

Northern Lights

great reads by Northern Irish artists
for ages 0–18



 Laureate
na nÓg

childrensbooksireland.ie

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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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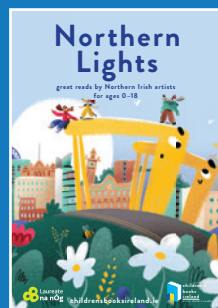
Production: Jenny Murray

Design: fintanwall.com 📷 WallHello

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Is í **Leabhair Pháistí Éireann** an eagraíocht náisiúnta carthanachta agus ealaíne a chosnaíonn agus a chuireann chun cinn an ceart atá ag gach páiste grá don léitheoireacht a fhás agus a fhorbairt. Tá sé mar aidhm againn grá don léitheoireacht a spreagadh i bpáistí agus daoine óga ar oileán na hÉireann agus cás a dhéanamh maidir le leabhair den scoth a sholáthar go cothrom. Roinnimid ár gcuid saineolais agus ár gcuid díograise leis na daoine fásta a threoraíonn na léitheoirí óga agus a théann i bhfeidhm orthu, agus cuirimid ina luí ar scoileanna agus suíomhanna luath-óige gur fiú cultúr dearfach a chothú maidir leis an léitheoireacht agus an léitheoireacht os ard. Tugaimid tacaíocht d'údair agus do mhaísitheoirí, cuirimid chun cinn iad agus nascaimid iad lena lucht léitheoireachta.



Cover illustration
by Mel Carroll from
A Belfast Fairytale.

The O'Brien Press, 2025.

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.

Introduction

Welcome to *Northern Lights*, a reading list that celebrates the children's and young people's writers and illustrators of Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland is unique in having not one but two children's Laureates. It gives us great pleasure to highlight the incredible talent that exists in this part of the island.

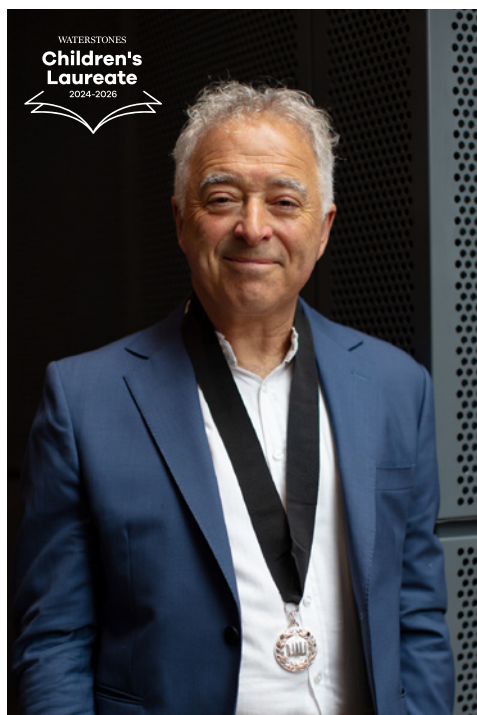
Is mór an pléisiúr dom an liosta seo a chur faoi bhráid an phobail, agus impím oraibh é a úsáid mar threoir chun an chuid is fearr de litríocht do pháistí a thabhairt do na paistí i do shaol.

Reading in childhood is more than a pastime; it is a way of seeing the world, of finding our own voices and learning to listen to others. In the gentle rhythm of a bedtime story or the bright adventure of a new chapter, children discover imagination, courage, and belonging.

How fortunate we are, then, to live in a time when Irish books for children are flourishing as never before. Across Northern Ireland, a crew of gifted writers and illustrators is at work – weaving stories in Irish and in English that sparkle with warmth, wit, and heart. They are creating worlds where young readers can see themselves reflected, and where every page invites curiosity and engagement.

Comhghairdeas leis na scríbhneoirí agus na maisitheoirí ar fad, agus tá muid ag tnúth go mór le tuilleadh dá gcuid oibre a fheiceáil sna míonna agus sna blianta amach romhainn.

Patricia Forde Laureate na nÓg 2023–2026 & **Frank Cottrell-Boyce** Children's Laureate 2024–2026



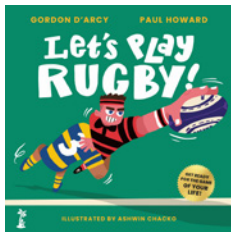


CÁIT agus ANDO NANO AGUS NA DATHANNA

AN tSNÁTHAID MHÓR 2025 (CAIRTCHLÁIR) 30LCH €6.95 ISBN 9781912929399

Is leabhar beag simplí é seo ina bhfeicimid Nano ag fágáil slán ag an bhfaoileán cois cuain sula dtéann sé ag taisteal faoin bhfarraige agus é ag féachaint ar na dathanna geala spleodracha atá ar na créatúir áille faoin uisce. Is breá liom an chaoi nach bhfuil ach focal amháin ar an gcuid is mó de na leathanaigh, rud a chiallaíonn go seasann na léaráidí amach don léitheoir óg. Tá simplíocht álainn ag baint leis an leabhar seo agus leis an tsraith ina iomláine. *Join Nano in a deep sea adventure learning the colours and creatures of the underwater world.* (Aois 0–2)

LÉIGH FREISIN: *Nano agus na hUimhreacha* le Cáit agus Ando

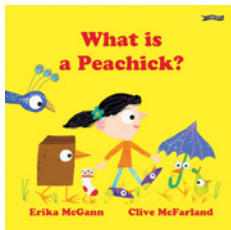


GORDON D'ARCY and PAUL HOWARD illustrated by ASHWIN CHACKO LET'S PLAY RUGBY!

