

## Robert Dunbar's top fifty Irish children's novels

Note on those novels without adequate internet references

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### **6. *The Lantern Moon* by Maeve Friel, 1996, Poolbeg Press, 1-85371-676-6**

Life is not easy for children in 1811. Annie Spears is a maid at Dinham house in Ludlow where Lucien Bonaparte is on parole. Her brother, William, makes silk top-hats for the mad hatter in Quality Square, while Libby, her little sister, works as a glove-maker for the despicable Leonard Evans. They have not heard from their father, John, since he was transported to Australia years earlier. When a fire destroys the Spears home and William and Annie are accused of theft, they take to the hills with Sam, the chimney sweep, trying to make their way to the sea along the ancient earthworks of Offa's Dyke. But great danger and deceptions lie ahead . . .

### **7. *Mark Time* by Sam McBratney, 1976, Abelard-Schuman, 0-20072-456-8**

This is an example of 'Ulster troubles' fiction which manages to explore more than mere local tribal differences and, in a particularly strong narrative, to examine the nature of prejudice and fear.

### **17. *Circling the Triangle* by Cruikshank, Margrit, 1991, Poolbeg Press, 1-85371-137-3**

In this exploration of infatuation and first love from a male perspective, Stephen dreams of beautiful Suzanne but is haunted by her twelve-year-old sister, a tale enlivened by his wicked sense of humour.

### **25. *When Stars Stop Spinning* by Mitchell, Jane., 1993, Poolbeg Press, 1-85371-320-1**

Coping with physical disability, the disastrous after-effect of alcohol and joyriding on teenage boys are the central focus of this fine novel which will affect you. Boys can be sensitive and thoughtful.

### **28. *Distant Voices* by Friel, Maeve, 1994, Poolbeg Press, 1-85371-410-0**

In this historical dream tale, the contemporary teenage heroine Ellie is haunted, almost possessed, by the ghost of a handsome Viking boy, Harald. He draws her away from her family in Derry over a real and symbolic border to Donegal, where she must free his tortured spirit.

### **29. *Lightning over Giltspur* by MacRaois, Cormac, 1991, Wolfhound Press, 0-86327-332-7**

In this the third novel in the Giltspur trilogy, it is Hallowe'en, the most menacingly magical time of the year, and the evil Morrigan returns to Giltspur seeking revenge. Niamh and Daire Durkan and their cousin Ronan must face Morrigan but Lofach and an army of Shadow Slaves are ready to attack. Will she succeed in enslaving Niamh? And where is Glasán? There is enough excitement and blood-curdling happenings to satisfy the most jaded imagination.

### **32. *The Hungry Wind* by Lally, Soibhe, Poolbeg Press, 1997, 1-85371-717-7**

The novel is a starkly realistic account of the impact and consequences of the famine on the family of Maeve and Breege from workhouse to Australia. Despite the grief, it is a story of hope and survival of the human spirit.

### **35. *The Door* by Cruikshank, Margrit, Poolbeg Press, 1996, 1-85371-617-0**

Cruikshank's newest teen novel, *The Door* focuses on a group of students who, in a school newspaper, address the issue of sexual politics.

### **39. *Cold Places* by Llywelyn, Morgan, 1995, Poolbeg Press, 1-85371-541-7**

When David McHugh discovers an unexpected talent for finding what he calls 'cold places' - sites that have ancient power - it isn't long until he locates a valuable artefact buried in one of these sites. The find excites his father, a professor of archaeology, who has been encouraging his son to follow in his footsteps. David is pleased to have made his father proud of him, but soon becomes frightened. As his "pull" to cold places becomes stronger, David discovers that these freezing energy vortexes provide a direct link to the Ice Age and he finds himself uncontrollably slipping into the past, terrified of being unable to return to the present. Worse yet, the malevolent ice follows him back to his own time! With his new girlfriend, Molly Doyle, he tries to find a way to stop the influence of the spirit of the ice is having on modern weather. But while he is battling strange forces, he is also struggling to grow up and accept the changes that are taking place in his own life. An exciting fantasy adventure with an undertone of gradually increasing horror.

### **42. *More Than A Match* by O'Sullivan, Mark, 1996, Wolfhound Press, O 86327-496-X**

This is a tense psychological drama of an angry young girl of German parents growing up and learning to accept herself in the hothouse background of provincial middle-class Ireland in the late 1940s.

### **47. *View From A Blind Bridge* by Considine, June, 1992, Poolbeg Press, 1-85371-244-2**

A teenage boy and girl from different Dublin social classes meet through a shared love of horses in this 'mature' handling of adolescent relationships, with interesting sociological elements.