children’s books ireland reading list

INCLUSIVITY AND REPRESENTATION

AGE RANGE 0–YA

#EveryChildaReader
TARO GOMI
I REALLY WANT TO SEE YOU, GRANDMA
CHRONICLE BOOKS 2018 (HBK) 40PP £12.99 ISBN 9781452161587
Yumi wakes up one morning and really wants to see her grandmother, who has the same idea on a mountain the other side of town. They both set off at the same time and there is much confusion as they criss-cross the town before eventually being joyfully reunited. Gomi uses a muted palette of browns mustard and yellows with the odd splash of pink and blue to create images that will delight young readers. (Age 0–2, 2–4)

ANNA McQUINN illustrated by ROSALIND BEARDSHAW
LULU’S FIRST DAY
ALANNA MAX 2019 (HBK) 32PP £11.99 ISBN 9781907825217
The latest in McQuinn’s series of picturebooks featuring the book-loving Lulu sees her preparing for her first day of school and thoroughly enjoying the experience. The full-page illustrations are lavish, bright and colourful and the subject matter will appeal greatly to those preparing to start school or kindergarten. Readers can join in the fun as Lulu chooses her clothes, packs her schoolbag and makes new friends. (Age 2–4)

NADIA SHIREEN
BILLY AND THE BEAST
Billy keeps ‘all sorts of stuff’ in her hair, which proves handy on a trip through the forest with her sidekick Fatcat that leads to an encounter with – the Terrible Beast! This no-nonsense heroine is unimpressed with his roaring and scheme to make Terrible Soup out of her woodland friends in this charming and witty picturebook. (Age 2–4)

BRITTA TECKENTRUP
WE ARE TOGETHER
As the two children in this story engage in various wholesome outdoor activities – flying kites, watching birds, sailing – the cut-outs in the pages reveal more and more children joining them, forming ‘one big happy crowd’. The diverse cast is set against a variety of rich, beautiful backdrops, emphasising both our shared humanity and our shared habitat. (Age 2–4)
KEN WILSON-MAX

ASTRO GIRL


Astrid wants to be an astronaut when she grows up. While her mother is away, she and her dad think about the kinds of things that astronauts do and about the way space captivates our imaginations. At the heart of the book is the supportive and loving relationship between Astrid and her dad, a relationship that helps her to believe her dreams will come true. Gorgeously illustrated and beautifully paced, this empowering and heartwarming story delivers a wonderful surprise at the end. (Age 2–4)

JOSEPH COELHO illustrated by FIONA LUMBERS

LUNA LOVES LIBRARY DAY

ANDERSEN PRESS 2017 (HBK) 32PP £11.99 ISBN 9781783445486

Luna loves going to the library, especially because she gets to spend time with things she loves – books and her dad. Together they explore curiosities, mysteries and knowledge and they even read a very special tale that relates to their own life. Luna Loves Library Day is a warm and endearing picturebook that gently broaches the subject of separated or divorced parents. (Age 2–4, 5–8)

MATT DE LA PEÑA illustrated by CHRISTIAN ROBINSON

LAST STOP ON MARKET STREET

PUFFIN 2017 (PBK) 32PP £6.99 ISBN 9780141374185

A young boy and his nana journey by bus to a soup kitchen in which they volunteer and, on the way, nana imparts deep wisdom with great humour and care. Robinson’s naive illustrative style evokes a child’s-eye view of the city and its inhabitants with great skill. Meditative and endlessly enriching. (Age 4–6)

ANDREA BEATY illustrated by DAVID ROBERTS

ADA TWIST, SCIENTIST

ABRAMS BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS 2016 (HBK) 32PP £10.99 ISBN 9781419721373

A picturebook in verse about a little girl called Ada with boundless energy who goes through life asking why, what and how, much to her parents’ and teacher’s frustration. But they soon embrace her zest for knowledge and encourage her scientific view of the world. A lovely story, with fabulous colourful illustrations, which promotes the wonder of knowledge and following your passion. Ideal for any curious child! (Age 5–8)
**ATINUKE illustrated by LAUREN TOBIA**