LITTLE ISLAND BOOKS 2025 (PBK) 32PP €11.99 ISBN 9781915071774

This interactive book encourages readers to get up and move, as the book becomes the rugby ball! Chacko's distinctive style enlivens the illustrations, which are practically bouncing off the page. The words are interwoven throughout the bright artwork, acting as a support to lend the story pace as the reader turns the pages. All comes together beautifully as the ball (book) spins, is kicked and, at one stage, gets completely lost in a scrum! Most definitely not a suitable choice for a bedtime story! (Age 2–4)

READ ALSO: *Wild City* by Ashwin Chacko

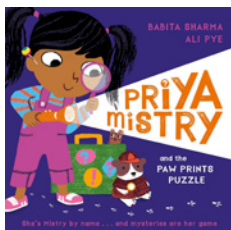


ÉRIKA MCGANN illustrated by CLIVE McFARLAND WHAT IS A PEACHICK?

THE O'BRIEN PRESS 2024 (HBK) 32PP €14.99 ISBN 9781788494571

This zany book does exactly what it says on the (pea) tin! Inquisitively and mischievously, it poses the question 'What is a peachick?'. Using sound logic and clever wordplay, one little girl tries to get to the bottom of it. If peachicks exist then surely celery chicks, cake chicks, shoe chicks and more must exist too? The perfectly topsy-turvy text is accompanied by bright and dynamic illustrations that will keep readers engaged and turning pages as they hunt down the answer. (Age 2–4)

READ ALSO: *Standing On One Leg is Hard* by Erika McGann and Clive McFarland



BABITA SHARMA illustrated by ALI PYE PRIYA MISTRY AND THE PAW PRINTS PUZZLE

ORCHARD BOOKS 2024 (PBK) 32PP £7.99 ISBN 9781408366318

Priya Mistry is your local corner-shop super sleuth, and she's onto something! Join her as she follows the trail of paw-print clues that lead through her parents' shop. What will she find at the other end? Fairies? Dinosaurs? It's a mystery, all right, and she's the girl to crack the case. The illustrations are vibrant and colourful, inviting the reader to peruse them while bringing a sense of childish wonder and excitement to shelves of tinned peas and toilet paper. (Age 2–4)

READ ALSO: *Priya Mistry and the Lost Treasure* by Babita Sharma and Ali Pye



KATHRYN SIMMONDS illustrated by ALISON BROWN
TWENTY BEARS: A COUNTING STORY

BLOOMSBURY CHILDREN'S BOOKS 2025 (PBK) 32PP £7.99 ISBN 9781526671417

What can twenty silly bears teach you about cleaning a house? Looking at the state of the house, it seems very little! But what can twenty silly bears teach you about counting? A lot, in fact! Each bear in this fun picturebook has a number and a task to complete in cleaning the house, many of which end in disaster! The lively coloured illustrations support this story beautifully, drawing the child into page after page of happy chaotic scenes. A hugely fun read. (Age 2–4)

READ ALSO: *Owl Babies* by Martin Waddell and Patrick Benson



JOHNATHAN SUNG
MOON MOON CAN'T SLEEP!

BAD BOOK PRESS MARCH 2026 (HBK) 40PP £14.99 ISBN 9781919273907

Moon Moon, a young wolf boy who usually has no trouble falling asleep anywhere, finds himself restless one evening. The reason for his sleeplessness quickly becomes clear: his beloved teddy, Eddy, is missing. Despite his own fears and uncertainty, Moon Moon bravely ventures into the dark, intimidating forest to find him. Bold and clean-cut, the illustrations provide natural depth to the story. The narrative balances suspense with comfort, creating a story that is engaging, imaginative and soothing for young readers. A playful, visually captivating and emotionally reassuring story. (Age 2–4)

READ ALSO: *The Ballad of Cactus Joe* by Lily Murray and Clive McFarland

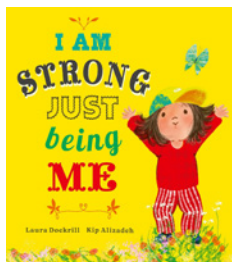


MEL CARROLL
A BELFAST FAIRYTALE

THE O'BRIEN PRESS 2025 (HBK) 32PP €14.99 ISBN 9781788495004

Inspired by the Norse fairy tale *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*, this story gives the original tale a quirky 'Norn Iron' slant. Readers follow three billy goat kids named Fluffy, Duffy and Scruffy, who set out to have a picnic in the Botanic Gardens. Their Da gives them a map to follow, along with a warning to watch out for the grumpy owl troll living under the Albert Bridge. Carroll's illustrations are lively and dynamic throughout as readers are taken on an armchair tour of Belfast city. (Age 2–4, 5–7)

READ ALSO: *The Wild HooBoo* by Barry Falls

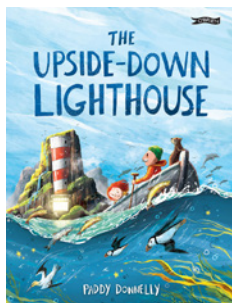


LAURA DOCKRILL illustrated by KIP ALIZADEH
I AM STRONG JUST BEING ME

LITTLE TIGER 2026 (PBK) 32PP £7.99 ISBN 9781838918019

Bean is exploring what it is to be strong and if it is something they want to be. Bean asks their Nanna: 'Can I be strong if I am so small?'. The prose switches seamlessly to Nanna's wise voice as she explains how strong can be standing up for yourself but can also be quiet, learning from your mistakes, asking for help, admitting when you are wrong and giving second chances. A joy from start to finish with beautiful artwork, this book is full of wonder and a celebration of intergenerational relationships. (Age 2–4, 5–7)

