

Cinders

magazine

VOLUME ONE ISSUE FOUR

Incredible Inspirations

EMMA SWAN * WONDER WOMAN * FEMINISM



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Hi Everyone,

Welcome to issue four of *Cinders*! This issue we're focussing on inspirations big and small. From the ladies who were our inspirations onscreen to the book characters who kept us going on our days off.

We look back on the characters who made us move forward and helped us on days that were hard. We focus on characters from Letty Ortiz to Hermione Granger 20 years on from her first appearance in *Harry Potter*.

We also look at the power of writing in mental health in an interview with Meg Grehan, and get the opportunity to chat about what it's like to be a world chess champion with Diana Mirza.

We indulge our creative sides by getting an intro to cross-stitch from Roisin McNally, and we speak to musician Sinead Murphy about her approach to songwriting.

Since the publication of the last issue there have been an unnecessary amount of tragedies in our world. We don't have answers for any of that. We wish we did.

We turn to art and music and stories when we feel alone in the world. We turn to them to empower us when we feel useless, and to experience life in someone else's shoes. We look for a little bit of hope inside them. So we will keep on championing art and music and culture here in *Cinders*.

Grainne Coyne's powerful piece on why we need *Wonder Woman* illustrates this so well. The world needs more Wonder Women.

We wish that our younger selves could have had her to aspire to. I know I wish I was like her now.

Méabh



Cover Image by Allef Vinicius courtesy of unsplash.com

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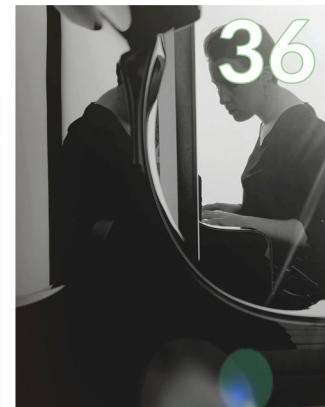
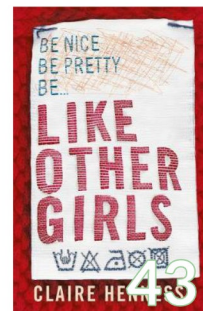
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Cinders says...

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WE'RE LISTENING TO...

Music has been the order of the day this month at *Cinders*. We've been doing a lot of travelling so good tunes on our playlist has never been so important, check out some of our favourite listens.

Sam Beam and Jessa Hoop - Love Letter for Fire

If duets are your thing then you should definitely check out Love Letter for Fire. A collaboration between Sam Beam (Iron and Wine) and Jessa Hoop, Love Letter for Fire has been on my playlist this month. An album filled with dreamy love songs and haunting harmonies between Beam and Hoop makes for perfect evening time listening. The whole album is saturated in love and longing. As you might expect from Beam the quiet guitar strands take you happily through the album. A soft and contemplative record, it's perfect for when you're a mood to hear some love stories. Particular highlights are the playful Kiss me Quick and soulful One Way to Pray will be on multiple plays for the rest of your weekend.



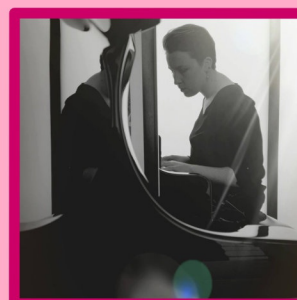
The Coronas - Trust the Wire

Irish kings of rock harmonies, The Coronas, released their latest album in May. And we've been listening to it ever since. The album is happily melodic with catchy lyrics. If you're looking for some good storytelling but aiming for more depth than Ed Sheeran, then Trust the Wire is well worth a listen. The album, written over a solitary stint in a Dingle is arguably the most adventurous from the Dublin based band. As usual the songs are full of atmosphere and will make you hard pressed to hold back singing along while driving in the car. There's a joy to numbers like Who We Are and a rhythmic dancing feeling to Real Feel.



Sinead Murphy

Sinead Murphy is an up and coming singer-songwriter born in Galway, who studied music in Cork School of Music. Sinead has a soulful, magnetic sound that drags you in and holds on to your heartstrings. Her lovely guitar and piano work adds a quiet depth to her songs, and makes them linger in your ears long after you've listened. This girl is one to watch. You can find her at @ShinMusic on Facebook where you can listen to her gorgeous originals. Check out our interview with Sinead on page 28!



WE'RE WATCHING...



Orange is the New Black

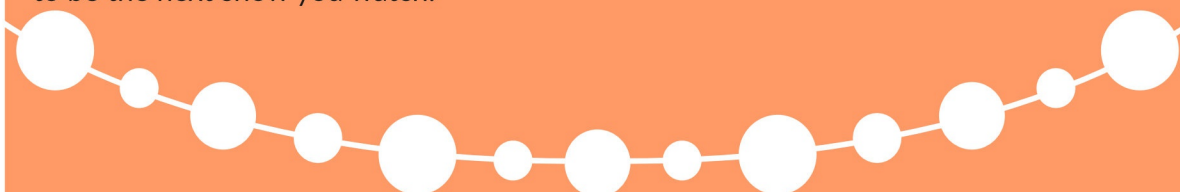
One of our absolute favourites *Orange is the New Black* returned this week! Fair warning - spoilers below for series four if you haven't watched yet! We have been trying to hold ourselves back from binging, but if ever there was a show that begs to be eaten in one go it's *OITNB*. We were dying to dive back in after the insane cliff hanger we were left on last year. The tragic ending of last season is still hanging over Litchfield as we dive back into series five. This season's episodes take place in real time - following the three days following Poussey's tragic and unnecessary death (still not over it). Series five follows the inmates in their different groups and pairings and examines how they are coming to terms with this tragedy at their door. Jenji Kohen's show maintains its usual blend of heartache-y drama, humour and social commentary for the fifth year and we are so on board for it!

Doctor Who

Doctor Who is in the midst of its new season and everyone - we mean everyone - is raving about new companion Pearl Mackie - she honestly might be our favourite so far! Pearl Mackie's Bill is teamed up with Peter Capaldi's 12th Doctor in a season where he seems to be 'feeling his age' to put it nicely. It's been a while since we've seen the Doctor quite so vulnerable and cantankerous, which is why Bill's fresh faced optimism is the perfect foil for him. As a character who has settled very nicely into the role of companion, Pearl Mackie manages to sell Bill's uncertainty about the Doctor and her happiness at being a companion in equal measures. The two become one of the best teams we've seen inside the Tardis - and make this season a very enjoyable watch.

Dear White People

Everyone should watch *Dear White People*. I mean everyone. The show - adapted from the movie of the same name - debuted on Netflix a few months ago. Told from multiple perspectives the story tells us about black students' lives in a fictional Ivy League university. *Dear White People* is a show that goes from interesting to necessary in the way that it illustrates the importance of the Black Lives Matter movement. However *Dear White People* doesn't merely succeed because it's a show with a 'cause'. It succeeds because of its use of humour and human drama to tell the stories of these students. Because of the show's format we get multiple different windows into their world. We are educated about the vastly different upbringings and experiences they have had but are also shown how they are united. We're not doing it justice here. *Dear White People* needs to be the next show you watch.



WE'RE GOING TO SEE...



