

reading list

mental wellbeing



secondary school



children's
books
ireland
every child a reader



Children's Books Ireland is the national charity and arts organisation that champions every child's right to develop a love of reading. Our mission at Children's Books Ireland is to inspire a love of reading in children and young people on the island of Ireland, and to champion equitable access for all to excellent books. We share our expertise and enthusiasm with the adults who guide and influence young readers, and encourage schools and early childhood settings to build a positive culture of reading and reading aloud. We support and promote authors and illustrators and connect them with their audiences through our work.

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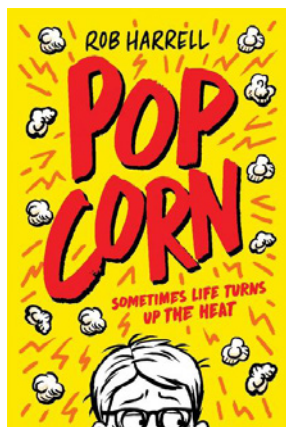
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This guide was published in January 2026.

Each review in this guide comes with a suggested age range. These are based on the information provided by the publisher as well as our own judgement of the level for which the language and content is most suitable. In some cases you may see two or more age ranges e.g. 12–14, 15+. In these cases, we feel that the book is suitable for a wider age span. These age ranges are a guide only – it is impossible to accurately predict the correct level for every child. If in doubt, parents/carers and teachers are advised to read the book themselves before deciding whether it is suitable for the child or young person.



Denotes an Irish author/illustrator/
publisher/údar/maisitheoir/foilsitheoir
as Éirinn

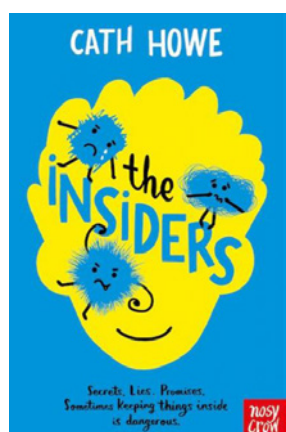


ROB HARRELL

POPCORN

PICCADILLY PRESS 2024 (PBK) 288PP £7.99 ISBN 9781835870877

A witty, heartfelt novel that deals with many difficult subjects with a light touch, viewed through the story of Andrew, who is trying to get through school photo day without messing up. This book looks at anxiety without pathologising it overly. Harrell mixes his prose with cartoons, typography and comic strips, which go deeper into Andrew's experience of anxiety. Tools and coping strategies are looked at, while there is also an acknowledgement that there are no easy answers, there is a satisfying resolution and a lot of kindness. (Age 10–12)



CATH HOWE

THE INSIDERS

NOSY CROW 2022 (PBK) 256PP £7.99 ISBN 978788006125

Callie, Billy and Ted each have their own worries to contend with: Callie experiences peer pressure and the impact of secrets, Billy tries to understand his changing family dynamics, and Ted faces the reality of bullying and changing friendship dynamics. Doing what it says on the tin – Howe focuses on the internal thoughts between the trio showing both how it can be easy to get caught up in one's own thoughts and how important it is not to let them consume you. (Age 10–12)



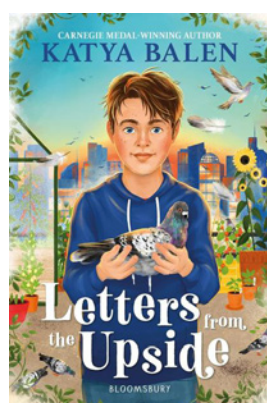
JONNIE PEACOCK illustrated by ASHWIN CHACKO

YOU CAN DO ANYTHING! 🍀

BLOOMSBURY CHILDREN'S BOOKS 2024 (PBK) 240PP £9.99

ISBN 9781526677037

At its heart, this book is all about empowerment. Paralympian Jonnie Peacock takes readers on a journey that encourages them to think about themselves, their future goals and what makes them happy. Divided into easy-to-read chapters, this book helps readers embrace their uniqueness, find their purpose and challenge themselves. Chacko's doodle-style illustrations throughout provide a fun backdrop to Peacock's advice. Written in a friendly, casual style, and although aimed at children, its lessons are valuable for readers of all ages. (Non-fiction, Age 10–12)