READ ALSO: *A Celebration of You* by Josh Funk and Kip Alizadeh



PADDY DONNELLY

THE UPSIDE-DOWN LIGHTHOUSE

THE O'BRIEN PRESS MARCH 2026 (HBK) 32PP €14.99 ISBN 9781788495998

Meara and Grandad are exploring together again, and this might be their most mesmerising adventure to date! The pair are out rowing on a boat on the sea when they decide to follow a bright light shining through the fog. A lighthouse appears as they row closer, but something is amiss, the lighthouse is upside down! Inspired by a real-life location, Rathlin Island on the Causeway Coast, Donnelly has a knack for bringing nature to life in his stories through stunningly atmospheric illustration. (Age 2–4, 5–7)

READ ALSO: *Badger Books* by Paddy Donnelly



OLIVER JEFFERS

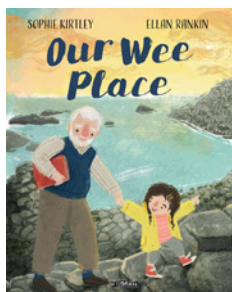
WHERE TO HIDE A STAR

HARPERCOLLINS CHILDREN'S BOOKS 2025 (PBK) 48PP €7.99

ISBN 9780008579753

The boy, the star and the penguin are back for an all-new adventure, with Oliver Jeffers's trademark warmth and themes of connection, friendship and play running throughout. The gang, once again, must travel far and wide to find what they are looking for. With the return of another familiar face, along with the introduction of a new character, Jeffers takes us on a beautifully illustrated journey and helps us to realise that often what we are looking for is right in front of us. (Age 2–4, 5–7)

READ ALSO: *How to Catch a Star* by Oliver Jeffers



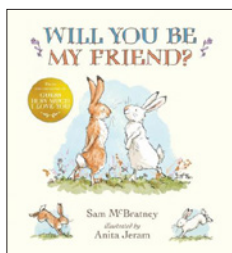
SOPHIE KIRTLEY illustrated by ELLAN RANKIN

OUR WEE PLACE

THE O'BRIEN PRESS 2025 (PBK) 32PP €9.99 ISBN 9781788495141

Our Wee Place is a warm, loving exploration of a grandfather sharing his love for Northern Ireland with his adorable and inquisitive granddaughter. Highlighting their special inter-generational relationship, Emily's granda shares his childhood photographs with her and teaches her about friendship and the beauty of their 'wee place'. Rankin's illustrations are wonderfully textured and evoke the energy and playfulness of the story and characters. The 'wee place' itself is charmingly rendered and showcases the North of Ireland in all of its natural and man-made beauty. (Age 2–4, 5–7)

READ ALSO: *The Secret Elephant* by Ellan Rankin



SAM McBRATNEY illustrated by ANITA JERAM

WILL YOU BE MY FRIEND?

WALKER BOOKS MARCH 2026 (PBK) 32PP €7.99 ISBN 9781406399820

Thirty-two years after *Guess How Much I Love You*, Sam McBratney and Anita Jeram return with this heart-warming sequel, *Will You Be My Friend?*. Little Nutbrown Hare is eager to play, but Big Nutbrown Hare is a bit too busy – as adults sometimes are. Wandering off, Little Nutbrown meets Tipps, a snow hare, and the two become firm friends. This book depicts the anticipation and joy that can be found in making new friends, capturing the essence and importance of play and friendship. (Age 2–4, 5–7)

READ ALSO: *Guess How Much I Love You* by Sam McBratney and Anita Jeram



TOM McCAUGHREN and ERIKA McGann

illustrated by **SHANNON BERGIN**

RUN HOME, LITTLE FOX

THE O'BRIEN PRESS 2025 (HBK) 32PP €14.99 ISBN 9781788496087

This charming coming-of-age story opens with Foxy and his mother sharing dreams and stories of the nearby, yet unexplored Wild Wood, sparking the little cub's determination to explore it and meet its mysterious creatures. With a vibrant colour palette and masterful use of light and shadow, the images capture the lushness of gardens and the depth of the woods. A genuinely lovely story, full of heart and humour, and a celebration of the wild beauty that exists in the most ordinary places. (Age 2–4, 5–7)

READ ALSO: *The Golden Hare* by Paddy Donnelly



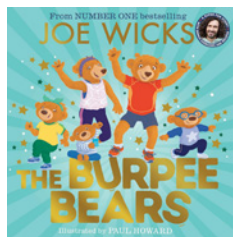
GYASI SHEPPY illustrated by **OLA SNIMSHCHIKOVA**

'BUT DANCING IS FOR GIRLS!'