Wonder Woman

Girl - have you seen *Wonder Woman*? Who are we kidding? Of course you've seen *Wonder Woman*. You should go and see it again! We had high expectations of Diana Prince's first foray onto the big screen, but we couldn't have prepared ourselves for just how joyful the newest installment into the DCEU would be. There's something about being able to cheer on a female character when she demolishes a clock tower that we just haven't gotten in cinema all that often. (It's been a long time since Ripley took out the xenomorph). It's rare that the female character in a comic book franchise gets to stand on her own two feet like Diana is allowed to. She literally holds up the movie. Now if superheroes aren't your thing - *Wonder Woman* might not be either. And despite the feminist utopia that is Themyscira (Robin Wright!), after Diana leaves she has very little interaction with other women. But it is a movie filled with joy and power and we will definitely be going to see it again.

The Red Turtle

I have very few words that will do *The Red Turtle* justice. It is, in short, the most beautiful film I've seen since I watched *Spirited Away* for the first time. *The Red Turtle* was released this time last year in Cannes but took 12 months to be released in Ireland. But boy was it worth the wait. The gorgeous gem of a movie was written and directed by Michael Duduc DeWitt and produced by Studio Ghibli. It tells the story of a man who is stranded on a mysterious island, and the twists and turns his life takes from there. Any more information would be spoiling it. The film has almost no dialogue, save for a few shouted 'Hey's, and it's all the better for it. The animation is frankly gorgeous with minimal detail on the characters, the backgrounds absolutely sing. Despite having little to no speaking the film manages to create multiple moments of believable tension and will keep you hooked from the start. It's moving, funny, romantic and life affirming. *The Red Turtle* is a piece of art and I strongly recommend you experience it.



Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2

We got to see the team with the best music taste reunite for what - at the time- we thought would be the best superhero movie of the year. The guardians are back and -happily- they're not entirely reformed from their criminal ways. Throw in some gold aliens trying to kill them, some very big daddy issues and the best *Mary Poppins* reference we've heard in quite some time and you've got a very fun, colourful piece of Sci-fi. We get introduced to fun new characters, Mantis and the scene stealing Baby Groot. However, for our money, it's Zoe Saldana's Gamora and Karen Gillen's Nebula who have the best story. The two sisters bicker and fight and show just how much of a bad idea it is to mess with either one of them. Removing the competitiveness between them is a brilliant move as we've seen enough storylines where women are pitted against one another. *Guardian's 2* is a movie that revels in fun and shows that it has the 'ensemble' genre nailed much better than other aspects of the MCU. The soundtrack is pretty brilliant too. Groot grooving to Mr Blue Sky is always a win for us.



WE'RE READING...

Check out our book reviews on page 43 for our verdict on Claire Hennessy's *Like Other Girls* - but for a quick scan here are some of the books that we were glued to while prepping this issue!

Nora and Kettle by Lauren Nicolle Taylor

Nora and Kettle is a novel I stumbled upon while reading recommendations for fairytale fantasy online. After purchasing the book, I binged the whole story in one morning. The compelling little novel is a re-telling of Peter Pan but from a very different perspective. Set in 1950s New York in the aftermath of WWII our 'Peter' is a Japanese-American runaway, nicknamed Kettle, who is terrified of having his band of lost children (other Japanese runaways) discovered and re-homed. Nora is our 'Wendy', the daughter of a wealthy public defender, she has much more reason than a lust for adventure to want to leave home. She is trapped in an incredibly abusive home where she has no protection. Her only reason for staying is her constant defence of her younger sister. The scenes of domestic violence are vivid and claustrophobic and make the book worth reading. The portrayal of the discrimination against the Japanese characters is ever present and uncomfortable too. Even though Nora and Kettle take a long time to meet, and the climax comes together a bit too quickly, the novel is a fascinating re-imaging of a period of time in America that is often forgotten and is well worth a read.

The Accident Season by Moira Fowley Doyle

I picked up *The Accident Season* in preparation for Moira Fowley Doyle's release of *The Spellbook of the Lost and Found* (out now). And I was blown away by the impactful little novel. If magical realism is your thing - then you can't go far wrong with this. Set in the West of Ireland it tells the story of a family who are subject to 'The Accident Season' every October. Each year they are forced to avoid dangerous scenarios that have led to death in the past. Corners are covered up, stairs are avoided, pain is had. Fowley Doyle mines a lovely story of teenage love and loss around the simple premise. The characters all read like apparitions out of a dream but it suits the story well. There is a magic in these pages that burrows deep. With dark frightening secrets buried in their past the threads of the family start to come undone as they build towards the height of *The Accident Season*. As we read and peel back the layers of fantasy and story we see the power of believing in magic for these characters as a hindrance and a help. An enchanting novel that will keep you looking for magic in unexpected places.

Flame in the Mist by Renée Ahdieh

Flame in the Mist is the eagerly anticipated opening novel in a new series by Renée Ahdieh (*The Wrath and the Dawn*.) Set in feudal Japan, the story was marketed as a 'reimagining of Mulan' (even though Mulan is Chinese) -and it does hit some familiar story beats, but not many. The most glaring similarity is that main character Mariko decides to dress as a boy for the majority of the story. After a failed attempt on her life intelligent Mariko walks away from her planned betrothal to the emperor's son and dresses as boy in order to get her revenge. Her quick thinking and knack for inventions help her infiltrate the Black Clan - a dangerous group of mercenaries. Against the odds, Mariko is welcomed among them although she faces the usual problems that girls who dress as boys in stories tend to. Although this is a well worn trope, *Flame in the Mist* is still fun and compelling. It's not quite as good as *The Wrath and the Dawn*, but still a fun weekend read.



WHY WE NEED WONDER WOMAN

Our remit in *Cinders* is to entertain, educate and empower. We love female led projects in all of these forms. That was why we were so disappointed to see the reaction to the 'female only' screenings of *Wonder Woman*. This got co-editor Grainne Coyne thinking about the outrages that come with being a girl in today's society and why films like *Wonder Woman* are so important to help us fight back.

IMAGINE you're eight years old and it's summer time, and while you should be thinking about a million different things, instead you're inside watching *Batman* or *Superman*, with your little brother. You're not admitting to him or others how much you love it, because superheroes are for "boys".

Fast forward to 15 where the few superhero franchises that were on screen then didn't contain many female characters who weren't damsels in distress.

Then, finally at 21, you move out, you set yourself up for the big, bad world and sort of grow up. Except growing up means facing more realities of the world, where you know deep down inside that you're a feminist, but are even more scared to admit it out loud.

Then at 27, as if you needed a big reminder that you're a "woman" in a male society, you find yourself standing on the Luas, minding your own business, when you realise that you're being subtly being groped by the man in a business suit beside you. Said man looks at least twice your age. You jump, he moves away and you pretend it didn't happen as if you're the guilty party?

Trust me, nothing makes you feel more powerless than being in a situation like that. It stays with you for weeks, which sucks even more: because you need to get the Luas, for your day to day life.

I have had other experiences similar to that before unfortunately, but I included the last one because: not only does it show that: 1) Even on a packed Luas listening to Miley Cyrus you're not "safe" from being sexually assaulted. 2) It also shows that on the scale of things women have to worry about in their day to day life, 'female only' screenings of *Wonder Woman* are not one of them.

