

WIS E-ZINE

Poetry Ireland Writers in Schools

September 2007

editorial / eagarfhocal

Hello and welcome to the first WIS E-zine, from Poetry Ireland's **Writers in Schools Scheme!**



It's the start of another busy academic year here in Poetry Ireland, when hundreds of visits to schools by writers and storytellers will be scheduled all over the country. For those of you who haven't heard of the **Writers in Schools Scheme**, which celebrates its 30th anniversary this year, you can read about this on page 2, and learn how we started, what we do, how to apply for a school visit by a writer and also see some feedback from those who have enjoyed a writer visit to their school.

The winning poems from this year's **Schools Against Racism Poetry Competition** also feature along with photographs of the winners with President Mary McAleese who presented the awards. There will be information over the coming months on the Poetry Ireland web site about next year's competition.

On the subject of the Poetry Ireland website, exciting new changes are underway to the Education section of the site. The WIS web-directory of writers will shortly contain more information about writers and storytellers, photographs, book cover images, and written and audio samples of their works. There will also be a web-forum where children and young people will have the chance to air their views, discuss and make comments about books they're reading, writing, and anything else to do with their experiences of and thoughts on the arts in general. This site will be mediated by Poetry Ireland staff and will only be accessible to registered users.

We're delighted to be able to include poems, *cuid acu as Gaeilge*, by some young poets in this e-zine. Young and aspiring writers can now submit poems and short stories to Poetry Ireland Education and those chosen will appear in future issues of this e-zine. Submissions can be from children and young people of up to 18 years of age. Stories can be as short as you like, but no longer than 1500 words!

I'd like to thank Moira Cardiff for editing this newsletter and David Maybury for the design and layout. We're delighted to announce the appointment of Moira as the new co-ordinator of the Development Education through Literature Project, which you can read all about on page 5, and of David Maybury as Poetry Ireland's Media Resources Officer.

Anna Boner

WIS Development Officer



Poetry Ireland News
Writers in Schools

Edited by
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Chomhairle Ealaíon



**To find out about how to apply
for a WIS visit from a writer to your
school log onto :**
www.poetryireland.ie/education

**‘Education is not the filling of a
pail, but the lighting of a fire’
- William Butler Yeats**

WRITERS IN SCHOOLS Celebrating Thirty Years

Anna Boner

After a recent visit by a writer to a primary school in Tallaght, a child said that it was *the best day of my life*. This child is one of hundreds of thousands who have enjoyed an author or storyteller visit to their school over the last 30 years.

2007 marks the 30th anniversary of the Poetry Ireland **Writers in Schools Scheme**, one of the longest-running arts-in-education programmes in the country. The Scheme, which is funded by the Arts Council/ An Chomhairle Ealaíon, supports visits by writers and storytellers to primary and post-primary schools throughout the Republic of Ireland.

The **Writers in Schools Scheme** has come a long way since it was initiated by the Arts Council/ An Chomhairle Ealaíon in 1977. It began as a pilot project in post-primary schools in Clare, Limerick and North Tipperary. In 1978, it was expanded to post-primary schools throughout the country. Eleven years later it became available to senior classes in primary schools. Talks began with Poetry Ireland in 1994 about the possible transfer of the Scheme, in 1996 Poetry Ireland took over operations, and it was finally opened up to all classes in primary and post-primary schools. Since 1996, Poetry Ireland has supported around 3,500 visits in every corner of the Republic from schools in the Aran Islands to Clear Island to the Inishowen Peninsula.

Because the Scheme is run by Poetry Ireland, the national organisation for poetry in Ireland, schools sometimes assume that there are exclusively poets working on the Scheme. However, there are a huge variety of writers available, working in both English and Irish, from children's writers and dramatists, to storytellers, short story writers, nov-

elists, screenwriters, and writer/illustrators. Some of Ireland's best known storytellers and writers are among the over 250 on the Scheme including CBI/Bisto and Whitbread award winners.

