children’s books ireland reading list

DIFFERENT ABILITIES

AGE RANGE 0–YA

#EveryChildaReader
SAM BISHOP illustrated by FIONA LUMBERS

I LIKE BEES, I DON’T LIKE HONEY!


An exploration of the likes and dislikes of various children in which the overall message is one of accepting difference and respecting individuality. The text not only encourages young children to express their own feelings and develop but helps them to empathise with their peers. In treating all likes and dislikes as equally valid, this book will be particularly valuable for teaching children how to accept and respect the specific interests and dislikes of children with autism – even if they might seem odd to others. (Age 0–4)

EMMA DODD

HAPPY TO BE ME


This delightful picturebook introduces, in a simple but effective way, the subject of body positivity to very young children. The bright illustrations feature a diverse group of children, without diversity ever being specifically mentioned in the text. Different races, genders and abilities are represented. There’s a child who wears glasses, a child who uses a wheelchair, and a child who uses a hearing aid. Diversity is normal, and this book depicts this wonderfully. (Age 2–4)

YASMEEN ISMAIL

SPECS FOR REX


What a day Rex has at school when he wears his loathed new glasses for the first time! Fluid watercolour images capture the energy of Rex and his classmates, filling the pages with gusto as Rex tries ploy after ploy to conceal his round red specs. Then, when he hides his head in the waste bin, he finds teacher’s missing whistle. Suddenly, this changes things. Thanks to his specs he is a hero and gets a big gold star, and a new friend too. (Age 2–4)

STEVE ANTONY

AMAZING


A little boy and his pet dragon are the very best of friends. They laugh, they sing, they dance, they snooze. They are both amazing – just like everyone else! Amazing is a celebration of diversity, inclusivity and friendship, and is an ideal introduction to young readers about acceptance and difference. With engaging, amusing and vibrant illustrations as well as fantastic end papers, a diverse range of readers will all be captivated by Zibbo’s antics. (Age 3–7)
MENENA COTTIN illustrated by ROSANA FARÌA

THE BLACK BOOK OF COLOURS

An innovative tactile book about colour that answers the questions: what does colour feel like, taste like, sound like? Our eyes tell us about colour. But what if you are blind? Can you still know colours? Using simple language and beautiful textured art through embossed black-on-black artwork and Braille, readers learn how to ‘see’ without their eyes. From out of the blackness, a beautiful rainbow of colours emerges! (Age 5–8)

NICOLA DAVIES illustrated by CATHY FISHER

PERFECT
GRAFFEG 2016 (PBK) 36PP £7.99 ISBN 9781912213498

A rare and wonderful picturebook that tells the story of a young boy coming to terms with the arrival of a baby sister with special needs. His sister’s condition is not explained or diagnosed and the journey from sadness at unfulfilled expectations to acceptance and hope is portrayed with subtlety and artistry. Perfect is an ideal way to open up the subject of disability with children, as well as being a great story in its own right. (Age 5–7, 8–10)

CECE BELL

EL DEAFO
AMULET BOOKS 2014 (PBK) 248PP £7.99 ISBN 9781419712173

Exploring friendship, family, self-esteem and the difficulties faced by difference, El Deafo is a unique graphic novel based on the author’s childhood. Told from the perspective of Cece, a young rabbit who loses most of her hearing due to an illness, this book mixes humour and insight in equal measure to paint a vivid and oftentimes hilarious picture of coping with school, friends and first love. (Age 9–11)

S.E. DURRANT illustrated by ROB BIDDULPH

RUNNING ON EMPTY

Aj’s dearest dream is to run on the same 2012 London Olympics track where he saw his hero Usain Bolt win gold. His dream is put on hold when his beloved grandfather dies and young AJ finds himself landed with the role of carer and protector to his own parents, both of whom have learning difficulties. AJ has to find a way to keep his family together in this heart-wrenching and beautifully told story. (Age 9–11)
**ABI ELPHINSTONE**  
**SKY SONG**  

Sky Song is a dramatic, action-packed and original adventure full of magical creatures and happenings that will grip the reader. Erkenwald is ruled by the wicked Ice Queen and it falls to three children to restore hope and joy to the kingdom. Eska, Flint and Blu, who is based on Elphinstone’s sister-in-law who has Down syndrome, are brave and nuanced characters and this is a skilfully woven story of identity, friendship and otherness that has never been more relevant. (Age 9–11)

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**ROSS MONTGOMERY**  
**MAX AND THE MILLIONS**  

An inventive and funny adventure that’s also about learning to look beyond our own assumptions. Max is used to spending time alone – it’s difficult to make friends in a big, chaotic school when you’re deaf. But Max has special talents as well as needs that set him apart at school, so he keeps company with the grumpy caretaker. A fast-paced and enjoyable adventure with great characters and a subtle social message encouraging readers to appreciate the small things in life. (Age 9–11)

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**PAOLA PERETTI translated by DENISE MUIR**  
**THE DISTANCE BETWEEN ME AND THE CHERRY TREE**  
HOT KEY BOOKS 2018 (PBK) 208PP £7.99 ISBN 9781471407550

Mafalda is a nine-year-old girl who knows one thing: sometime in the next six months her sight will fail completely. Can Mafalda find a way through a seemingly dark future and still go to school, play football and look after her beloved cat? Translated from the Italian and based on the author’s own life, this is a beautifully written, poignant tale of a little girl’s courageous struggle to come to terms with the gradual loss of her sight and to discover what will matter most when she can no longer see. (Age 9–11)