"YOU FIND YOURSELF STANDING ON THE LUAS, MINDING YOUR OWN BUSINESS, WHEN YOU REALISE THAT YOU'RE BEING SUBTLY BEING GROPED BY THE MAN IN A BUSINESS SUIT BESIDE YOU. "



"I WANT AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE TO SEE WONDER WOMAN BECAUSE IT NEEDS TO DO WELL. IF IT DOESN'T THEN BIG EXECS WILL USE IT AS AN EXAMPLE WHY THERE SHOULD BE NO FEMALE LED SUPERHERO FILMS OR – EVEN WORSE – FILMS DIRECTED BY FEMALE DIRECTORS."

What with everything that is happening in the world, those screenings really aren't a priority for us. Especially considering we're living in a world where rape culture is all too prevalent, that many positions of power still belong to men, and a lot of us live in fear of simply walking home by ourselves. In theory, yes, not allowing men in to see a film that is specifically orientated for a female audience is sexist.

But I say to the "boys" and "men" who are so outraged by this, have you ever experienced any of the examples I've already outlined?

No? Then you might understand, why some of us scoff at your cries of "sexism", especially considering the atmosphere we are living in right now. (If you want to feel uncomfortable with a work of female led fiction, read or watch *The Handmaid's Tale*, I'm not being sarcastic, please at least, watch the first episode).

Don't get me wrong, there are many, blatant, sexist behaviours that are aimed towards men that worry me deeply.

This includes the stigma around men engaging with their emotions, which can sometimes lead to more, mental health problems. And I want as many people as possible to see *Wonder Woman* because it needs to do well. If it doesn't then big execs will use it as an example why there should be no female led superhero films or - even worse - films directed by female directors.

But this "outrage" over an all women screening reeks of last year's upset over a female cast in the *Ghostbusters* remake.



Not only were many male critics all too delighted to criticize how “terrible” it was but, for the most part, female critics talked about a different viewing experience. They described how enjoyable it was to see an all women group defeat the monsters for once.

Hell, I even received some backlash when I stated on Facebook how much I enjoyed the Ghostbusters remake. 10 minutes later I got mansplained in the comments of my status why the original is better (BTW I love the original *and* the remake for different reasons). But, most importantly, we cannot forget that absolute barrage of racist and sexist tweets Leslie Jones received almost a year ago, for simply starring in that film.

By contrast 2017 has actually been glorious when it comes to all led female, television programming. We still have bit further to go in film in that regards but the likes of Sofia Coppola’s *The Beguiled* has us hopeful.

And *Wonder Woman*? Well, *Wonder Woman* is a big step in the right direction. It flipped the switch on gender roles. Chris Pine is the witty sidekick to the wise, noble and yes, beautiful Gal Gadot (and he is only too delighted to play a male sidekick and has said as much through constant questioning targeting this). We also have the delightful Lucy Davis playing the witty and funny, Etta Candy.

The trailer gave me chills when it was released last year. It looked epic, moving, beautiful, and funny, just everything I needed *Wonder Woman* to be. Now that the reviews have been excellent my heart is welling with pride. Do not even get me started on the little girls dressed up as *Wonder Woman*, staring at Gal Gadot with nothing but joy and awe. That makes eight year old me well up a little.

"WONDER WOMAN IS A BIG STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. IT FLIPPED THE SWITCH ON GENDER ROLES. CHRIS PINE IS THE WITTY SIDEKICK TO THE WISE, NOBLE AND YES, BEAUTIFUL GAL GADOT."





"I NEED MORE EMPOWERING WOMEN LIKE DIANA ON SCREEN. NOT JUST TO NOT MAKE ME FEEL BETTER ABOUT MYSELF, BUT TO MAKE ME FEEL LESS ALONE IN THE MOMENTS WHERE THE WORLD FEELS LIKE AN UNFRIENDLY PLACE TOWARDS ME."

We go to the cinema to enjoy ourselves, and escape. Films, television, books are more powerful than people realize and I know for a fact they have kept me sane so far in 2017. I don't think it's too much to want one of those viewing experiences, especially within a superhero franchise and sci-fi genre to be female led and told from the female gaze.

Wonder Woman is for fangirls, pure and simple. It's not saying guys can't watch it, but they will not have the same viewing experience as women and girls. This logic applies to me too, just like when it comes to Beyoncé's visual album, *Lemonade*, or the brilliant TV series, *Dear White People*, which is not designed for me either. I can watch it, appreciate it and most importantly respect both of those for the works of art that they are, but I won't really understand how important they are for many, African American people or POC, because it isn't about *me*.

I can explain, again and again, why *Wonder Woman* is so important to me and other women. I can explain why the attack on all these female screenings, is really an attack on us and the film itself. It feels pointless though, because I know there's no getting through to that mindset that's against it.

I need more empowering women like Diana on screen. Not just to not make me feel better about myself, but to make me feel less alone in the moments where the world feels like an unfriendly place towards me, especially most recently. So that's why I'm saying no.

The day that women can walk and speak freely without fear, hold more positions of power, don't have to worry about losing their rights, don't have to protest to keep those rights, and receive a full and comprehensive education worldwide? Then sure, that day we will be there, right behind you in "outrage" over female only screenings of *Wonder Woman*.



LADIES

inspiring us since 1988

Earlier this month we asked our Cinders contributors to share the female characters who had inspired them in the past and they came up with fantastic strong, empowered examples that filled us with the need to solve mysteries, kill zombies and save the world.

Buffy Summers! She is strong and funny and a good friend. And also Willow Rosenberg from Buffy, she's smart, funny and caring and gay to boot! As a young gay person who didn't quite know what was going on it was great to see such a positive representation of a gay woman. And Cordelia in the Angel years was great too! Basically most of the women in the Buffyverse.

- Dee McDonnell

Susan Sto Helit, specifically in *The Hogfather*. The monsters under the bed in that universe are real, so there's no point doing what adults usually do and just tuck the kids into bed and reassure them. The monsters are real. But so is the poker that Susan will beat them with. And Susan always wins.

- Coraline Cobalt

Xena Warrior Princess. She was smart, tough, badass, and loyal. She had had a dark past, but worked to redeem herself and show empathy and strength. I found that super cool. I loved Gabriella too!

- Teresa Mulhern


I used to love **George** from the Famous Five - so determined and capable, a tree climbing tomboy and I related to her more than the others. Another character that I've always loved is **Elisabeth** from Maeve Binchy's *Light a Penny Candle*. She was shy and looked a bit weak and had so much thrown at her from a young age, but she turned out to have balls of steel and self possession through everything life threw at her.

- Monica Heck

I was always inspired by Tim Burton characters, outcasts, strange beautiful people. I love **Miss Lovett** the baker of human meat pies, *Corpse Bride*, Edward Scissorhands, Catwoman (Tim Burton's version), and **Lydia** from *Beetlejuice*. I mostly loved them for their quirkiness, madness, darkness, and the fact that they were always kind, despite their many flaws and the friendships they had.

- Baška Szóstak





Emma Swan Hero at large

Once Upon a Time's hero Emma Swan has always been a special character to co-editor Grainne Coyne. On hearing that this is the heroine's final season with the show, she was inspired to look back on Emma's journey through the world of fairy tales and how she has inspired countless girls along the way.