Every visit is different and it's important when inviting a writer or storyteller, that the teacher involved has a chat with them about what they will do on the day. Teachers might like an author to read some of their work, followed by questions from the children. It works best for such sessions if the children are familiar with at least one of the visitor's works. The children may also want to have questions planned in advance. An author might give a talk about how they became a writer and writing in general, or a teacher might prefer a workshop-type session in creative writing, storytelling or drama. In these types of sessions it's better if numbers are kept to a minimum.

There are two types of single visits that schools can apply for. The A-type visit lasts two and a half hours; the present cost to the school is €76, half the writer's fee. Poetry Ireland covers the other half of the fee, plus travel expenses in full. Visits can be divided into separate group sessions for example a visit could consist of three fifty-minute sessions with different class groups. The B-type visit lasts five hours and the cost to the school is €152. The B visit can, if schools wish, take place over a maximum period of two weeks, divided into no more than five dates, with a local writer. Arrangements for B-type visits must be discussed with the WIS Office prior to application. Due to budgetary reasons, schools are entitled to apply for two A-type visits, or one B-type visit per academic year.

In 2000, schools could apply for short-term writer residencies for the first time. The purpose of the **Writers in Schools** residencies is to develop the work already being carried out through the single visits so that the participants can explore the world of the imagination over a longer period of time. Typically these residencies involve a ninety-minute session each week over 8 weeks with one teacher and with the same class or group of not more than 30 students. Funding for these residencies works differently to the single visits as it is three-way, coming from the school, Poetry Ireland, and another local funding agency such as the local Arts Office, Údarás na Gaeltachta etc.

Originally, information about how to organise and apply for a visit, and a list of writers, was available in hardcopy booklet form, and issued to schools upon request. Now, applying for a visit is done via the Poetry Ireland web site: www.poetryireland.ie. This way, information, and the writer directory, is always up to date and immediately accessible to everyone. There are a number of categories under which a teacher can search for the kind of writer they would like, such as genre, age group, session type and county. Alternatively, you to take a look through the entire list of writers.

Contact details for writers can be found on the web-directory. Once a teacher has chosen a writer for a single-visit, they contact them and if the writer is available, they arrange a provisional date. The teacher then completes the application form; this can be done on-line and emailed or it can be downloaded from the site, and posted or faxed to **Writers in Schools**. Application forms must be received at least three weeks before the proposed date of the visit, but it's recom-

mended that schools should get forms in as early as possible, as applications are processed on a first-come first-served basis. When an application has been approved for funding, the school will receive a confirmation letter and evaluation form in the post. If, due to funding limitations, the visit can't be supported, the school will be notified by phone. An application form for residencies can also be downloaded from the site.

Writers and storytellers interested in working on the **Writers in Schools Scheme** are asked to send in details of their work, and any experience they have in a classroom or educational setting. Those fulfilling the literary criteria will be called for interview, and then participate in the **Writers in Schools Mentoring Programme**. The programme is a training and support service, which involves the writer shadowing and receiving feedback and advice from one of a group of mentors, who have extensive experience of working with **Writers in Schools**. Since the initiative began in 2005, twenty-five exciting new names have been added to the WIS web-directory.

Although facts and figures tell us that approximately 3,500 visits have taken place in every county over the last ten years, the real impact of the Scheme is revealed when we hear back from the children and young people, teachers and writers involved.

One of the main aims of the Scheme, particularly through the single visits is to promote and foster reading. One writer said:

*I participate in the **Writers in Schools Scheme**, not only because it helps promote my books, but because the visits help to stimulate the interest of young people in reading and writing... There may be one or two who don't*

read books and because of my visit have started to read a book (for pleasure) for the first time.