SWEET CHERRY PUBLISHING 2025 (PBK) 32PP £7.99 ISBN 9781802638011

All Chester wants to do is dance, but he is constantly told that dancing is for girls! So, to achieve his dream of becoming a dancer, he must remain passionate and strong, regardless of what others say. An inclusive and fun story with interesting family characters accompanied by a rhyming text. The illustrations are bright and enticing, their vibrancy adding hugely to the story. A feel-good story about children following their dreams and hobbies even in the face of adversity. (Age 2–4, 5–7)

READ ALSO: *An Unexpected Thing* by Ashling Lindsay



JOE WICKS illustrated by **PAUL HOWARD**

THE BURPEE BEARS

HARPERCOLLINS CHILDREN'S BOOKS 2022 (PBK) 40PP £6.99

ISBN 9780008546557

As the sun rises Daddy bear is wide awake and keen to get the little Burpee Bears up and active! The text is imbued with Joe Wicks' infectious enthusiasm for exercise as Bella, Frankie and Baby Bear stretch, run and jump on their family adventure. Paul Howard's illustrations capture the warmth of family life alongside the zinging feel-good-factor that comes along with exercise endorphins. An inspiring text to get readers moving and grooving, particularly with the wake-up routine included at the end of the story. (Age 2–4, 5–7)

READ ALSO: *The Dressing Up Dad* by Maudie Smith and Paul Howard



DAVID ALMOND aistrithe ag **TADHG Mac DHONNAGÁIN**

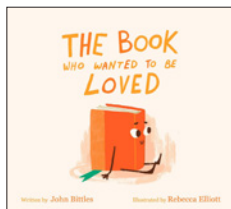
maisithe ag **P.J. LYNCH**

CAOIMHÍN AGUS NA LONTA DUBHA

FUTA FATA 2025 (BOG) 32LCH €10.95 ISBN 9781915684325

Tá luach na timpeallachta agus meas ar an dúlra fite fuaite san athinsint chroíúil seo ar fhinscéal Naomh Caoimhín. Nuair a deir na manaigh gur cheart dó fás suas agus a chuid saoirse a ghéilleadh, éiríonn Caoimhín míshona – go dtí go dtagann dhá lon dubh le nead a thógáil ina lámha. Cruthaíonn na léaráidí atmaisféar álainn agus déanann an téacs an léitheoir a thumadh i stair an scéil in aois na manach. *A heartfelt retelling of the legend of St. Kevin expertly illustrated by former Laureate na nÓg P.J. Lynch.* (Aois 5–7)

READ ALSO: *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* by Robert Frost and P.J. Lynch



JOHN BITTLES illustrated by REBECCA ELLIOTT
THE BOOK WHO WANTED TO BE LOVED

NO ALIBIS PRESS 2023 (PBK) 36PP £8.99 ISBN 9781838108144

Never taken home by a customer, a lonely little book decides to run away – but danger awaits out in the world, where seagulls and dogs have their own ideas about what a book might be used for. Maybe the bookshop is home after all ... This is a heartwarming story about finding a home and realising the love already in one's life. The illustrations, both bright and gentle, help create the cosy and appealing atmosphere, making this a celebration of bookshops, reading and community spaces. (Age 5–7)

READ ALSO: *The Little Street Library* by Amy Adeney and Erin McClean



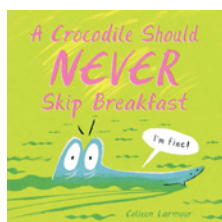
MALACHY DOYLE aistrithe ag MÁIRE ZEPF
 maisithe ag ANDREW WHITSON

MUIREANN AGUS PLUAIS NA bhFOGHLAITHE MARA

AN tSNÁTHAID MHÓR 2024 (BOG) 38LCH €10.00 ISBN 9781912929412

Is cinnte go mbeidh léitheoirí óga iomlán tógtha leis an leabhar pictiúr seo. Tá sé maisithe go hálainn, le dathanna gléineacha ar na léaráidí. Tá Gaeilge bhinn in úsáid nach bhfuil róchasta do léitheoirí níos sine atá ag léamh go neamhspleách, nó do léitheoirí níos óige atá ag léamh le duine fásta. Is scéal é seo faoi chrógacht an chailín bhig, agus is féidir linn uilig foghlaim uaithi. Is beag páiste nach mbainfeadh sult as an eachtra is déanaí seo agus as Muireann agus a cairde ag tógáil an lae arís. *Young Muireann braves a pirate cave as she goes looking for her missing dog. Part of a series.* (Aois 5–7)

LÉIGH FREISIN: *Rita agus an tEachtrán* le Máire Zepf agus Mr Ando



COLLEEN LARMOUR

A CROCODILE SHOULD NEVER SKIP BREAKFAST

KIDS CAN PRESS 2024 (HBK) 32PP \$19.99 ISBN 9781525308345

After waking up late and skipping breakfast, Croc is so hungry at work that he forgets his job is ferrying customers across the river and begins to imagine eating them instead ... Loose watercolours pair the narrative and images well, as the story uses speech bubbles and evocative fonts for Croc's story alongside a more basic serif font representing the narrator, who offers dryly funny commentary. A playful picturebook that stresses the importance of breakfast in an entertaining way. (Age 5–7)

READ ALSO: *This That What* by Katy Ashworth and Colleen Larmour



ASHLING LINDSAY

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE VALLEY

FRANCES LINCOLN CHILDREN'S BOOKS 2024 (PBK) 32PP £7.99 ISBN 9780711291140

Pip lives on his side of the valley, safe in his contentment and not wanting to venture very far from the comfort of home. One day, an unidentifiable leaf drifts into his life and sets him on an adventure outside of his valley. This well-developed and thoughtful fable, with its whimsical, delicate illustrations, will certainly resonate with more reluctant or anxious little ones with its meaningful message of self-belief, bravery and finding fulfilment outside of our comfort zones: all it takes is that first brave step. (Age 5–7)