UPON pitching this piece to my co-editor, I had no idea how significant it would become, nor how emotional I would be writing this. Emma Swan is a character that means so much to me, for so many reasons. I'm no stranger to falling for bad ass female characters on TV, but there is and will always be something really significant for me about Emma Swan.

This is a credit not just to the creators but also to the amazing actress Jennifer Morrison. It's obvious that she was as emotionally invested in Emma Swan as the fans were from the start. She did extensive research for the role, from what life is like for children in foster care to Emma's abandonment issues and made many notable creative choices as result of this. So needless to say it came as a shock to both fans and myself, when Jennifer Morrison announced last month that she would be leaving the show.

Now some might say 'She's just a character, she's not real' or, 'How can something like this upset you?' Or even, 'How does she even inspire you?' And they may be right, but at the same time, to me, they're so wrong.

Summer 2013, I got a new job, I was back in Dublin and I should have been happy, but for many reasons I was not. I spent most of my time online on sites like Tumblr and watching some odd television shows.

One of them was *Once Upon A Time*, which I accidentally came across and decided to give a go. Even though it seemed like a cheesy premise at first, there was one character who hooked me from the get go: Emma Swan. It wasn't the gorgeous hair and costuming that attracted me to her, it was her vulnerability.

It was the walls she very slowly let down, initially for herself, and eventually for everyone close to her heart. She was a multi-faceted female, lead character and in the early 10s, there weren't too many of those that I remember on TV. She wasn't the "tough one", "quirky one", "emotional one" or even "bitchy for the sake being bitchy one". She was complicated, flawed, selfless and selfish, she was everything and for all her mistakes, she was perfect to me.

"SHE WASN'T THE "TOUGH ONE", "QUIRKY ONE", "EMOTIONAL ONE" OR EVEN "BITCHY FOR THE SAKE BEING BITCHY ONE". SHE WAS COMPLICATED, FLAWED, SELFLESS AND SELFISH, SHE WAS EVERYTHING AND FOR ALL HER MISTAKES, SHE WAS PERFECT TO ME."



While she was initially used as a method to introduce us all to this fairy tale world in season one, she was much more than a storytelling device to me. It was the walls Emma built around her that resonated with me, her reluctance to get close to any other of the characters. I understood those walls all too well. Throughout the early seasons of *Once* Emma wore a mask that said she was tough and content. By contrast mine said I was happy-go-lucky, funny and content. We were neither of what our masks portrayed us to be.

When I first started watching that series I felt alone; even though, like Emma, there were many Snow Whites and Henrys who wanted to help me. Like Emma, I refused to connect. I found it easier to be isolated within myself, than to lean on someone else. I related to the struggle Emma felt with letting people in (still do) and with allowing others to see me at my most vulnerable.

The thing is though, it was there, Emma helped me the most. When she was hiding all of her vulnerability, I understood her. She made me feel less alone. When I was hiding, in my damp, mouldy room in Dublin, it was those crazy fairy tale twists, that helped me escape for a few hours a week.

Emma did not let her past define her, she grew out of it, she became stronger. It was through watching her determination and bravery that helped me find my own. I was emotionally attached to the show and to Emma. I was rooting for her.

I didn't know what her happy ending would be, but her battle to overcome the pain of her past, and for her son Henry to suspend her scepticism, were what mattered to me most. She helped me stand up for myself, she helped me leave a toxic situation, she helped me learn that it's okay to be vulnerable, and it's even more okay to let those in around me who want to help.

As the series went on Emma let Henry in to her world, and eventually her parents too. After that arrived the iconic season three. With it arrived what is in my opinion the best *Once* arc: Neverland. The opening scene showing Emma giving Henry up, is definitely up there with one of the most heart-breaking scenes of the series. So I had a feeling Neverland was going to be a big deal, but I had no idea how big. In this arc, enemies came together, everyone was related (this is no joke), but mostly we got a glimpse of another side of Emma: the romantic side.

Her walls were ever-present especially when it came to Captain Hook and I didn't blame her. I'll be honest, I was protective of Emma. I did not want her to have just any love interest - scratch that, I would have been glad if she didn't have anyone and remained independent.

I especially didn't want her to end up with Neal, just for the sake of a happy, family scenario. I wanted someone to see her for the amazing, strong, kind and beautiful woman, she is and with Hook, the writers suspended my doubts with what they came up with. It helped that Hook was quite handsome, but it wasn't his looks that endeared him to me (there were plenty of handsome on *Once*) it was his loyalty, dedication and his need to put Emma first. And for a woman who has been constantly let down, abandoned and heartbroken for most of her life, this was huge.

But this was no normal love story, Emma had no problem kissing or flirting with the Captain, but emotionally letting him in? Letting him see the real Emma Swan?

'THE FINALE AND MUSICAL EPISODE WERE PERFECT TRIBUTES TO EMMA SWAN, WHO HAS GROWN SO MUCH OVER THE COURSE OF SIX SEASONS OF CRAZY ADVENTURES, HEARTBREAKS, AND BATTLES.'

That was a lot harder. It took up to three seasons of gradually built trust, belief and love to get there. One of the most poignant lines that struck me, when it came to matters of Emma's heart, was in her brief romance with Sheriff Graham: "Not feeling anything is an attractive option, when what you're feeling sucks." I remember crying when I first watched that because when it comes to romance, oh boy is that me to a tee.

Even so, Emma and Killian proved time and time again that their story was as epic as her parents. Granted, I rolled my eyes at how much angst that was dragged out with the both of them towards the end (something I blame on the show's decline). However, Emma found her true love, got her fairy-tale wedding and showed me that nothing is impossible and most importantly, it is okay to want these things.

Which brings me to the last few episodes for Emma Swan, which were so incredibly emotional, that I am getting teary eyed as I write about it.

The finale and musical episode were perfect tributes to Emma, who has grown so much over the course of six seasons of crazy adventures, heartbreaks, and battles. I'm forever changed for the course of it. While I've had no villains and curses to contend with, I can easily understand how daunting your life can be especially with the prospect of doom and gloom constantly around the corner.

But Emma did not let this phase her, and with that she is still inspiring and helping me today.



But before Emma stood up to the Black Fairy with the song in her heart, there was a key moment with Henry, that explained my connection to Emma better than I ever could.

It was one line that caused me to burst into tears (I watched this episode the same day as Jennifer's announcement): "Every time something big came along, I ran from it."

In that moment, I understood Emma, but, more than ever, I truly understood myself. When it came to the big things in my and Emma's lives; the people, the moments, the chances, the opportunities, the places? Those things that we knew could change our lives made us run and run hard. Why? Because we didn't think we were good enough. We had been let down before, in different ways, but we had. So what was the point of even trying in the first place?

Emma overcame this with a self-belief and determination that never diminished even during one of the darkest curses.

Her bravery was there to the end: life had dealt her a bad hand, but what I love about Emma Swan is despite all of this, she still wanted to see the best in everyone. She believed in second chances, but wasn't completely gullible, and eventually, Emma saw that she deserved her chance to be happy and finally see the best in herself.