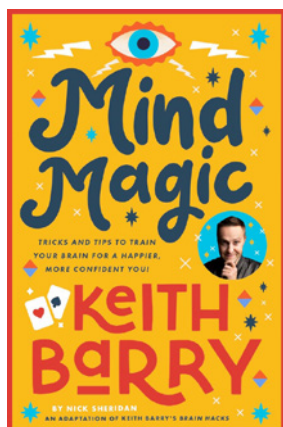
KATYA BALEN

LETTERS FROM THE UPSIDE

BLOOMSBURY CHILDREN'S BOOKS 2025 (HBK) 288PP £12.99

ISBN 9781526663894

Con's dad has left, leaving him consumed by grief and guilt which he struggles to express except as violent anger. Suspended from school, life feels bleak, lonely and claustrophobic, trapped in the tower block that is his home. That is, until his neighbour, Mr Williams, lets him into the secret world at the top of his building. On 'The Upside', where there is space to move, air to breathe and, crucially, this is where Con meets Mr Williams's homing pigeons. Deeply emotive, this is a haunting story of hope, redemption, and the unexpected places we find friendship. (Age 10–12, 12–14)

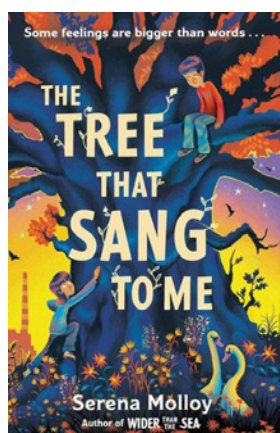


KEITH BARRY adapted by NICK SHERIDAN

MIND MAGIC

GILL BOOKS 2023 (PBK) 224PP €16.99 ISBN 9780717199853

Having confidence in yourself is one of the most important lessons to learn in life, here Irish magician, mentalist and hypnotist Keith Barry demystifies the magic of confidence and self-esteem. Combining a mix of Barry's own life experience, affirmations, visualisations and journaling, this fantastic guide adapted from *Brain Hacks* by Nick Sheridan shows you how to understand and harness the power of your mind. A fun and accessible look at building the power of resilience, this book will appeal widely and encourage readers to embrace their own inner magic. (Non-fiction, Age 10–12, 12–14)

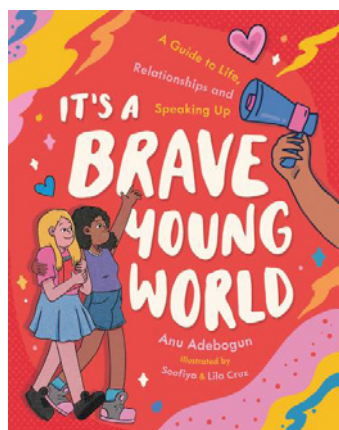


SERENA MOLLOY illustrated by GEORGE ERMOS

THE TREE THAT SANG TO ME

HODDER CHILDREN'S BOOKS 2024 (PBK) 224PP £7.99 ISBN 9781444968439

When Kai's sister Jen leaves home, the repercussions reverberate through the family and are particularly felt by Kai. Feeling adrift without his big sister to help him face the bullies at school, he begins to suffer from trichotillomania, caused by his anxiety. Molloy captures Kai's feelings of loneliness and anxiety perfectly in her concise verse that brings the reader straight to the core of the story – the special love and bond between siblings. With an uplifting ending, Kai's story will remain in your mind for a long time. (Verse novel, Age 10–12, 12–14)



ANU ADEBOGUN illustrated by SOOFIYA and LILA CRUZ

IT'S A BRAVE YOUNG WORLD

LITTLE TIGER 2025 (PBK) 216PP £12.99 ISBN 9781838916404

An absolute treasure trove of information for girls, this book describes itself as a guide but is more akin to an encyclopedia. It covers a myriad of topics, including friendships, crushes, mental health, consent and the impact of social media. Readers can select a topic and work through the text and information, or dip in and out, easily following whatever catches their eye. With UK-based resources included, this book will leave readers feeling informed, confident, and ready to take on the world. (Non-fiction, Age 10–12, 12–14)



ANN-MARIE IRELAND agus FIONNUALA CLOKE
maisithe ag OLIVIA GOLDEN

TABHAIR AIRE DUIT FÉIN

COIS LIFE 2018 (BOG) 80LCH €12.00 ISBN 9781907494727

Tá *Tabhair Aire Duit Féin* bunaithe ar an obair atá déanta chun cuidiú le páistí iad féin a chiúnú agus chun féintuiscint a fhorbairt. Tá cleachtais aireachais ghearra sa leabhar ar féidir a úsáid ó lá go lá – cleachtais shimplí atá oiriúnach don seomra ranga nó do shaol an teaghlaigh. Tá machnaimh shamhlúcháin ann freisin a thabharfaidh an páiste isteach i ndomhan slán a shamhlóidh siad féin. Tá rannóg sa leabhar faoi acmhainní folláine más maith leat spás suaimhnis a chruthú. *Learn to calm your mind through simple mindfulness exercises and meditation.* (Neamhfhicsean, Aois 10–12, 12–14)



