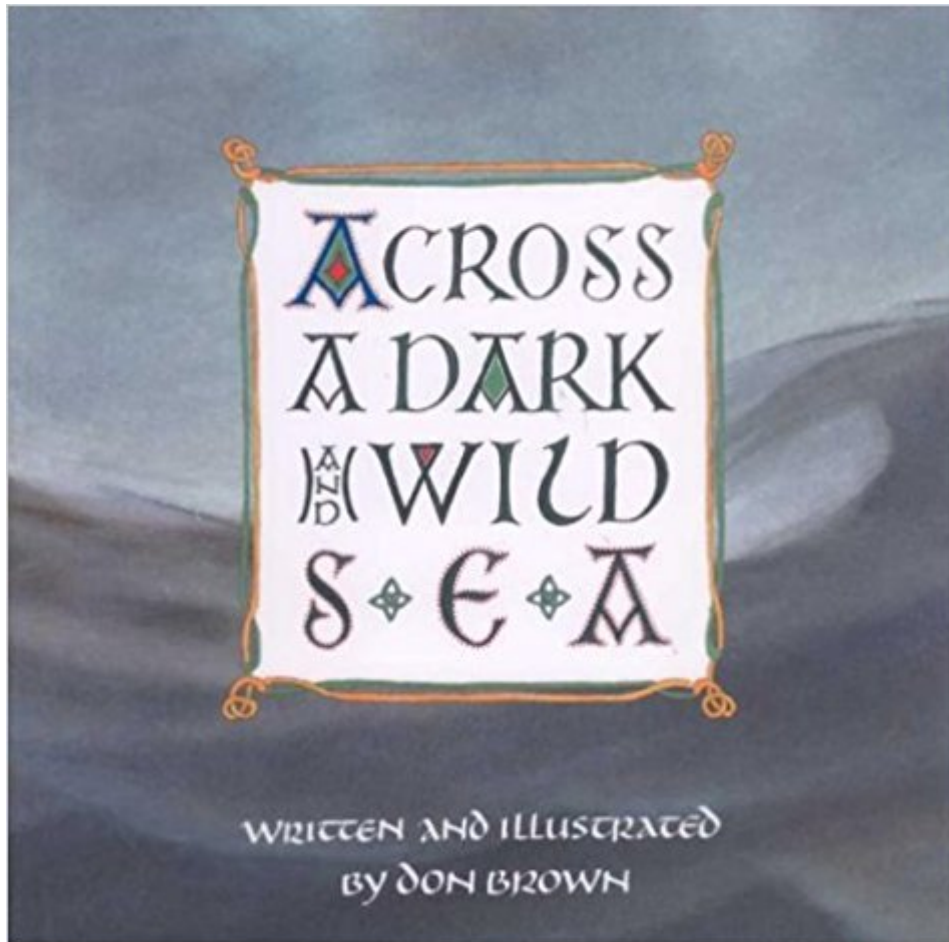


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# Across A Dark And Wild Sea (Single Titles)



## Synopsis

Columcille was born in a remote corner of Ireland in the year 521. Legend has it that as a child, he was fed a cake filled with the letters of the alphabet, and so learned to love writing. He grew up to become a monk and a scribe a thousand years before the invention of printing, when books had to be copied by hand. There was one book, a beautiful volume of psalms from distant Rome, that Columcille especially loved, and even though its owner refused him permission, Columcille secretly copied it. The copy was discovered, and a dispute arose over who it belonged to: Columcille, who made it, or the owner of the original. So better was the argument that a battle was fought between the two men's powerful friends; although Columcille's side won, the victory felt hollow to him. To punish himself, he set out in a tiny boat, vowing to leave Ireland forever. A revered figure in Celtic history, Columcille (also known as Columba) founded the famous monastery on the Scottish island of Iona and left a legacy of learning that illuminated a corner of the Dark Ages. History, drama, and a love of books and reading fill a story--told here in exquisite watercolors and deftly understated prose by noted author and artist Don Brown.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 5 - 9 years

Grade Level: 1 - 4

## Customer Reviews

Brown's (Uncommon Traveler) lyrical narrative chronicles the life of Columcille, born to an Irish king

in 521, and his passionate commitment to words and ideas. Though he grew up during the Dark Ages, when the new rulers of Ireland had virtually extinguished education ("Reading and writing were like magic, and the people who knew their secrets as rare as wizards"), Columcille from early childhood loved writing, which he mastered as a student in a monastery. He went on to become a monk as well as a skilled scribe and poet, and founded many monasteries. Brown laces historical facts with anecdotes from legends in his portrayal of this remarkable man, who exiled himself from his homeland after his kinsmen crushed the army of a High King, in defense of a manuscript. Columcille had painstakingly hand-lettered a Psalter (book of Psalms) and the king had ruled that the copy belonged to the owner of the original manuscript. In penitence for the bloodshed, Columcille decided to exile himself from his homeland, and ended up on the Scottish island of Iona, and there founded a monastery. He and the other resident scribes there devoted themselves to transcribing manuscripts, creating books that were then "dispatched, like small boats on a dark and wild sea, to places where reading and writing had been forgotten or ignored." Like the work of his subject, Brown's account also sheds light on an intriguing individual of extraordinary accomplishment. The author's signature stark, muted watercolors seem especially well suited to this hero's life of piety and his historical setting. Ages 5-9. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