I also admire Jennifer Morrison in more words than I can possibly say. It's not an easy decision to leave something that has been a big part of your life for six years. But seeing how they ended season six and Emma Swan's story, I believe Jennifer has made the right decision. Even with this departure, Jennifer has inspired me that it's okay to move on, it's okay to start a new chapter, no matter how big scary and it's okay to put yourself first.

I'm now reaching the age she was when we first met Emma Swan in the pilot, blowing out a solitary candle and whispering sadly "another banner year". We've both changed since then, but oh boy have I been grateful for the journey.

I don't want this piece to be a goodbye to Emma Swan but instead a thank you. A thank you for helping me become the better and stronger woman that I choose to be every day. For helping me escape to my imagination, when the world was sometimes too perplexing and hard to understand. For making me smile, laugh, and even cry, when I sometimes I didn't know that I really needed a good cry at all. But most importantly, for helping me realise my potential, embrace the love and support of my friends and family around me, and letting me define myself as I move onto the next chapter in my life.

Many bad ass heroines and antagonists will come and go, but for me, there will only ever be one Emma Swan.



WINONA FOREVER



Baska is a young artist specialising in textiles based in Galway. Follow Baska on Twitter @BaskaSzostak and find her on Facebook for more gorgeous artwork.

"Winona Forever"

Baska Szostak

STEPPING IT UP A GEAR

For Gems Morrow, when it comes to female action heroes, *The Fast and the Furious*' Letty Ortiz was a welcome breath of fresh air. Smart, resourceful and tough, Letty Ortiz set the bar for female characters she wanted to see onscreen.

LETTY Ortiz was a revelation for me. Because when I was 15, I didn't have Black Widow or Emma Swan. In most of the action movies I watched the female main character was always pretty and a little bit screechy. That character was always so feminine, and yes, sometimes you'd have the tough female character sidekick and she would love the male character but she was *never* right for him. And then I saw Letty. She was this tough woman who could fix a car, drive fast and was also the love interest of the male main character (MMC). I was just stunned.

I remember watching *The Fast and the Furious* for the first time, and loving Letty. And then the scene popped up that pops up in every action film. The one where the MMC gets in this fight with a rival and it's pretty brutal and the love interest looks around for help, or screams at him to stop.

In *The Fast and the Furious* this scene happens between Dom and Johnny Tran.

Letty rocks up and looks around and I'm already cringing, because I'm thinking 'here come the decibels' or 'maybe she'll get someone else to help out'. But instead Johnny's cousin comes storming up about to join the fight and Letty just punches him in the face, knocks him clean out.

And I realised, *that's* what Letty was looking for. She knew Johnny, she knew Johnny's cousin was there and that if Johnny was in a fight his cousin would back him up and fight dirty. So Letty took him out before he could gang up on Dom. And in that moment, Letty became my absolute favourite female character in a film series ever.

Letty assured me that you could be pretty if you wanted to be pretty and wear a dress and flirt.

But you could also play video games, laugh with other boys, be friends with other girls and fix cars and drive fast. She showed me that you can be a girl and be anything you want to be and be loved for that.

Yes, in the first film Letty does use some 'meow' tactics on other girls who flirt with Dom but when she's a little older, she just laughs it off because he's attractive and why wouldn't other girls think that? He loves her so she doesn't have to worry.

And I love that.



Hermione Herself



There are some characters who we meet as children and have a lasting influence on our whole lives. For editor, **Méabh McDonnell**, Hermione Granger was that character. She looks back on Hermione's introduction and her immediate empathy with the girl who could do anything if she put her mind to it.



WHEN I was ten years old I reluctantly began to read *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. I say reluctantly because when I was seven I had the unfortunate experience of hearing the second last chapter of the book, completely out of context. It gave me a very warped perspective on the stories including thinking they were about businessmen, played nothing but magical baseball and there was no mention of the superhero that is Hermione Granger.

Because if I'd known about her, I would have eaten those books up. Instead I maintained my stubborn attitude to all things JK Rowling for three years. It wasn't until I received the first book for my 10th birthday that I finally decided to read them. And then something very special happened, a few chapters into the book, I met Hermione.

And after her less than perfect introduction, I'm not sure I liked her. But I definitely knew her. Because I was her.

Maybe not the perfectly bad-ass her - but the 'wants to be perfect all the time' her.


"The girl who is terrified of breaking any rules - that was me. The girl who liked school and learning."

The girl who is terrified of breaking any rules - that was me. The girl who liked school and learning. The girl who was competitive, and was constantly driven to be better. That was someone I understood. That was someone I tried to be.

Now, as the years went on my own commitment to perfect grades slipped, but my general air of 'wanting to do things right' remained. And I credit a lot of that to Hermione.

Hermione was a revelation as a heroine. Here was a girl who was powerful, competent and mature - she's easily the most together of the three. She wasn't the sidekick, and she isn't there simply as a love interest for either Harry or Ron. They need her.

But equally, she needs them. Because Hermione's deepest insecurity was one I understood well. I knew that when you place yourself in competition with everyone else, it becomes very difficult to make friends. Not only was that something that I understood, it was something I experienced. I remember it being so refreshing to see Hermione act in a way that was competitive and overbearing, but also to have it be shown that she acts this way because of her own insecurity. It becomes obvious that part of Hermione's drive to be perfect is because she sees this as a way to endear herself to someone - if not her peers, then her teachers.



"It was Hermione who got to be the superwoman of these stories and it was Hermione who inspired me."

That's not to say she isn't incredibly talented, but a personality like Hermione's can go into overdrive if the possibility of being named the best or praised as perfect comes about. To her that's a sign you're doing things right. That's a sign that it's okay to be lonely, so long as you're doing well. That was the side of Hermione that I understood completely. And that was the side of me that cheered when she and Ron and Harry solidified their friendship over an unconscious cave troll. From there, we get to see just how loyal she is to those who are her friends.

As the books were released throughout my teen years, I felt - as I'm sure most people my age did - as if I was growing with these characters. Hermione wasn't the only one who I enjoyed reading either. Ginny was always a favourite, and of course I loved Luna's perfect blend of weirdness and complete confidence in who she is. I wanted to be as comfortable in my own skin as Luna was. And don't even get me started on Molly Weasley.

But it was Hermione who got to be the superwoman of these stories and it was Hermione who inspired me.

I think that might be one of the reasons why *Prisoner of Azkaban* has always been my favourite Harry Potter installment (followed by GoF, HBP -it's underrated-, OoP, PS, DH, and CoS). *Prisoner of Azkaban* is Hermione's story. Even though Harry and Ron don't talk to her for a large portion of it in the middle, thus proving that thirteen year old boys are idiots - even when they're Harry Potter. I identified with Hermione's do-gooder attitude, but also her tendency to bite off more than she can chew. The time turner is a brilliant plot device and in true JK form, it's use at the end nicely ties up the ongoing mystery of the story of how Hermione has been getting to classes all year. It's also particularly nice to see Hermione and Harry go on an adventure together and have it come off without a hitch. Now of course *Prisoner of Azkaban* is also the best because of its self contained mystery, the amount of backstory we get regarding Harry's parents and the beautiful misfit that is Remus Lupin. But bad-ass-Malfoy-hitting-Hermione makes it too.