After a number of writer visits to a school a teacher observed, *there was a huge increase in the purchase of books by children and parents and use of the local library, and another that there was, less reluctance on the part of some children to read novels.* And finally another remarked, *over the last few years we have seen an improvement in the overall reading standard in our school. I am sure the WIS Scheme like other reading related activities contributes to this improvement.*

The Scheme also seeks to encourage children and young people to write. Some will already be writing away but others discover they have a feel for writing, which they never knew they had before. *You were able to get me to write a poem, which I never thought I could do,* one pupil said following visits by a poet to their school. *Now I'm not afraid to let my imagination grab my pen,* said another.

Another objective of the Scheme is to demystify the celebrity writer so that when the children meet a famous writer they realize they are just ordinary people, and that they could be a writer too. One young person commented after a writer residency, *the experience of being taught by a published author is one that will stick with me for the rest of my life. It was absolutely brilliant and an experience that helped me see what it is that I want to do with my life,* while another remarked, *you opened my eyes to the real writer's world. You showed me and my classmates that we could write our own poems and when we did we had a laugh.*

Finally, a comment from a teacher about a writer residency in their school simply

speaks for itself, and affirms the true value of arts-in-education programmes and what they can achieve: *the self-confidence and self-esteem of these children has developed beyond belief. They realise that they can achieve success.*

- Anna Boner, WIS Development Officer

For more information on the **Writers in Schools Scheme**, go to www.poetryireland.ie/education.

If you'd like to call us for further help or advice about organising a visit and/or choosing a writer, you can contact:

Anna Boner, WIS Development Officer at writersinschools@poetryireland.ie or (01) 4758601

Jane O'Hanlon, Education Officer at education@poetryireland.ie or (01) 4758605/ (087) 9877872

A hardcopy version of this article will appear in the December issue of *Inis*, the magazine of Children's Books Ireland. For more information about how to subscribe to *Inis*, go to www.childrensbooksireland.com



Our News

Schools Against Racism

An Úachtarán, Mary McAleese, presented the winners of the third annual **Schools Against Racism Competition** with their awards in the National Library of Ireland on the 31st May. The winners read their poems and also heard inspirational words of encouragement from President McAleese. Maria Coyle from Eureka Girls' Secondary School, Kells, took the prizes for Senior and Overall Winner, for her poem 'Help'.

Kerri Ward from Assumption Girls' Secondary School, Walkinstown, took the award for Junior Winner with her poem 'Dark Satin'. Guest language prize (French) was presented to Benjamin Burns from Abbey Community College, Boyle, for his poem 'Dans un Rayon de Soleil'.

The competition, run by Poetry Ireland and the National Consultative Committee on Racism & Interculturalism (NCCRI) in association with the Equality Commission of Northern Ireland, has seen around 5,000 entries over the last three years. We hope to develop the competition in a number of ways next year so keep an eye on our website www.poetryireland.ie and www.nccri.ie

HELP!!!

I cry for help "palīdzība!"
But nobody answers because I am Latvian.
"Ajutor!" I cry,
But nobody turns because I am Romanian.
"НОМОЩЬ!" I plead,
But I am ignored because I am Russian.
"Appi!" I scream,
But I am invisible because I am Estonian.
"Help!" I whisper
And my country comes running.

Maria Coyle



Above: Benjamin Burns, President McAleese, Kerri Ward and Maria Coyle at the National Library.



Above: President McAleese, Maria Coyle and Theresa McKenna, English Teacher, Eureka Secondary School

Right: Judges Colette Nic Aodha, Paula Meehan and Jean Philippe Imbert



Our News

Congratulations to Irish academic Emer O'Sullivan whose book *Comparative Children's Literature*, published by Routledge, was the winner of the 2007 Book Award from the Children's Literature Association (ChLA) of the U.S.A. The award is given annually by ChLA 'to the most distinguished scholarly work in the field of children's literature'. Dr. O'Sullivan, Professor of Literature at Leuphana University Luneburg in northern Germany is the first Irish writer to win this award.

