

Write Club Members (13-17 year olds) write about their favourite books.

The following pieces were published in *The Book List No.1 – Must Reads for Teenagers* published with *The Irish Times* on Saturday, November 26, 2011.

Eimear Duff (17)

The Bell Jar

by Sylvia Plath

From the shadowy depths of Plath's psyche shimmers a breathtaking semi-autobiographical novel. *The Bell Jar* documents young Esther Greenwood's desperate internal battle for the sovereignty of her mind during an uncontrollable downward spiral.

Incongruously, she is outwardly perfect: a successful, ravishing and talented academic. Beneath the glossy surface of the "Bell Jar", however, is tormented soul: constricted and suffocating in a conservative era.

The novel's confessional style is a hallmark of this meticulous American writer and poet. The deeply honest writing style of Plath facilitates so intimate a connection with the reader that we imagine ourselves her sole confidant, and can strongly identify with different aspects of her behaviour. The sobriety of the subject matter is alleviated by dark humour, yet offers insight into the complex nature of mental illness. Her thoughts are plagued by rigidity: controlled by unyielding emotional neutrality, dulled by unfading numbness. Habitual self-critical

introspection makes it difficult to pry open the stiff jaws of her blinkered vision. Ultimately, the protagonist oscillates in a non-committal, transient stage of recovery.

I was simultaneously disturbed and fascinated by this unique work. To cite from this refulgent masterpiece, it rendered me 'blinking and wide-eyed as a myopic owl'.

Emily Holmes (12)

Running in heels

By Helen Bailey

Daisy Davenport has everything she could possibly want, and more. She is used to specially tailored uniforms and Louboutins, not cheap Asda skirts and old shoes.

So when her Dad is sent to jail for corruption she has to adjust to their family's new lifestyle very quickly. They have to leave their luxury mansion to live above a kebab shop, and she has to leave her beautiful private school and go to a school where she could possibly be eaten alive by the students.

Nobody at Bensham high wants to talk or look at Daisy, and when they do, it's just to taunt her about being a spoilt rich girl. So when her old friends ignore her and everything is in tatters, the only person it seems she can turn to is herself. I thought that this book was a great and fantastic read, and would highly recommend it. I thought it was brilliant and can't wait for the sequel. I

just wish that it had been a bit longer than it was. I thought the ending was great and the characters were good.

Eoin Moore (17)

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy
by Douglas Adams

Existing as a radio play, multiple television series and a film adaption, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* saga exists in mediums as strange and varied as the universe it is set in. It is often considered to be the late Douglas Adams' finest work, and is unlike any other book series in its genre. The so-called Trilogy of Five follows the life of Arthur Dent, a perfectly normal human who is placed in extremely abnormal situations after his house and planet are destroyed by a group of evil galaxy-roaming contractors. The book carries the rarely seen description of sci-fi/satire, and its true merit has little to do with its plot and more to do with the anecdotes that come up in between the storylines. Every strange alien race and ludicrous philosophically challenging situation is a commentary on human life. Aside from this, the few core characters are interesting and well established, the plot really gives the reader a feeling of how terrifyingly large and varied is the universe we live in and the narration has a deadpan charm that makes every page an enjoyable read. There are few books that I've read in my life that have made me laugh out loud while reading them – this is one of them.

Jennifer Aust (15)

Anna and the French Kiss

By Stephanie Perkins

At first glance, it could be dismissed by many as simply a light, clichéd, romantic story about an American girl called Anna in Paris. Yes, many elements of these negatively interpreted adjectives are true, but the story has so much more meaning than that.

The characters have such a brilliant mix of personality, madness and wit. They're so well written, as relatable and flawed people, that they give a rational honesty to the intense emotions that run through the novel. Etienne St. Clair, the love interest of the main character, has a fantastic mixing pot of wildly attractive nationalities yet is the most fleshed-out male character I've ever read in a book from a female's perspective. Both Anna, and the author herself have analysed and imagined him so complexly.

This book is gorgeous, full of charm and hilarity. It's so atmospheric, and Paris is almost a character of its own. It doesn't feel like you're reading the story, it feels like you're living in it.

Siúbhan O'Donnell (15)

The House at Riverton

Kate Morton

I decided to read it only because I could not find Morton's other book, *The Forgotten Garden*. This book would be found in most bookshops under Adult Fiction, but is an ideal book for any teenager with an interest in reading. This fantastic book is based on the mystery of a young poet who took his life in the 1920s. With only two witnesses, Emeline and Hannah Hartford, who will never disclose the happenings of that fateful evening, the truth about his suicide remains a mystery.

In 1999 an old woman, Grace Bradley, once a maid at Riverton Manor, is visited by a young director making a film about the suicide. As Grace recollects her time at Riverton, a shocking secret begins to emerge.

Kate Morton's skillful writing keeps us on the edge of our seats on every page, and we are eager to reach the end; but when you do you will be left with an inconsolable sadness and the need to read it again and again. This book deserves to be read by everybody and I guarantee that anyone who does will fall head over heels in love with it.

Cian Nugent McGealy (14)

The Spook's Apprentice

Joseph Delaney

The *Spook's Apprentice* is without a doubt, as of five years ago, my favourite book. Having read it at the age of nine I essentially grew up with it, the further instalments of the series, and of course their main character, Tom Ward. It is, in my opinion, fairly well-written and is extremely imaginative; when reading it, I felt as though I was watching Tom from outside the window or behind a tree, as though I myself, was part of the story. Author Joseph Delaney really does take us on a journey which a young reader will not forget for years to come. The personalities of the characters I felt were well painted, and every time it left my hands I felt as though I was losing numerous friends. So although some will not proclaim it a masterpiece, I hope that their respect for it grows.

Jennifer Keating (15)

The Hunger Games

by Suzanne Collins

Passion. Blood. Excitement. Drama. Survival. Death. It's that time of year again, folks. The 74th Annual Hunger Games are upon us. The tributes have been chosen, the arena is prepared; get ready to watch their fervent, thrilling, bloody fight to the death.

But remember, only one can be victorious. Who are you betting on? Will it be the strong and surly Thresh? Or could the “girl on fire” Katniss be your champion? Don’t count out small but speedy Rue. It’s all to play for in the arena. Twenty-four go in; only one can come out alive. Blazing fires, venomous bees, weapons sharp and plenty. So sit tight and watch with nail biting tension as we find out who the survivor is amongst them all. May the odds be ever in your favour.

An exhilarating book to be enjoyed by teens and adults alike.