Conversely, *Chamber of Secrets* is my least favourite for the same reason: Hermione gets put on a petrified bus for the back end of the story. She does get the credit for solving the mystery of the basilisk (something no one in universe ever praises her for)! But Harry and Ron get awards for special services to the school and Hermione gets nothing, even though without her solving the mystery: the school would be shut down, Ginny would be dead and Voldemort's diary powered body would be wandering around the place causing general havoc. But you know, give Ron an award for getting stuck behind a wall.

The Ron-Hermione romance was never really something I found to be that compelling. In the early years I thought it made more sense to have her with Harry. Then when it became obvious that it was going to be Ron, it was just that - obvious. I would have been perfectly happy to have Hermione not fall for any of the boys and instead, carve out her own bad-ass coven that celebrated everyone's differences and talents, but that's not the way the cookies crumble. The romance did fuel a lot of my teen misconceptions that the path to true love was disagreeing constantly with the boy I liked. And I do understand the logic behind their love story, but I think Ron's pragmatism as a foil to Hermione's intellect was often overshadowed by his purpose as comic relief. This often made me ask the question: what does she see in him? (I really hope I don't get hate mail for saying that!) However, the scene of the almost hand-holding at the beginning of *Deathly Hallows* still makes me feel warm and fuzzy inside though, don't get me wrong!

Deathly Hallows also gets points for having Hermione and Harry go on their awesome/horrible road trip together though! I rank it lower on my list for the general lack of Hogwarts in it, but Harry and Hermione solving mysteries together is always a win in my book. She's very sad throughout that period of the story which isn't something I particularly enjoy. Although I did appreciate that Hermione's loyalty and steadfastness are on point: she refuses to leave Harry when she promised she would stay.

I could go on and on about all of the reasons that Hermione Granger was a role model for me growing up. From being not afraid to show how smart she is in class, to where she developed her own special brand of rule breaking - firmly based around her ability to do magical things that should have been too advanced for her - she never disappoints. She may be bad at sport, but she's never described as inactive, and we cannot forget her unwavering loyalty to her friends.

I never reached Hermione's heights of intelligence or ambition, but, she never stopped being someone who I wanted to be like - someone who showed me just how much girls can do.

I'm so very, very grateful to JK Rowling for her.

"I would have been perfectly happy to have Hermione not fall for any of the boys and instead, carve out her own bad-ass coven that celebrated everyone's differences and talents."



Write what you need

Last issue we had the pleasure of reviewing Meg Grehan's gorgeous verse novel, *The Space Between*. This month editor Méabh McDonnell was delighted to talk to Meg about her writing inspiration, mental health and poetry.

What was the inspiration for *The Space Between*?

It wasn't inspiration so much as desperation, to be honest! When I started writing *The Space Between* I was an absolute mess. I couldn't go two days without a panic attack, I was afraid of everything, I couldn't bring myself to leave my house and I needed to do something. I read a lot which helped at first but I could never find exactly what I needed in the books I read, so I decided to write what I needed instead. It was inspired by the tough things I was going through but also the good things. I'm lucky to have had someone who was there for me every step of the way, my girlfriend came home every evening and listened to every rambling thought I had. She constantly reminded me that I had to help myself but that she would hold my hand while I figured out how. I wanted to write about how while people aren't medicine, there's power in letting people in and she inspired that in a million little ways.

"I COULD NEVER FIND EXACTLY WHAT I NEEDED IN THE BOOKS I READ SO I DECIDED TO WRITE WHAT I NEEDED INSTEAD."

Have you always written poetry?


I was a drama kid so poetry was always a big part of my life but I didn't try writing it myself until I was maybe 16 or 17. I wrote a poem about Neverland that wasn't completely terrible and then a ton of others that were! I've always loved reading and performing poetry but writing it didn't seem to really come naturally until I started *The Space Between*. I tried to write it as prose but it didn't feel right, words kept going off in their own directions. Once I gave in it all just poured onto the page, verse fit the story perfectly!

Did you find it difficult to tell a story using both poetry and plot?

No I actually found it much easier! Writing prose I always felt like stories needed more words than I wanted to give them. Using structure instead was really liberating! Big plot points could happen in one line, I could use structure and punctuation and repetition however I wanted and that was ok! It was all about finding the balance, knowing if I was doing something, putting that line there or that word here, for the sake of the story or that particular poem and deciding which was more important. I love it, it's such a fun way to write.

What was your process for writing each individual poem - did you have a length or topic in mind or did you just see where the writing took you?

I would always just start writing and see what happened. There were sections that I thought would need pages that actually only needed a couple lines or scenes I thought would be super short that took pages and pages of words and formatting. It was always fun to start with one idea or one word and see what it turned into.



Beth is dealing with a mental health disorder at the beginning of the novel - did you find it difficult to immerse yourself in that kind of mindset?

No, I was very much already in that mindset! I found it helpful, cathartic. I would write through panic attacks or when I had to leave the house and it gave me something good to focus on. Writing was my safe space, I could pour it all out, piece it together and see it much more clearly afterwards.

Do you think that there is still a stigma surrounding mental illness in Ireland today?

I do think so, but I also think we have such amazing people changing that with their bravery and honesty, especially in the arts. It isn't always easy to talk about your mental health, but if you're suffering you can look around and you will find someone who has been there or who feels the same. We have so many writers and performers and artists who are opening up and every honest voice dampens that stigma a little.

Beth and Alice have a beautiful love story in the novel - is this something that you were inspired by in your own life?

Their story isn't my story, but I don't think I could have written theirs without my own in mind.

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SAME.

Was there any part of the book that was particularly challenging to write?

Not particularly, if anything was very difficult or jarring I would just put it aside and moved onto a new section. When it worked I could feel that it worked so I just tried to trust my instincts.

The book reads like a minuet - was music a big influence on your writing?

Ooh I like that! I definitely listened to music a lot while I was working on it, I listened to Shura, Oh Wonder and Dodie quite a bit. I never listen to music when I'm actually writing though, I always worry that it might influence my writing too much or that I'll get too wrapped up in listening and forget to write! Mostly music was helpful when I was tired or having trouble focusing. I would put on something fun (usually Boyfriend by Tegan and Sara!) and have an emergency dance break until I felt a little better.

Alice gives Beth a book of fairytales as a gift - what is your favourite fairy tale?

That's tough! I think I would have to say *The Little Mermaid* because despite a massive fear of the sea, I have always been a little bit obsessed with mermaids. In general I think I prefer retellings since they tend to be kinder to women! My all-time favourite book is *Kissing the Witch* by Emma Donoghue, which is a collection of classic fairytales told with a very feminist and queer twist, maybe that's what Alice should've given Beth!

What would be the perfect book gift to give to you?

At my book launch my amazing friend gave me a beautiful little book shaped locket with the *The Space Between* book cover on it. It's one the greatest gifts I've ever been given!

Are you writing anything new at the moment?

I am! I'm working on another verse novel inspired by constellations, it's been a ton of fun so far!

What happens to Mouse?!

Mouse takes over the world, of course.



THE TRUTH BEHIND: Borderline Personality Disorder

In this installment of her ongoing series, psychologist **Teresa Mulhern** gives us an insight into a disorder often misunderstood by the public: Borderline Personality Disorder.