SINÉAD MORIARTY

FIXING MUM & DAD

GILL BOOKS 2024 (HBK) 224PP €13.99 ISBN 9780717199891

Quinn's whole life is changing quickly and she's not at all happy about it. Adapting to a new town, dealing with popular kids and trying to stop her parents drifting apart is a lot for a young girl to handle. There is no doubt that this story is sure to resonate with many young people who have watched their family dynamics change, but it refreshingly reinforces the message that, while this kind of change is scary, it can also be a good thing! (Age 10–12, 12–14)

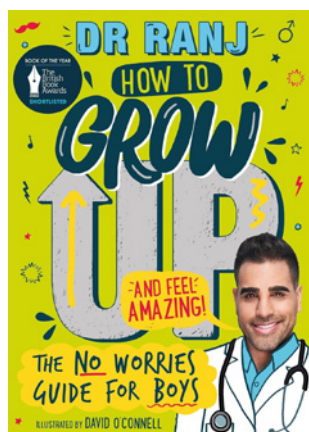


EVE AINSWORTH illustrated by THEO PARISH

JELLYBEAN

BARRINGTON STOKES 2025 (PBK) 80PP £7.99 ISBN 9780008739522

It has been six months since Ellie set foot in school. She hasn't been bullied, isn't struggling with her classwork and has some lovely friends – so why does the thought of school fill her with such anxiety? With help and support from her parents and a therapist, will Ellie be able to get back on track? Inspired by growing numbers of students suffering with Emotional Based School Avoidance post-pandemic, this super-readable book helps readers to relate to Ellie, cheering her on as she battles her anxiety. (Age 12–14)



Dr RANJ illustrated by DAVID O'CONNELL

HOW TO GROW UP AND FEEL AMAZING: THE NO WORRIES GUIDE FOR BOYS

WREN & ROOK 2021 (PBK) 160PP £9.99 ISBN 9781526362957

This book runs the gamut of the challenges, perils and pleasures of life for the average tween or teen, offering support, information and advice to boys about puberty from Dr Ranj. Relationships, bullying, body image, nutrition, the internet and mindfulness are just some of the many topics covered. The lively text is complemented by a cheerful layout that incorporates illustrations by O'Connell. Peppered with pop culture references and a playlist of songs, the book also provides a UK-based resources list and a glossary of terms for further learning. (Non-fiction, Age 12–14)

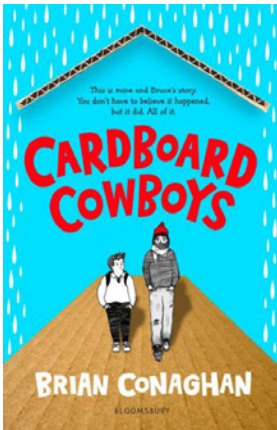


ÁINE UÍ FHOGHLÚ

LABHAIRAMACH.COM

CLÓ IAR-CHONNACHT 2017 (BOG) 122LCH €8.00 ISBN 9781784441722

Pléann an scéal seo le ról na teicneolaíochta i sóisialú daoine óga. Tá deacrachtaí roimh Chiara nuair a leagann sí cos thairseach na scoile, ach nuair a thagann sí abhaile níl sárú aici ar na deacrachtaí sin. Feiceann sí go bhfuil íomhánna gránna di á roinnt agus á bplé ar an suíomh labhairamach.com. Déantar iniúchadh sá scéal ar an tionchar atá ag tromáocht ar líne ar chailín meánscoile mar aon leis an tacaíocht agus an solás a fhaigheann sí ó chairdeas. *Ciara is bullied at secondary school and online before finding an unexpected ally to help.* (Aois 12–14)



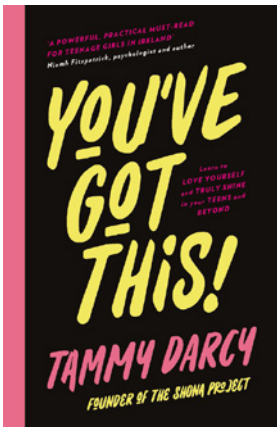
BRIAN CONAGHAN

CARDBOARD COWBOYS

BLOOMSBURY CHILDREN'S BOOKS 2021 (PBK) 352PP £9.99

ISBN 9781526628602

Lenny is having a hard time: his classmates make fun of him because of his weight, and he is struggling with the absence of his brother, Frankie, who his parents refuse to speak about. When Lenny meets Bruce, a homeless man who lives in a cardboard house, he begins to realise his own worth and can start to confront the guilt he feels. Dealing with issues of body image, familial issues, violence and grief, this is an exceptionally rewarding read that will resonate with teens who have experienced similar issues. (Age 12–14, 15+)