READ ALSO: *Big Thoughts* by Laura Dockrill and Ashling Lindsay



MARIANNE McSHANE illustrated by JORDI SOLANO
RÓNÁN AND THE MERMAID: A TALE OF OLD IRELAND

WALKER BOOKS 2022 (PBK) 32PP £7.99 ISBN 9781406394320

Rónán and the Mermaid is the tale of a young foundling boy. Writing in the traditional storyteller voice and inspired by the historic Annals of the Four Masters, McShane tells the story of Rónán, saved from drowning by a beautiful mermaid, Líban. Washed up on the shores near Bangor Abbey, Rónán yearns for the haunting music of the mermaid. One day he gets the chance to repay her for saving his life. Gorgeous illustrations are a mix of pencil, watercolour and digital. (Age 5–7)

LÉIGH FREISIN: *Cailín Sinséir Bhéal Feirste* le Marianne McShane agus Mr Ando



JOHN DOUGHERTY illustrated by THOMAS DOCHERTY
THE BEAR-SHAPED HOLE

FRANCES LINCOLN CHILDREN'S BOOKS 2025 (PBK) 40PP £7.99
 ISBN 9780711296602

Gerda bear is close to her older friend Orlo, but when Orlo gets ill and eventually dies, Gerda must learn to cope with her grief. This story explores the sadness we can feel at the idea of losing someone we love, and it shows how life goes on past losing that person. Grief is a big topic in any child's life and must be handled gently, as it is here. A helpful read for a child who has experienced the loss of a loved one after a long illness. (Age 5–7, 8–10)

READ ALSO: *The Hare-Shaped Hole* by John Dougherty and Thomas Docherty



GRÁINNE HOLLAND maisithe ag MORGANA WEEKS
DRAÍOCHT AN DÚLRA

CORCRA MEDIA 2023 (CRUA) 36LCH €18.00 ISBN 9781399971928

Déanann an leabhar ealaíonta ceolmhar seo ceiliúradh, ní hamháin ar an fhiántas agus an nádúr ach ar an fhéilire ársa Gaelach fosta. Is léir ó na hamhráin agus na léaráidí beoga go raibh i bhfad níos mó ná clár ama I gceist leis an fhéilire chéanna agus go raibh saolta ár sinsir fite fuaite leis an dúlra. Má osclaíonn tú an leabhar seo, tá seans maith ann go mbeidh tú féin spreagtha le do chorp agus do chroí a thumadh i lár coille mistiúla. *Celebrate the ancient Irish calendar and immerse yourself in the music of the natural world.* (Aois 5–7, 8–10)

LÉIGH FREISIN: *An Féileacán agus an Rí* le Máire Zepf agus Shona Shirley Macdonald

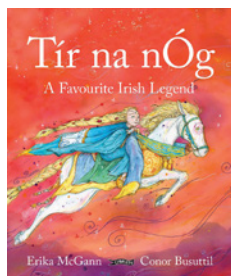


DEREK KEILTY illustrated by MAGDA BROL
IVY NEWT AND THE SWAMP DRAGONS

SCALLYWAG PRESS 2024 (PBK) 176PP £7.99 ISBN 9781915252531

Ivy's foe takes a most unexpected form following a bubble bath gone awry! She must face an enemy with a schoolyard-bully malevolence that is more intimidating than any mythical creature, and does so with bravery and ingenuity, helped by friends old and new. This book opens and closes with scenes of quaintly magical domesticity, which children are sure to find enchanting. While this is the third book in the series, new readers are guided into its world by Brol's illustrations, and it can be easily read as a stand-alone story. (Age 5–7, 8–10)

READ ALSO: *Ivy Newt and the Storm Witch* by Derek Keilty and Magda Brol



ERIKA MCGANN illustrated by CONOR BUSUTTIL
TÍR NA nÓG: A FAVOURITE IRISH LEGEND

THE O'BRIEN PRESS 2025 (HBK) 32PP €14.99 ISBN 9781788495158

A truly special retelling of the popular folktale of Niamh, Oisín and Tír na nÓg, Busuttill and McGann's combination of considerate storytelling and ethereal illustrations signal a rebirth for this well-loved tale. When Oisín joins Niamh in the magical land of Tír na nÓg where no one grows old, the pair create a beautiful life together. But Oisín's human heart soon starts to long for his loved ones and the land of his former life. A rumination on what it means to be human alongside the fragility of life. (Age 5–7, 8–10)

READ ALSO: *Billy Conker's Nature-Spotting Adventure* by Conor Busuttill

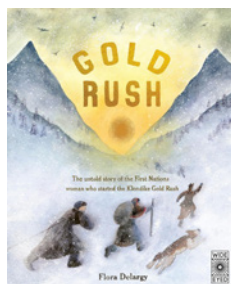


MAGGIE O'FARRELL
 illustrated by **DANIELA JAGLENKA TERRAZZINI**
WHEN THE STAMMER CAME TO STAY

WALKER BOOKS 2024 (HBK) 72PP £14.99 ISBN 9781529504286

Bea and Min are two sisters with a bond like no other. One night, when the sisters are playing a game, Min finds she cannot quite get her words out. Readers follow Min as she navigates life with her new stammer, addressing themes of self-acceptance and resilience. Terrazzini's use of colour and texture in the illustrations captures the emotional journey of the characters, incorporating words into the illustrations presenting the stammer as a visible object Min must confront. O'Farrell's narrative provides comfort and understanding to children who stammer. (Age 8–10)