"At its worst, you feel like the odd one out – like people just tolerate you because they have to... Constantly not being able to trust your own thoughts. DBT is the only reason I can now say I can separate and sift out these negative aspects of borderline personality disorder"

– C, aged 23 and living with borderline personality disorder.

In the US, May has been marked as Borderline Personality Disorder Awareness month – so let's familiarise ourselves with this psychological disorder. Currently, it's estimated that borderline personality disorder (BPD) affects 5.9 per cent of adults, meaning that BPD affects nearly as many people with schizophrenia and bipolar combined. Of all patients admitted to psychiatric hospitals, it's estimated that 20 per cent of these patients have a diagnosis of BPD. Despite the prevalence of BPD, it is often misdiagnosed, as it is not unusual for a person suffering from BPD to also have a diagnosis of depression, post-traumatic stress disorder or bipolar disorder.

BPD is characterized by unstable relationships with others, unstable sense of self, and unstable emotions. An individual suffering from BPD may also experience an extreme fear of abandonment and exhibit frequent dangerous behaviour, such as self-harm. In fact, instances of substance abuse, depression and eating disorders are frequently related to a diagnosis of BPD with 10 per cent of individuals with this diagnosis dying by suicide.

In order to meet the diagnostic criteria for BPD, an individual must demonstrate significant impairments in both *personality functioning* and *interpersonal functioning*.

Impairments in personality functioning are also known as impairments in self-functioning and can manifest itself by impairments in either *identity* or *self-direction*. Impairments in identity involves a poorly-developed or unstable self image, this has been associated with excessive self-criticism, chronic feelings of emptiness and dissociative states under stress. Self-direction impairments involve an individual experiencing an instability in goals, aspirations, values or career plans.

Impairments in interpersonal functioning can include impairments in either empathy or intimacy. People who show impairments in empathy as part of this diagnosis can demonstrate a compromised ability to recognise the feelings and needs of others and can demonstrate interpersonal hypersensitivity (i.e., they are prone to feeling slighted or insulted) and can perceive others as having negative attributes or vulnerabilities. People with a diagnosis of BPD who demonstrate impairments in intimacy demonstrate intense, unstable and conflicted close relationships that are marked by mistrust, neediness and anxious preoccupation with real or imagined abandonment. Any close relationships may be viewed in terms of extreme idealization and devaluation, which can alternate between over-involvement and withdrawal.

"PEOPLE WHO SHOW IMPAIRMENTS IN EMPATHY AS PART OF THIS DIAGNOSIS CAN DEMONSTRATE A COMPROMISED ABILITY TO RECOGNISE THE FEELINGS AND NEEDS OF OTHERS"

A further diagnostic criteria of BPD is that of pathological personality traits in the domains of negative affectivity, disinhibition and antagonism.

Negative affectivity is characterised by emotional lability, anxiousness, separation insecurity, and depressivity. Emotional lability is characterised by unstable emotional experiences and frequent mood changes. This often involves emotions that are intense and easily aroused, and may be out of proportion to events and circumstances that the individual finds him or herself in.

Anxiousness involves intense feelings of nervousness, tenseness or panic, which may occur in reaction to interpersonal stresses. Separation insecurity involves fears of rejection and/or separation from others. This can also be associated with fears of excessive dependency and a complete loss of autonomy. Finally, depressivity is marked by frequent feelings of being down, miserable, and/or hopeless and can include thoughts of suicide and suicidal behaviour. Disinhibition is marked by instances of impulsivity and risk-taking, while antagonism is characterised by instances of hostility.

One of the most widely used therapies for BPD is dialectical behaviour therapy and has been found to show positive results for those with BPD, including symptom reduction and an improvement in life quality. Although not all the symptoms of BPD may ease, there is often a major decrease in problem behaviours and suffering. However, when exposed to instances of stress, some of these symptoms may recur. When this happens, people with BPD should return to therapy as soon as possible and seek all necessary support.

If you have experienced any of the issues discussed in this article please contact your General Practitioner.

Please find the phone numbers for Childline here: 1800 666 666

Samaritans: If you are in need of immediate support call: 116 123

QUEEN TAKES AROUND

Sixteen year old Diana Mirza recently won the World Schools Under-17 Chess Championship. She is Ireland's first ever world chess champion and has filled Cinders in on openings, tactics, non stop practice, and how it's never too late to get into chess.

When did you start playing chess?

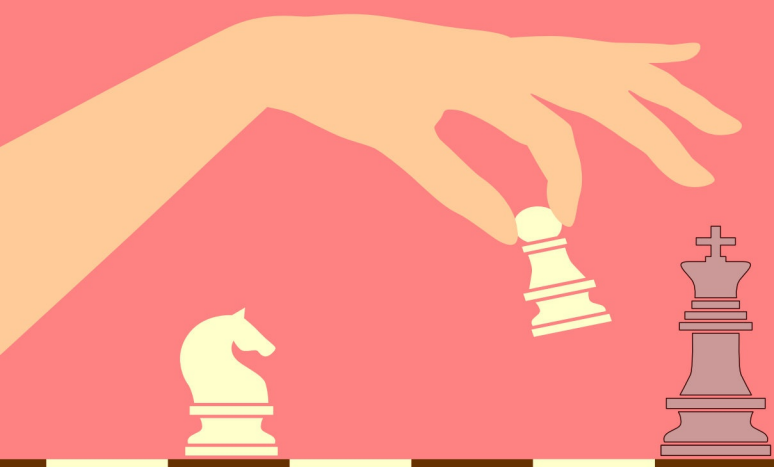
I started playing when I was five years old, my Dad runs chess classes after school so I used to be around it all of the time. I began playing in competitions when I was nine and I started to improve. As I got better, the more I liked doing it. I suppose it's like anything, when you discover you're good at it then you'll want to stay doing it.

How much practice do you have to do to get to your level?

There's a huge amount of theory that you have to learn, like you have to learn your openings (opening moves in chess have to be learned, there are thousands of different ones that can be used and are memorized by players). That's the difficult thing about chess, you have to be self disciplined. I have a coach who does Skype lessons with me, but he's a bit more of a mentor, it's up to me to keep going, to keep practicing.

Do you use books to study and learn?

There are lots of books and I have used some of them but mostly now everything is computerised. I do practice games online. When it comes to preparing for specific opponents you can look up their game play. There's a huge database in chess. Each player in a tournament has their game moves recorded. So with that you can look up their game play, the openings they like to use and get a sense of their style. It can be really helpful. It goes into helping you prepare for your opponent, it's a great asset to have. Although sometimes it can work against you if you're playing someone who hasn't played many tournament matches.





It means that they have less recorded matches and it isn't as easy to gauge their style. They can catch you by surprise. During the tournament there was a Sri Lankan girl I was drawn against who hadn't many tournament ranked matches, so there wasn't a lot of information I was able to take from her match play. But she had lots of information on the way I played! I had to think about how to get around that. So I memorized a new opening so I might throw her off - and it worked! There's a lot of preparation that goes in even when you're not on the table so if you can force someone into being thrown off by a new opening, something they weren't expecting then you have an advantage. You just play the board you have.

How far ahead can you memorise in a game of chess?