There has long been a need for stories for children in Irish on CD. Fourteen such CDs were launched for children 3-10. There is one story on each of 11 CDs and three stories each on the remaining 3. The stories read by Máire Breatnach, Mícheál Ó hUanacháin, Séamus Brett and Gabriel Rosenstock amongst others are enhanced by beautiful music. These CDs are available free of charge from Caitríona Uí Mhuirchheartaigh, Foras na Gaeilge at (01) 6398400. The books accompanying the CDs can be purchased at Siopa Leabhar, 6 Fhearchair, B.Á.C. 2 or Cúpla Focal in Bray or ordered through any bookshop. (An Sicín Beag Búí is a favourite here in Poetry Ireland)

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Subscribe online to **Poetry Ireland Review**, the journal of record for Irish poetry and **Poetry Ireland News**, the best way to keep up to date with the world of poetry in Ireland

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And don't forget a special page of Poetry Ireland News is devoted to information, opinions and breaking news about education matters.

Send submissions to Jane O'Hanlon, Education Officer, Poetry Ireland

E: education@poetryireland.ie

Féile Filíochta

The Féile Filíochta International Poetry Competition is now accepting entries. The competition includes categories for under 17 and under 12 year olds, and there is no entry fee. Poems will be accepted in Irish and English, among a wide range of other languages. For further information click here. The deadline is in mid-November.

To see the Summer Sky
Is Poetry, though never in a Book it lie –
True poems flee –

- Emily Dickinson

The only problem
with Haiku is that you just
get started and then

-Roger McGough

If Galileo had said in verse that the world moved,
the inquisition might have let him alone.

- Thomas Hardy

To have great poets there must be great audiences
too

- Walt Whitman

Development Education Literature Project

WHAT IS IT?

The project involves writers going into the classroom to raise awareness amongst young people about child labour issues and to get them to empathise with the children whose lives are affected by poverty.

Through creative writing, drama and/ or film, students imaginatively explore these themes and what it must be like to live these children's lives. Thanks to help of Irish Aid and Trócaire, some of the **Writers in Schools Scheme's** most experienced writ-

ers who also have a personal interest in these issues, facilitate workshops during an eight-week residency. For further details go to **www.poetryireland.ie/education**

This year's celebration of the work and performances produced by pupils from primary and post-primary schools participating in the project took place once again in the Dunamais Arts Centre, Portlaoise on 14th May. As part of this year's project, Lalita Missal Pradhan of the National Alliance of Women's Organisation

(NAWO, India), visited some of the schools participating in projects and spoke about her organisation and about child labour in India. This is the sixth year that the project has been running and we would like to thank both Irish Aid and Trócaire for their kind support.

The co-ordinator for the project for 2008 is **Moira Cardiff** who can be contacted at Poetry Ireland for schools interested in taking part.

Comments on the Dev-Ed Project

For many deaf children, storytelling comes late into their lives. But when it does – Wow! Do they love it! So the experience of having a real children's author in the classroom helping them create their own stories was tremendous.

The first group, over a period of 6-8 weeks, produced their own book of stories. This led to the class of 11 and 12 year olds to organise their own book launch for their parents and friends.

The second group, the following year wrote a drama, which had the theme of child labour. During its creation the girls learned of the unhappy and unjust lives of other children. They met Suman from India who visited our school. She told them of her work rescuing children from slavery. The play 'The Long Journey Home' became a whole school project and was performed at the end of the school year for family and friends. The girls were inspired to dedicate their play 'to Ashraf and children who have to hide in trees'.

- Mary Steen, St. Mary's School for Deaf Girls, Dublin

A group of pupils discussing passionately why a mother and father might possibly be in such dire circumstances that they would make the heartbreaking decision to 'sell' their children into bonded labour.... Pupils writing hopes and wishes based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on paper planes and taking them to the yard and symbolically sending them flying off to children less fortunate than themselves. These are just two of the many fabulous events I have been lucky enough to witness and participate in as a result of our school's involvement in the Poetry Ireland Writers in Schools Scheme over the past number of years. Pupils in our small inner-city school have produced a film, several short stories, lots of rap songs/poems, and huge amounts of diverse poetry and prose. But on all occasions, the product has not been nearly as important as the process.