READ ALSO: *The Boy Who Lost his Spark* by Maggie O'Farrell and Daniela Jaglenka Terrazzini



FLORA DELARGY
GOLD RUSH

WIDE EYED EDITIONS 2024 (HBK) 80PP £16.99 ISBN 9780711263871

This book details the rise and fall of the Klondike gold rush in the Yukon Territory and the First Nations clans who inhabited it, before discussing the effect that the gold rush had on them, drawing attention to the chronic erasure of women throughout history. The illustrations are deeply immersive, and Delargy's flair for creating panoramic scenery and charming characters make them a delightful accompaniment to a truly fascinating part of history. (Non-fiction, Age 8–10, 10–12)

READ ALSO: *Rescuing Titanic* by Flora Delargy

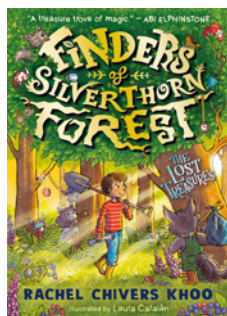


KIT FROST illustrated by AARON CUSHLEY
WHAT CAME FIRST?

RED SHED 2025 (PBK) 32PP £7.99 ISBN 9780008568153

Interactive history is the order of the day in this lively account of what happened and when. Taking the question posed by the title as its starting point, *What Came First?* invites readers to guess the order in which events fall on the history timeline. Facts, figures, topics and timelines are rendered in stunning illustrations that blend classic colour schemes with a wealth of interesting characters. Inductive in approach and informative in content, this book will help readers understand how time passes and the wonders of history. (Non-fiction, Age 8–10, 10–12)

READ ALSO: *How to Survive on the Moon* by Joalda Morancy and Aaron Cushley



RACHEL CHIVERS KHOO illustrated by LAURA CATALÁN
FINDERS OF SILVERTHORN FOREST:
THE LOST TREASURES

WALKER BOOKS 2025 (PBK) 224PP £7.99 ISBN 9781529523805

Seventy years ago, Max's grandmother buried a memory box on the day of a solar eclipse. However, now she's forgotten where she buried it, so it's up to Max to help track it down. Max's hunt takes him into the forest to the home of the Finders of Silverthorn Forest. The Finders are a curious group of creatures, with a golden rule – finders keepers. This is a lovely book, which ties together a fun adventure with a touching story about family, home and the importance of sharing memories. (Age 8–10, 10–12)

READ ALSO: *Finders of Silverthorn Forest: The Faraway Adventure* by Rachel Chivers Khoo and Laura Catalán



DARA McANULTY illustrated by BARRY FALLS
A WILD CHILD'S GUIDE TO NATURE AT NIGHT

MACMILLAN CHILDREN'S BOOKS 2025 (HBK) 64PP £14.99 ISBN 9781035023028

Readers are led through nature at night by way of the garden, woodland, countryside, heathland and sky. Each chapter is introduced with delightful poetic prose about the environment. This charming writing is peppered with information about active conservation projects and some very real warnings about our dwindling natural world. The beautiful, almost photo-realistic illustrations are paired with earthy, papery textures and eye-catching colour schemes, elevated and modern. Another wonderful book from McNulty and Falls that will hopefully ignite the same passion for our environment in its readers. (Non-fiction, Age 8–10, 10–12)

READ ALSO: *Wild Child* by Dara McNulty and Barry Falls

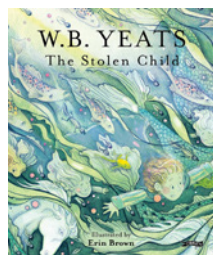


JUDITH McQUOID
GIANT

LITTLE ISLAND BOOKS 2025 (PBK) 224PP €9.99 ISBN 9781915071828

This lovely historical novel takes place over a period of time in the life of the young C.S. Lewis. This is not, however, a biography of the iconic writer – the story is about Davy Caruth, a young Belfast boy who befriends Lewis, known personally to him as Jacks. Davy and Jacks's friendship helps the boys navigate a transitional period when both are dealing with personal challenges. Equally hopeful, magical and heartbreaking, it is truly a poignant and universal tale of growing up and the beauty of friendship and creativity. (Age 8–10, 10–12)

LÉIGH FREISIN: *Tubaiste ar an Titanic* le Máire Zepf agus Olivia Golden

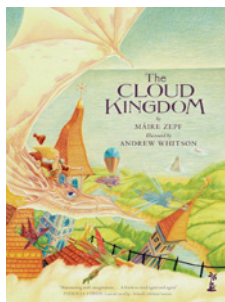


W.B. YEATS illustrated by ERIN BROWN
THE STOLEN CHILD

THE O'BRIEN PRESS 2025 (HBK) 32PP €19.99 ISBN 9781788495172

In *The Stolen Child*, a boy is invited by fairies to forget the sorrows of the human world and to come explore their extraordinary land: with his new companions, the child visits 'the water and the wilds' and dances under the moonlight amongst the forest creatures, never to return home again. Under Brown's pencil imagery, Yeats's well-known poem and the magical inhabitants of Sleuth Wood come alive on the page, creating an immersive reading experience. A magical way to discover or rediscover one of Yeats's most famous poems. (Poetry, Age 8–10, 10–12)