**YOU’RE AMAZING, ANNA HIBISCUS!**

WALKER BOOKS 2016 (PBK) 96PP £5.99 ISBN 9781406349139

Anna Hibiscus and her extended family live together in a big house in Africa. Coping with troublesome younger brothers, the death of her beloved grandfather and a falling-out with her best friend, Anna learns important lessons about life. The rhythm of the writing echoes the oral tradition of Africa and lively illustrations bring the strong cast of characters to life. A beautiful portrait of a child facing and overcoming grief, Anna Hibiscus is indeed amazing. (Age 5–8)

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**MICHAELA and ELAINE DEPRINCE illustrated by ELLA OKSTAD**

**BALLERINA DREAMS**


Orphaned in war-torn Sierra Leone, Michaela finds solace in her friendship with Mia and her treasured picture of a famous ballerina. The young friends are adopted by Elaine DePrince and move to the US. Michaela’s new mother, Elaine, encourages and supports her dreams of becoming a dancer. With beautiful illustrations highlighting Michaela’s sheer joy and dedication to dance, *Ballerina Dreams* is a true, inspirational story, championing the rights of black dancers and girls in general, and touching on themes of difference. (Age 5–8)

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**JONATHAN MERES illustrated by HANNAH COULSON**

**MINT CHOC CHIP AT THE MARKET CAFÉ**


Priya is a second-generation Indian girl whose parents’ pet supplies stall is threatened by market forces, but Nana-ji’s quiet wisdom gives reassurance that all will be well. Priya is a well-rounded character and much loved with her multicultural community – her name means ‘loved one’. This well-paced, accessible and sensitively illustrated book is highly recommended. (Age 5–8)

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**MAURICIO NEGRO**

**COLOUR OF PEOPLE**

LITTLE ISLAND BOOKS 2018 (PBK) 24PP €10.00 ISBN 9781912417070

This wordless picturebook explores race and diversity through a series of paired images. Here are two children – one dark skinned, one light skinned – and here they are again angry. The white child is now red, and in the next image, where both are freezing cold, blue. We work our way through the rainbow until returning to the original peach, with our sense of ‘flesh coloured’ hopefully completely turned on its head. Playful without being didactic, this is one every school library should have. (Age 5–8)
SITA BRAHMACHARI

TENDER EARTH

MACMILLAN CHILDREN’S BOOKS 2017 (PBK) 432PP £6.99 ISBN 9781509812509

Laila has to contend with starting secondary school, siblings moving out and maybe losing her best friend. But she’s also rattled by growing fear and racism in contemporary London, particularly when it starts to affect the people she loves. This is a coming-of-age story in the best sense and the endpoint of Laila’s journey is truly inspiring, as she connects not only with herself but also with her ancestry and her whole community. Convincingly written, Laila’s progress is powerful, personal and political. (Age 9–11)

DEBORAH ELLIS

MY NAME IS PARVANA


Convinced she is a terrorist, the US army uses interrogation techniques that violate international treaties, but Parvana stubbornly refuses to reveal even her name. Instead she recites multiplication tables and, long given to daydreaming, she draws on memories of her family and of the school for girls she helped to build and maintain. A powerful story about the importance of education and the extraordinary strength of a teenage girl who is often stubborn and headstrong, always resourceful, independent and fiercely loyal. (Age 9–11)

GABRIELLE KENT illustrated by REX CROWLE and LUKE NEWELL

KNIGHTS AND BIKES

KNIGHTS OF 2018 (PBK) 244PP £6.99 ISBN 97819999642501

From Nessa’s first crash into Demelza’s private retreat, this story accelerates with all the energy of a mad bike race. In the sleepy peninsula of Penfurzy, the visible world is underpinned by magical forces and in times of crisis – they crash. The girls must defeat knights and monsters to save their home and on the way they forge a friendship based on trust, humour and bravery. Look out for the sequel Knights and Bikes: Rebel Bicycle Club. (Age 9–11)

ONJALI Q. RAUF

THE BOY AT THE BACK OF THE CLASS


When Ahmet joins their class, Alexa and his best friends Josie, Tom and Michael set out to befriend him and try to understand why his life seems different from theirs. When they learn he is a refugee and his parents are not allowed to come to the UK with him, they decide to help their new friend with the Greatest Idea in the World! A glorious book celebrating diversity and encouraging empathy. (Age 9–11)
KATIE and KEVIN TSANG