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**ROBIN STEVENS based on an idea by SIOBHAN DOWD**  
**THE GUGGENHEIM MYSTERY**  
PUFFIN BOOKS 2018 (PBK) 320PP £6.99 ISBN 9780141377032

When his aunt is framed for the theft of a painting from the Guggenheim Museum, Ted, who is on the Autism spectrum, his sister Kat and cousin Salim, set out to prove her innocence. We see most of the story through Ted’s eyes, giving the reader a glimpse into how he sees the world in patterns and puzzles and how he uses facts to try to solve the mystery. A fine mystery novel with plenty of colourful characters as suspects. (Age 9–11)
JACQUELINE WILSON illustrated by NICK SHARRATT

KATY

PUFFIN BOOKS 2016 (PBK) 480PP £6.99 ISBN 9780141353982

An uplifting and sensitive reworking of Susan Coolidge's classic *What Katy Did*. Katy Carr is a lively, daredevil oldest sister in a big family. She loves messing around outdoors, climbing on the garage roof, or up a tree, cycling, skateboarding, swinging ... But her life changes in dramatic and unexpected ways after a serious accident. Wilson's modern retelling explores Katy's gradual acceptance of her acquired disability due to spinal injury and how she adapts to life as a wheelchair user. (Age 9–11)

BRIDGET BLANKLEY

THE GHOSTS & JAMAL

HOPE ROAD 2018 (PBK) 222PP £8.99 ISBN 9781908446633

*The Ghosts & Jamal* is an intriguing story, touching on religion, terrorism and Nigeria’s internal conflicts, following a young orphan who is negotiating an unforgiving society. Jamal was born with epilepsy and that marks him out as 'the bringer of bad spirits' in his Nigerian community. But when Jamal survives a terrorist attack, everything changes. With an ending that will take your breath away, this is a beautifully written book about survival, bravery and finding your place in the world. (Age 12–14)

SARAH CROSSAN

ONE

BLOOMSBURY CHILDREN’S BOOKS 2015 (PBK) 448PP £7.99 ISBN 9781408827215

Written in free verse, this tender and moving novel charts a momentous year in the lives of conjoined twins Tippi and Grace: rare and extraordinary sixteen-year-olds sharing the same body. Grace and Tippi don’t like being stared and sneered at, but they’re used to it. What they want is to be looked at in turn, like they truly are two people. Crossan is sensitive to each twin’s uniqueness as they consider whether to have surgery in a novel that will appeal to curious young readers. (Age 12–14)

KIM HOOD

FINDING A VOICE


Kim Hood’s début novel deals with a wide range of issues, from mental illness to physical disability. It deals with the voiceless in a range of ways, from Jo’s struggle to cope with her mother’s mental illness and the feeling that she isn’t being heard to Chris’s more literal journey to finding his voice with assistance from Jo. Jo could never have guessed that the friendship she so desperately craves would come in the shape of a severely disabled boy. Refreshing and important – you need to read this book. (Age 12–14)
RACHAEL LUCAS
THE STATE OF GRACE
Lucas’s novel offers a sensitive yet realistic insight into the struggle of navigating adolescence, especially when you have Asperger’s. The wholesome relationships and unique stream-of-consciousness will undoubtedly appeal to teenagers, and Grace’s quirky personality makes her a very likeable protagonist. The moral of the story is that loyal friends and a united family can get you through pretty much anything. Whip-smart, hilarious and unapologetically honest, this is a heart-warming story of one girl trying to work out where she fits in, and whether she even wants to. (Age 12–14, YA)

MEL DARBON
ROSIE LOVES JACK
USBORNE PUBLISHING 2018 (PBK) 352PP £7.99 ISBN 9781474937832
Rose loves Jack but her parents don’t approve; Jack has anger issues due to a brain injury and Rose has Down syndrome. When Rose runs away to find Jack, it’s scary – she might be capable of being independent but she’s also vulnerable. Through their story we are shown the power of love and the importance of remembering that those with disabilities should not be defined by them. A though-provoking read with a well-earned happy ending and a narrator whose voice will stay with you. (YA)

JENNY McLACHLAN
TRULY WILDLY DEEPLY
BLOOMSBURY CHILDREN’S BOOKS 2018 (PBK) 320PP £7.99 ISBN 9781408879740
McLachlan provides a narrative that is part school story, part romance, part coming-of-age tale, weaving genres to tell all aspects of Annie’s story. Annie is a girl beginning at a new college; she loves English, is a vegetarian and also has cerebral palsy. Determined to assert her independence, Annie is starting afresh, and she is delighted to discover that new opportunities await in her new space, including friendship and maybe even romance. (YA)

PEADAR Ó GUILÍN
THE CALL
DAVID FICKLING BOOKS 2016 (PBK) 336PP ISBN 9781910989203
The Sídhe are a race that have been banished from Ireland and now live in the Greylands. They are angry and decide to take revenge on the teenagers of Ireland. Three minutes is all the teens have to survive the hunt of the Call. Nessa is struggling to protect herself from the Sídhe, as she has polio and is weaker than most fourteen-year-olds. A thrilling fantasy tale full of excitement and unpredictable twists, gripping and engrossing from the start. (YA)
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