READ ALSO: *Tread Softly* by Nicola Reddy and Erin Brown



MÁIRE ZEPF illustrated by ANDREW WHITSON
THE CLOUD KINGDOM

LITTLE ISLAND BOOKS 2025 (HBK) 80PP €18.99 ISBN 9781915071859

In this beautifully illustrated collection of stories, the reader is taken on a journey from a small town with magical hats to a grand kingdom with a Cloud-Maker. Like Alice falling down the rabbit hole into Wonderland, we follow Nancy as she reads stories to the faeries in her garden. Highly illustrated throughout, all of the individual stories are interlinked and bookended by the opening and closing chapters. Zepf's collection of fairy tales and the vividly colourful and detailed hand-drawn illustrations by Whitson transport the reader to enchanting lands. (Age 8–10, 10–12)

READ ALSO: *Animal Tales from India* by Nikita Gill and Chaaya Prabhat

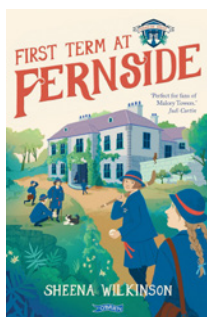


MEGAN HOPKINS
STARMINSTER

HARPERCOLLINS CHILDREN'S BOOKS 2024 (PBK) 288PP £7.99
 ISBN 9780008626891

Escaping a parentally imposed life of solitude in a lonely rhubarb shed, Astrid is thrown into a new life. In London Overhead, the sky city populated by winged 'Librae', Astrid waits for her own wings to appear as she navigates new friendships, a new school and many questions. Hopkins's detailed world-building shines throughout the story, with plenty of space for readers to discover the whimsical cityscape of London Overhead. Hopkins creates an entertaining read populated by a diverse cast that sets the stage well for future books. (Age 10–12)

READ ALSO: *Starminster: The Month of Birthdays* by Megan Hopkins



SHEENA WILKINSON
FIRST TERM AT FERNSIDE

THE O'BRIEN PRESS 2024 (PBK) 288PP €9.99 ISBN 9781788494892

Set in 1925 in Belfast, this adventure takes place at Fernside, an old ivy-covered house, which is an inspirational school that clearly wants the best for its girls. A slow-burn introduction into a world of fascinating characters, the story follows cousins Linnet and Robin, who navigate the school together as two lower-fourth students. With mystery, intrigue, playful pets, netball matches and secret gardens, this story has it all, as the bonds of girlhood and friendship are explored in an uplifting way. (Age 10–12)

READ ALSO: *True Friends at Fernside* by Sheena Wilkinson

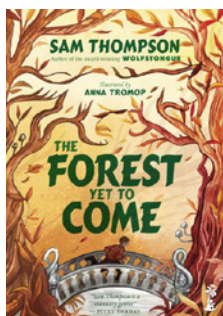


SOPHIE KIRTLEY
THE HAUNTING OF FORTUNE FARM

BLOOMSBURY CHILDREN'S BOOKS 2024 (PBK) 336PP £7.99 ISBN 9781526642783

Edie and her little brother Pip go to stay with their grandmother near Lough Ivarr in Northern Ireland. While happy-go-lucky Pip is thrilled to explore the area, for Edie, the valley is full of happy memories of holidays with their late father. Lough Ivarr is steeped in Viking folklore, and Edie soon discovers a hidden diary with a link to her late father, a local legend and a mysterious new friend that helps her find new depths of courage. A spooky, spine-tingling mystery sure to intrigue young history lovers. (Age 10–12, 12–14)

READ ALSO: *Swanfall* by Sophie Kirtley

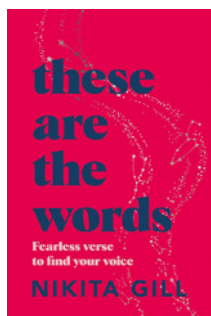


SAM THOMPSON illustrated by **ANNA TROMOP**
THE FOREST YET TO COME

LITTLE ISLAND BOOKS 2024 (PBK) 256PP €11.99 ISBN 9781915071392

Sally and Faolan cannot remember life before they arrived in The Land. Though accepted by the community who live there, Faolan struggles to fit in as the forest and its wolves are calling to him. In this beautifully crafted fantasy tale Thompson explores themes of belonging, family, nature and the power of storytelling. The third book in the Wolfstongue Saga series, *The Forest Yet to Come* also works as a standalone read that will be enjoyed by young fans of the fantasy genre. (Age 10–12, 12–14)

READ ALSO: *Wolfstongue* by Sam Thompson and Anna Tromop



NIKITA GILL

THESE ARE THE WORDS:
FEARLESS VERSE TO FIND YOUR VOICE

MACMILLAN CHILDREN'S BOOKS 2022 (PBK) 192PP £7.99 ISBN 9781529083606

A stunning poetry collection, the warmth of Nikita Gill's free verse poetry takes the reader by the hand guiding them on a journey through the seasons of the soul. From friendship break-ups to arguments at home, heartache to joy, the author encourages the reader to express their own voice – these are the words you need to hear. Intertwined with simple line-drawn images, this is a gorgeous read essential for any teen finding their way in a modern world and accessible to seasoned poets and newcomers alike. (Poetry, Age 12–14, 15+)