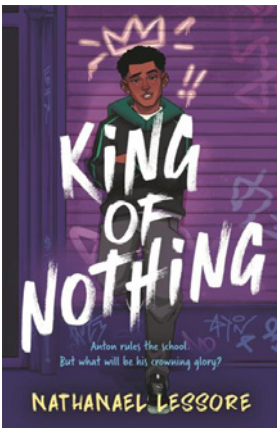


TAMMY DARCY

YOU'VE GOT THIS!

GILL BOOKS 2021 (HBK) 256PP €10.99 ISBN 9780717190447

Created by the founder of The Shona Project, who provide online and in-person safe spaces for girls seeking guidance on the challenges associated with growing up in Ireland, *You've Got This!* is like a best friend in a book guiding you through a variety of growing up experiences. Informative yet conversational, funny yet very real, this is a hugely useful guide divided into sections focusing on your heart, mind, body and world that does its best to be inclusive and reflective of teen life in Ireland. (Non-fiction, Age 12–14, 15+)

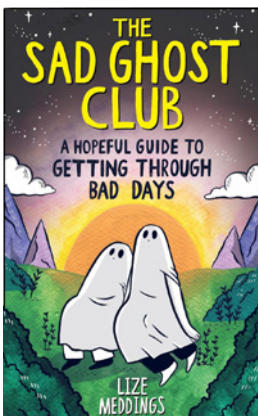


NATHANAEL LESSORE

KING OF NOTHING

HOT KEY 2024 (PBK) 320PP £7.99 ISBN 9781471413247

At school, Anton's friendship group is known for being bullies and he has been trying and failing to catch the attention of the girl he likes. After receiving one too many detentions, his mum forces him to join the local youth club and while this starts out as seemingly the worst solution, working with the youth group starts to grow on Anton causing him to make some unexpected friends. Covering toxic masculinity, exam stress and figuring out the future, this book would be ideal for young people going through similar struggles. (Age 12–14, 15+)



LIZE MEDDINGS

THE SAD GHOST CLUB: A HOPEFUL GUIDE TO GETTING THROUGH BAD DAYS

WREN & ROOK 2025 (PBK) 192PP £12.99 ISBN 9781526367303

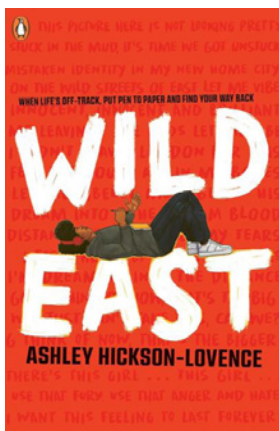
If you've ever felt sad, lost or alone, the Sad Ghost Club creates a space to help Ghosties through the tough times. Originally a four-book graphic novel series, this separate guide is designed to provide encouragement and practical tips on self-care, handling friendships and even being there for someone else experiencing a hard time. Warmly funny black-and-white imagery guides the reader through accepting sadness to seeking help and finding ways to feel better with Meddings expertly cultivating a sense of relatability, belonging and most importantly, hope. (Non-fiction, Age 12–14, 15+)



KATIE HICKS ASTRAL PANIC

FLYING EYE BOOKS 2025 (PBK) 192PP £16.99 ISBN 9781838742089

When Gale meets his new roommate Aiden, he wants to hide away like he always does. But when Aiden struggles to land a job and put together his band's first gig, Gale forces himself to step out of his comfort zone and help a potential friend in need. Hicks uses the page in a fun way, cluttering each panel to show how Gale's anxiety grows. Aesthetically gorgeous, this story shows us that our lives can only be brighter with other people in it if we are brave enough to take a chance and trust ourselves. (Graphic novel, Age 15+)



ASHLEY HICKSON-LOVENCE WILD EAST

PENGUIN 2024 (PBK) 288PP £8.99 ISBN 9780241645444

Ronny's world turns upside down after his best friend is killed and his mum moves him to East Anglia. Ronny initially struggles to navigate his new environment as a Black teenager in a predominately white school. But when a poet-in-residence comes for weekly writing workshops in his school, Ronny is introduced to a new way with words that ignites his love of rapping and music. This is a well-crafted story of self-discovery that will resonate with many young, creative readers. A wonderful ode to the power of words. (Verse novel, Age 15+)