For the last number of years, our school has been lucky enough to have had a writer come and work with a class of pupils over a number of sessions. The competence and confidence of the pupils and their willingness to express themselves through prose and poetry and to explore issues of injustice and unequal development is a testament to the success of the project. We consider ourselves fortunate to have been part of such an exciting initiative and hope that our involvement with it will continue into the future.

- Gregor Kerr, Scoil Plás Mhuire, Dublin

Poetry Aloud Spoken Poetry Competition

Over 700 post-primary students from all around the country entered the Poetry Aloud competition held in association with the National Library. Regional heats were held in Killarney, Kilkenny, Tullamore, Monaghan, Ballinasloe, Laois and Dublin. The semi-final and final took place on 11th May and the winners were Niamh Kenneally (Ursuline College, Sligo) Senior and Overall winner, Intermediate was Sarah Giffen (St. Michael's Grammar School, Armagh) and the Junior winner was John King (Belvedere College, Dublin). The judges were Brendan Kennelly, Pat Donlon and Tom McCarthy. Everyone present was moved by the energy, enthusiasm and spirit of the performances. Poetry is alive and well we are pleased to say!



Aongus Ó hAonghusa, Niamh Kenneally and Brendan Kennelly at the National Library



Above: Niamh Kenneally

Left: Pat Donlon, Niamh Kenneally, Tom McCarthy, Sarah Giffen, Aongus Ó hAonghusa, John King and Brendan Kennelly.

Poems

'A Poem begins with a lump in the throat'
Robert Frost

Worst Week

Four o'clock Friday I'm home at last!
time to forget the week that has past!
On Monday at break they stole my ball
And threw it over the playground wall.
On Tuesday morning I came in late
but they were waiting behind the gate.
On Wednesday afternoon in games
they threw mud at me and called me names.
Yesterday they laughed at my test
cause my marks were lower than the rest.
Today they trampled my books on the floor
and I was kept in because I swore.
Four o'clock Friday at last I'm free
and for two whole days they can't get me.

Amanda Roche, 9,
Clondalkin,
Dublin 22

Pig

Pig without tail
Tail without wiggle
Wiggle without a wobble
Wobble without jelly
Jelly without cherry
Cherry without red
Red without ketchup
Ketchup without bacon
Bacon without pig!

Jennifer Hughes,
St Mary's NS,
Castlefin,
Donegal

All the Big Words

All the big words would
mean nothing if there
wasn't small words to
join them together.
Big words and small words
we need them for
almost everything.

Without words we would
be lost, we wouldn't be able to read or
sing the way we want.

Peter Moran, 12,
Ballygar NS,
Co Galway

The Fox Burglar

There is a fox burglar in my local town,
He has stolen my Mum's slippers and her
favourite nightgown,
I have mislaid my school tie and my library
book,
And this is how I know to track down the
crook.

I found traces of brownish-red fur,
Lying on the seat of my Dad's blue tractor,
There are also teeth marks on my socks,
This leads to no other than the sly, clever fox!

I took a quick trip to the local wood,
To find some clues if I could,
Suddenly I noticed a fox's den,
At this stage I felt as weak as a wren.

Nervously I looked inside,
To see if this is where the crook may hide,
Indeed there were our missing things,
Savaged by a sly King!

Mellisa Mooney, 10,
Cloughjordan
Co Tipperary

Save the Hoodie

Save the hoodie, for goodness sake
Did you just feel the earth shake.
Just because we dress differently
Doesn't mean we commit felony.
Let the hoodie be wild and free
Just like it should be.
We're not the ones who commit the crime
But are we the ones doing the time?
We're the ones put to shame.
Is it true, is it some kind of game.
It is the truth
It is no game
That one in two people
Are never the same.