READ ALSO: *Fierce Fairytales* by Nikita Gill



STEPHEN DALY

THE LAST DEATH POET

ROCK THE BOAT APRIL 2026 (PBK) 336PP £8.99 ISBN 9781836431350

After Micheal's dad disappears, his mum moves them from London to West Belfast to be with family. His English accent isn't the only thing that sets Michael apart, however, and his strange, disturbing new visions are almost as hard to hide. Thankfully his friend Meg is determined to help him solve the mystery and adapt to his new life. A timely and poignant novel that explores history and identity, Daly's debut deftly weaves serious subjects with a riveting mystery and complex characters. (Age 15+)

READ ALSO: *Dreams* edited by Faerie Press



SUE DIVIN

TRUTH BE TOLD

MACMILLAN CHILDREN'S BOOKS 2022 (PBK) 304PP £7.99 ISBN 9781529040982

Tara is a Catholic living in Derry with her grandmother and mother. Faith is the daughter of strict evangelical Protestants from Armagh, who has been hiding her true sexuality from her family. When Tara and Faith's worlds collide, their striking physical similarities make them realise they are connected in ways they could never have imagined. Set in Northern Ireland in 2019, this gripping story explores themes of sectarianism, religion, politics, sexuality, family bonds, suicide and loss. (Age 15+)

READ ALSO: *Runaway Road* by Sue Divin



JENNY IRELAND

MATCHED UP

PENGUIN 2025 (PBK) 304PP £8.99 ISBN 9780241720950

Lexie is seventeen and football is her life. When she meets Shane, she is blown away by his talent at football and his good looks. The connection between them is electric, but tension between Shane and Lexie's twin brother forces Lexie to hide her romance. But Lexie's not the only one keeping secrets ... With all the ingredients for a thrilling teen romance novel, Ireland also tackles issues facing teen girls playing sport while trying to navigate school and societal pressures. (Age 15+)

READ ALSO: *French Kisses* by Jenny Ireland



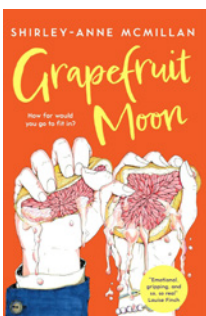
KELLY MCCAUGHRAIN

LITTLE BANG

WALKER BOOKS 2024 (PBK) 304PP £8.99 ISBN 9781406375725

Teenagers Mel and Sid find their lives turned upside down when they learn they are expecting a baby. While facing parental pressures, decisions about life and college, and the judgements of others, they must also navigate the hard-hitting realities of an unplanned pregnancy. Drawing on the events surrounding the 2018 Irish referendum on the eighth amendment, McCaughrain shines a harsh light on the lack of sexual education for teenagers in school systems, opening the space for all to enter and discuss. (Age 15+)

READ ALSO: *Just Another Dead Boy* by Kelly McCaughrain



SHIRLEY-ANNE MCMILLAN

GRAPEFRUIT MOON

LITTLE ISLAND BOOKS 2023 (PBK) 280PP €10.99 ISBN 9781915071422

Drew is a working-class teenager navigating a new elite private school in Belfast. Charlotte, a fellow student, has recently split up with Adam – the most popular boy in the school and the head of an exclusive clique known as the Stewards. The plot driving the novel is a will-they won't-they romance between Drew and Charlotte, as they each embark on a journey of self-discovery. A jam-packed, compulsively readable book that explores masculinity and its impact, from its most toxic to its most nurturing. (Age 15+)

READ ALSO: *Every Sparrow Falling* by Shirley-Anne McMillan



MÁIRE ZEPF

NÓINÍN

COIS LIFE 2019 (BOG) 273LCH €10.00 ISBN 9781907494949

Déanann Zepf ceist na sábháilteachta agus an chairdis ar líne a chíoradh go hógair agus go healaíonta sa saothar saorvéarsaíochta seo. Déantar beirt phríomhcharachtar, Nóinín agus a cara dílis Eimear, a leanúint agus pléitear ceisteanna a bhaineann leis an ré dhigiteach i rith an scéil. Léirítear dhá thaobh an scéil le linn an leabhair, rud a chuireann go mór leis an reacaireacht. Bainfidh idir dhéagóirí agus léitheoirí fásta taitneamh as an leabhar seo go háirithe as an gcur chuige turgnamhach a chuirtear i bhfeidhm lena linn. *This verse novel follows Nóinín and her friend, Eimear, as Nóinín falls in love with a man she meets online – but when she goes to meet him, Nóinín goes missing.* (Aois 15+)

READ ALSO: *A Good Hiding* by Shirley-Anne McMillan



The **National Year of Reading 2026** is a Department for Education initiative, with the National Literacy Trust, as the lead delivery partner of the campaign. A UK-wide campaign designed to help more people rediscover the joy of reading. Reading expands minds, builds confidence and fuels creativity. Yet with more distractions and less time, reading for pleasure is in decline across many groups. The National Year of Reading is here to change that, by connecting with everyday culture – supported and delivered by a group of literacy sector charities, and supported by funders, sponsors and pledge partners to build a legacy that lasts beyond 2026. Inspiring more people to read, visit libraries, connect through stories and develop a lifelong love of reading, in all its forms, The National Year of Reading 2026 will come to life through a diverse calendar of activity. Each moment designed to bring people together, spark imagination and make reading a part of everyday life across the UK.

Find out more information about events and how to get involved at goallin.org.uk/



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