JENNY IRELAND THE BOY NEXT DOOR

PENGUIN 2024 (PBK) 368PP £8.99 ISBN 9780241591888

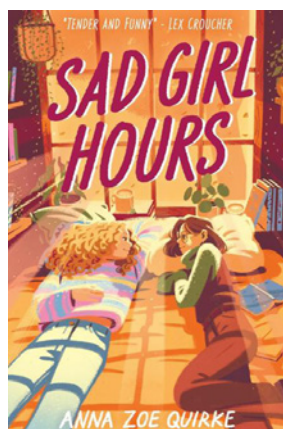
When Molly experiences a dramatic near-fatal illness, her life explodes, bringing her back into contact with her childhood friend Finbar, which becomes the catalyst for huge personal change for both of them. Dealing with themes of family dysfunction, loss, serious illness and poor body image, this is not a 'light' text, though a consistent thread of humour and romance lifts the story into hopefulness. Short chapters alternating between the two protagonists injects steady momentum into this deftly constructed, pacy and absorbing read. (Age 15+)



GRÁINNE O'BRIEN SOLO

LITTLE ISLAND BOOKS 2025 (PBK) 288PP €10.99 ISBN 9781915071798

Music has always been a part of Daisy's life. However, when a shock break-up leaves her reeling, she must come to terms with what it means to be a solo act once again. O'Brien's use of free verse is a creative exploration of the unpredictable and chaotic essence of what it means to be a teenager navigating the tides of love, loss, friendship and anxiety. Winner of the 2025 An Post Irish Book Awards' Teen and YA Book of the Year, this is a powerful novel about starting again. (Verse novel, Age 15+)



ANNA ZOE QUIRKE
SAD GIRL HOURS

LITTLE TIGER 2025 (PBK) 432PP £8.99 ISBN 9781788956949

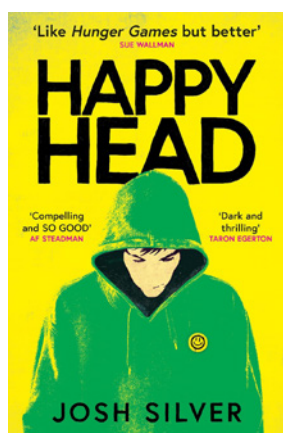
When Nell and Saffron meet, they have an instant connection. Nell is proudly Autistic with a penchant for poetry and the blank page. Meanwhile Saffron is set on becoming the astrophysicist of her dreams. But as the dark months descend, Saffron must make the decision to confide in Nell about her Seasonal Affective Disorder or to weather the storm alone. Tackling issues around chronic illness and mental health, this story is an unabashedly queer and witty book where romance blooms. (Age 15+)



EMMA SHEVAH
MY NAME IS JODIE JONES 🍀

DAVID FICKLING BOOKS 2025 (PBK) 352PP £8.99 ISBN 9781788453516

Jodie Jones is obsessed with words, with sentences, with everything we say and the spaces left by the things we don't. Struggling to cope with her memories of a traumatic experience in childhood and trying to hold the pieces of her broken family together, Jodie feels utterly powerless. With a neurodivergent narrator and dealing with darker themes of mental illness and abuse with sensitivity and empathy, this book is a celebration of individuality and one that you will not want to put down. (Age 15+)



JOSH SILVER
HAPPYHEAD

ROCK THE BOAT 2023 (PBK) 400PP £8.99 ISBN 9780861545537

HappyHead is a camp designed to tackle the unhappiness that is endemic amongst teenagers. Sebastian is one of the lucky few chosen to attend, along with other shy, disengaged, introverted teenagers that are living solitary lives, mainly online. In a *Squid Game*–*Hunger Games* hybrid, the group is encouraged to participate in a series of 'challenges' that escalate in jeopardy and bizarreness until only the successful survive. A very impressive début with a new angle on the well-trodden dystopia path that feels topical and sensitive. (Age 15+)



KEL MENTON
A FIX OF LIGHT 🍀

LITTLE ISLAND BOOKS 2025 (PBK) 288PP €10.99 ISBN 9781915071743

When Hanan took his darkness down to the forest, he didn't expect to return home alive and changed. An ancient magic has resulted in emotions erupting beyond his control. That is, until Hanan meets Pax and finds his curse muted under the boy's touch ... An enlightening excavation of the depths of the human heart, this is a trans romance about trust and survival in the glare of trauma. A strong début best suited to the bookshelves of mature teens due to themes of suicide and self-harm. (Verse novel, Age 16+)



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