Erin Brennan, 12,
Stonepark NS,
Longford

The Words Under the Stairs

The words under the stairs
Are scared of the outside world
Too scared to give a squeak
Or a sneeze or a hello.

The words under the stairs
Are too scared to be let out
But don't worry or shout
I will take their hands and lead them
Out.

Aoibhin Moore, 10,
Marist Girls' NS,
Carrick-on-Shannon

Filíocht

Le fada tá gá le scéalta do pháistí in nGaeilge ar CD agus lainseáil muid 14 CD i nGaeilge do pháistí idir trí agus deich mbliana le déanaí. Tá scéal amháin ar 11 CD agus trí scéal ar an 3 CD eile. I measc na ndaoine eile, tá Máire Breatnach, Mícheál ó hUanacháin, Séamus Brett agus Gabriel Rosenstock atá ag léamh na scéalta agus tá ceol aláinn le cluisteáil. Tá na CD ar fáil saor in aisce ó Catriona Uí Mhuircheartaigh, Foras na Gaeilge ag (01) 6398400. Is feidir na leabhra a théann leis an CD a cheannacht ón Siopa Leabhar, 6 Sráid Fhearchair, B.Á.C. 2 nó ó Cúpla Focal i mBré agus is feidir iad a órdu freisin trí aon siopa leabhar. (Is é scéal An Sicín Beag Buí rogha na coitiantachta linn in Éigse Éireann.)

An Nóinín Dubh

An nóinín dubh
i measc na nóiníní bána
ag cromadh a chinn le brón.

Leis féin atá sé
agus a bheidh go deo
gan fáth, gan reasún, gan grá.

De bharr a dhath a fhágtar é
leis féin sa ló is oíche
sín do lámh is croch leat é.

Níl ann ach nóinín dubh.

Lisa Ní Thuathail
Coláiste na Coiribe
Galway

Is Cuma Linn

Fadó, fadó
Bhí Gaeilge i mbláth
Imithe anois ach cén fáth?
Níor tháinig crith talún nó tornado
‘gus ní raibh aon muirbhrucht nó bolcán.

Chun an fhírinne a rá
Is cuma linn de gnáth
Nach bhfuil sé sin áiféiseach
Ach níl sí cailte go deo
Tá sí fós saghas beo
Mar bíonn daoine á labhairt í le grá

Bíodh náire orainn
Níl an trua again
D’ár teanga ár ndúchas isár dtír
Tá siad i mbaol gan dóchas sa saol
Agus is cuma linn.

Claire Evans
Presentation Secondary
School, Kilkenny

Dialinn

Dé Luain –
Tá pian i mo bholg
Tá tinneas cinn orm
Níl mé ag iarraidh dul ar scoil
Cad a dhéanfaidh siad inniu?

Dé Máirt –
Chaith siad mo lón síos an leithreas
Bhuail siad san aghaidh mé
Dúirt mé le mo Dhaid gur thit mé
Cén fáth nach ligeann siad dom?

Dé Céadaoin –
D’íth mé mo lón sa leithreas inniu
Ceapairí salami – na cinn is fearr liom
Nuair a tháinig mé amach
Bhí siad ansin – ag fanacht orm

Déardaoin –
Sheas mé i gcúinne an chlóis
Im aonair – i gcónaí im aonair
Cén fáth go bpiocann siad ormsa?
Ní mise an t-aon duine nár rugadh anseo

Dé hAoine –
Lá amháin eile
Sin an méid
Ní ghéillfidh mé do na deora
Ní go dtí anocht is mé liom féin

Dé Sathairn –
Saoirse
Táim saor uathu
Ní gá dom a bheith buartha
Dhá lá iomlán saor

Dé Domhnaigh –
Imíonn an t-am ró-thapaidh
An ndéanfaidh mé rith?
An rachaidh mé i bhfolach?
Cad a dhéanfaidh siad amárach?

Séan Mac Dhonnagáin, 14