**SAM WU IS NOT AFRAID OF GHOSTS**

EGMONT 2018 (PBK) 205PP £5.99 ISBN 9781405287517

After the Incident That Must Never Be Mentioned Again, Sam Wu has to prove to the school bully that he is not a scaredy cat. No easy task when he is indeed even scared of his own cat Butterbutt. With a gift for talking big and acting small, Sam finds himself the reluctant owner of a large pet snake that impresses his friends but terrifies himself. When the creature escapes, Sam has to dig deep to find his own true courage. This warm-hearted romp embraces friendship, cultural diversity and Chinese food, from congee to lo bak gou. (Age 9–11)

KATHERINE WEBBER

**WING JONES**


Wing Jones is a young woman, growing up in nineties Atlanta. When tragedy strikes, she discovers a talent she didn’t know she had, a talent that allows her to process her grief and frustration, and express herself more freely. Wing’s family relationships are very close and special, particularly the intercultural, intergenerational relationships she shares with her Chinese and Ghanaian grandmothers. The warm, caring family relationships and the complex situation Wing finds herself in on her journey make for a moving and satisfying read. (Age 12–14, YA)

TOMI ADEYEMI

**CHILDREN OF BLOOD AND BONE**

MACMILLAN CHILDREN’S BOOKS 2018 (PBK) 544PP £7.99 ISBN 9781509871353

Zélie remembers when magic was alive and her mother, a Reaper, could harness the power between the living and the dead. But magic is dead and so is her mother, and Zélie’s people are controlled and downtrodden by the royal family and the non-magical ruling class. The West-African inspired world-building is lush and elaborate and brings something new to YA fantasy. (YA)

MUHAMMAD KHAN

**I AM THUNDER**

MACMILLAN CHILDREN’S BOOKS 2018 (PBK) 320PP £7.99 ISBN 9781509874057

Muzna Saleem dreams of being a writer but her controlling parents want her to be a doctor and have strict rules about her behaviour. At her new school, Muzna falls for the charismatic Arif, who encourages her to explore her religion and deepen her faith. But his brother’s views worry her and Muzna finds herself placed in an impossible position. A powerful début about racism and the power of speaking up. (YA)
PATRICE LAWRENCE
ORANGEBOY
HODDER 2016 (PBK) 432PP £7.99 ISBN 9781444927207
Marlon was a good kid: quiet, studious, the type of kid people looked straight through; the exact opposite of his older brother, Andre. All that changes when Sonya breezes into his life and Marlon has to find out who the mysterious Mr Orange is. Orangeboy is a frank and gripping study of teenage gang culture in London’s inner city, seamlessly blending issues of drug abuse, violence and race with grief, loss and family life in the wake of tragedy. (YA)

JASON REYNOLDS illustrated by CHRIS PRIESTLEY
LONG WAY DOWN
This powerful book takes a compelling look at gun violence in the US through the story of Will, whose older brother has just been shot and killed. There are rules surrounding a shooting – no crying, no snitching, get revenge – and it’s time for Will to act out rule three. In a dream-like sequence, Will meets the ghosts of victims of gun violence and must decide if he will continue this cycle. (YA)

ANGIE THOMAS
THE HATE U GIVE
WALKER BOOKS 2017 (PBK) 448PP £7.99 ISBN 9781406372151
Inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement, this is the story of a young woman coming of age in two worlds, the warm yet troubled community she was raised in and that of the largely white private school she attends. When she witnesses her unarmed friend Khalil shot and killed by a police officer, Starr finds herself at a crossroads. Should she remain silent and keep safe as tensions escalate? Or should she speak out against racism and police corruption? An addictive and artful read as well as a necessary one. (YA)

RENÉE WATSON and ELLEN HAGAN
WATCH US RISE
BLOOMSBURY YA 2019 (PBK) 368PP £7.99 ISBN 9781526600868
Chelsea and Jasmine are ‘artivists’. They want to promote social justice through their writing but feel stifled, even at their hyper-liberal New York high school. To make their voices heard, they’ll have to break some rules. Jasmine is an engaging narrator, particularly when describing the slow fallout from a tragic family illness, while Chelsea’s poems perfectly capture the emotion and frustration of a developing teenage writer. Readers who avidly follow American cultural politics will find much here to provoke and inspire. (YA)
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