Grade 3-6-A lyrical picture-book biography of Columcille, or St. Columba, an Irish monk of the sixth century. In an age in which books were a rarity and few people were literate, Columcille was "Prince, scribe, monk, [and] bard." Brown describes his subject's fascination with a rare book of Bible psalms and his secret vow to make an illegal copy. The High King declared that the duplicate manuscript was the property of the owner of the original, and a terrible battle ensued. Although Columcille's army won, the horror of the bloodshed that day caused him to vow to leave Ireland and cross the sea to Scotland. On the island of Iona, he and 12 followers established a monastery and set to work copying other books and illuminated manuscripts. This brief but fascinating story will appeal to bibliophiles and be useful for assignments on European saints and Celtic history. There is a helpful author's note, a sample Roman alphabet, and detailed sketches of bookmaking and a leather boat. The illustrations are soft double-page watercolors that create an impression of green countryside, wild waves, and the windswept shoreline. This is a lovely, intriguing book for special readers. Beth Tegart, Oneida City Schools, NY Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

I got this book for my 1st and 2nd grade religious ed/First Holy Communion kids. At first, I was taken

aback. The colors are kind of dark and rainy. It also focuses on Columcille (St Columba's - mid to late 500's A.D.) fight over a book that he had copied (i.e., a handwritten manuscript) that ended up in a clan war and a number of wounded and dead. However, after reading it a few times, I realized it was a really interesting approach to looking at sin and weakness. Columcille was given the death penalty by his bishop, but was given a reprieve through the support of another monk. Instead of doing something useless or dumb, Columcille exiled himself to nearby Scotland and ended up doing fabulous work, spreading Christianity, founding monasteries and churches, and functioning as a peacemaker among the Picts. I found that the kids really liked the story and were captivated by the illustrations.

Great book and inspiring. A good saint book to add to your collection. Easy to read and for the kids to understand.

"Columcille was born in 521. He was the son of a king, from a corner of Ireland scrubbed hard by ocean winds, in a time that came to be known as the dark ages..." So begins Don Brown's marvelous picture book biography of the scribe and monk, known now as Saint Columba. Brown traces the Celtic legend of this remarkable man who desperately wanted to bring learning and books back into the world after much was lost with the fall of the Roman Empire. After a bloody war was waged over the copying and ownership of a special book of psalms, Columcille left Ireland forever and with twelve followers "set sail on a dark and wild sea." Landing on the tiny Scottish island of Iona, he and his followers built a monastery and scriptorium where books were copied and scribes were trained. "Books were made and dispatched, like small boats on a dark and wild sea, to places where reading and writing had been forgotten or ignored. The books made colonies of learning, and people's minds, once dark with ignorance, were brightened." Mr Brown's poetic text is filled with imagery, is rich in history and drama and complemented by powerful and evocative artwork in quiet and subdued tones. Together word and art bring Columcille's inspiring story to life with passion and respect. Perfect for youngsters 8 and older, or as a read aloud for younger children, *Across A Dark And Wild Sea* includes an Author's Note to enhance and complete the story, the Unical alphabet used by scribes, and a bibliography. This is a rare and wonderful story celebrating books and learning, that shouldn't be missed. "Columcille, the man who loved books, helped the world love books. So we remember him and retell his story."

In the Year of Our Lord, 521, in the Dark Ages that haunted Europe, was born Columcille, the son of

a minor king in Ireland. This is the story of Columcille, his growth, his education, and his founding of the great monastery on Iona, in Scotland. The book itself is written for the younger reader, and contains many colorful and extremely beautiful illustrations. Overall, I found this to be a very good book. It does a good job of telling the story of St. Columcille in an easy-to-read, no-nonsense way. It's a very entertaining read, and an educational one. I highly recommend it.

The storm-tossed watercolors on the pages of this book are the perfect illustrations for this biography. Columcille the man was a monk who fought to maintain the written word during the Dark Ages. This biography is quite well done, with a very good notes section at the back. Includes a bibliography and a demonstration of how to create Uncial calligraphy script. Great book.

Deftly written and superbly illustrated by Don Brown, *Across A Dark And Wild Sea* is the true story of Columcille (also known as Columba), a beloved figure from Celtic history. Columcille loved books so much that he secretly copied a volume of psalms from Rome against its owner's wishes. The resulting and bitter fallout in 521 A.D. caused Columcille to deliberately leave Ireland in a tiny boat, vowing never to return. He founded a famous monastery on the Scottish island of Iona and left a legacy that endures to this day. Brought to life with moody, windswept color illustrations, *Across A Dark And Wild Sea* is a most engaging picture book and recommended for readers of all ages.

This is a nicely illustrated and written story about Ireland's Columcille, but the author left one very important point out--Columcille was a monk! That's right, a Christian leader in ancient Ireland. To read this book, one would only know he was a scholar & lover of books, but his claim to fame was as a religious man.

This book was read as part of the Catholic Mosaic program with our kids. It happened to be read around the first week of school and the subject of being a scholar and how important books are to EVERYONE was highly appropriate. Definitely a keeper!

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