Really the only thing you can have memorised before you go into a match is your openings and they're 10 - at most 15 moves in length. You memorise openings and then you memorize responses to openings, so you have to figure out how to evade your opponent's opening as well. If you don't recognise an opening, if you're not prepared for it then that can cost you. A game can be won because of preparation. That happened to me against the Sri Lankan girl I mentioned earlier. Because she didn't recognise the opening it led to her losing the match. I won that one in 18 moves - an hour and a half - I know that sounds like a fair bit but trust me, in chess it's nothing!

How did you feel headed into that last round of the competition, of the league?

Well, in the last round I was just half a point ahead of the other players, so I was nervous. There were also other players playing their final rounds all around me. I knew that if I won my round, I had the title.

There were two players playing next to me though, Kazakhstan vs Azerbaijan, depending on which of them won, I would have to win or draw my match. As it turned out, all I needed was the draw. It's not that I didn't want to win, but sometimes if you try to force a win, you can get caught and end up losing. That happened to me in a round against a Russian girl, I was drawing with her but I was really determined to win, I tried to force it and ended up losing, so I didn't want to do that in the final round.

That must be massive pressure?

It can feel like a huge amount of pressure when you're playing in a tournament like that. It can feel like a lot of pressure afterwards too, you keep thinking about the moves you should have made and the mistakes that you could have changed. The rounds are also very long. Games can last up to five hours. I tend to have very long matches as well.

My games against Moldova and Sri Lanka I was the last person to finish. You have to keep your concentration for a long time.

How do you train for that kind of pressure?

Chess players exercise a lot, it's important because you need stamina to keep concentrating for that long. I play basketball and some other sports. When I'm playing chess stamina is key, in a single turn you have to plan what they can do, what I can do back, analyse positions, counter attacks. It's a lot to think about - it's why chess is so slow! Sometimes that can be what trips up a player in a game - they get into time trouble - that can lead you to miscalculate a variation. It can also be a way to put off your opponent - if you move fast, then they have to move fast. That's happened to me before, I've gotten into time trouble with opposing players and once you're in trouble, it can lead you to make mistakes. Because of that it's really important to have the right mindset.

For our readers, who are interested, do you think it's ever too late to get into chess?

No, you're never too old to get into chess! That's the great thing about it, you're never too old to start. It's not like with other sports where age is a factor, chess is something you can begin at any age. I think the current world champion only started when he was 18! And he went on to become world champion! My Dad just played in an all ages tournament. If tournaments are something that you're interested in, then there are tournaments for every different level. The tournament that I won was the Schools Championship Under 17 Girls.

What are some of the challenges for you as a chess player?

Well, because of a lack of funding for chess in Ireland I often have to pick and choose the tournaments that I attend. They're almost all outside of Ireland, so travel is required. It has gotten better in recent years but there is still a lack of funding for the Irish Chess Federation. This can cause there to be a lot of wasted talent as people give up playing because they can't make it to tournaments. It would be great if there was more support. For example in Romania, where the world championships were held, chess is huge. The top three national champions each year get funding from the federation to go to chess camps. There's a lot of emphasis in Romania on chess because they want to produce good players. One of my best friends from chess is Romanian so I see the difference between how it is treated there and in Ireland.

Does chess help you much with school?

It does and it doesn't, it's helpful for maths, for quick calculation, but it doesn't give me a hack for a specific class. I did have a teacher who mentioned that it would be very helpful if I went into politics! Because you have to think tactically, a few moves ahead!

"MYSELF AND MY FRIENDS PLAY ONLINE GAMES AND WE JOKE ABOUT VARIATIONS AND PUZZLES ALL OF THE TIME. MOST OF MY BEST FRIENDS ARE FROM CHESS. IT'S JUST GREAT."

What are the best things you've gotten out of playing chess?

Oh, there's so many things! I love the travelling, the opportunity to go to so many different places around the world, I've also made so many friends through chess. I love the game too, there's so much that can happen in one game. There's so much that can go on, you need imagination and so many tactics! There's also chess puzzles that I just get lost in, some variations of the game that are so exciting. Myself and my friends play online games and we joke about variations and puzzles all of the time. Most of my best friends are from chess. It's just great.

Do you have a favourite opening?

I do actually, the French Opening with the King's Indian attack is my favourite. It's not the best opening but I play it well and I just know what it will do. I'm not really a theory player, I like plans and ideas, it makes you a bit more adaptable. But theory is very important, it's always better to know it - I can just be lazy sometimes! I think it's important to learn both really.

Do you think there will be many more people interested in playing chess in Ireland after your win?

None of my Irish friends are chess players but my dad runs a chess school and I train two kids myself. I really want there to be more chess out there in the world! I think it's underdeveloped here in Ireland and I would love it to be more popular!



History's inspirational Heroes

There are so many inspiring and incredible women from history that we can't keep it to just one list - this will be an ongoing series in *Cinders*. This month we look at some of our favourite politicians, inventors, entrepreneurs and heroes.

Neerja Bhanot

Neerja Bhanot was a purser for the airline Pan American World Airways, based in Mumbai, India. She was shot and killed while trying to save passengers on Pan Am Flight 73, which was hijacked by terrorists. Bhanot was the senior flight purser on Pan Am Flight 73 flying from Mumbai to the United States, which was hijacked by four armed men on 5 September 1986. Bhanot was able to alert the cockpit crew as soon as the hijackers boarded the plane, and as the plane was on the tarmac, the three-member cockpit crew of pilot, co-pilot and the flight engineer left the aircraft through an overhead hatch in the cockpit. As the senior-most cabin crew member, Bhanot took charge of the situation inside the plane.

After 17 hours, the hijackers opened fire and set off explosives. Bhanot opened one of the airplane doors, and started helping the other passengers escape. According to a surviving passenger: "She was guiding the passengers to the emergency exit. That is when the terrorists were firing constantly fearing a commando attack. They saw Neerja relentlessly trying to help the passengers out and that is when they caught her by her ponytail and shot her point blank." Out of a total of 41 American passengers, two were killed during the hijacking. A child on board, then aged seven, is now a captain for a major airline and has stated that Bhanot has been his inspiration, and that he owes every day of his life to her. She became the youngest recipient of the Ashok Chakra Award, India's most prestigious gallantry award for bravery during peace time.



Constance Markievicz

Constance Markievicz was an Irish Sinn Féin politician, revolutionary nationalist, suffragette and socialist. In December 1918, she was the first woman elected to the British House of Commons, though she did not take her seat and, along with the other Sinn Féin TDs, formed the first Dáil Éireann. She was also the second woman to hold a cabinet position in the world (Minister for Labour of the Irish Republic, 1919–1922). As a member of the ICA, Markievicz took part in the 1916 Easter Rising. At the 1918 general election, Markievicz was elected for the constituency of Dublin St Patrick's, beating her opponent William Field with 66 per cent of the vote, as one of 73 Sinn Féin MPs. This made her the first woman elected to the British House of Commons. However, in line with Sinn Féin abstentionist policy, she would not take her seat in the House of Commons. Markievicz served as Minister for Labour from April 1919 to January 1922, in the Second Ministry and the Third Ministry of the Dáil. Holding cabinet rank from April to August 1919, she became both the first Irish female Cabinet Minister and at the same time, only the second female government minister in Europe.



Hedy Lamarr

Hedy Lamarr is one of the most interesting women I have ever read about - especially considering inventions she created contributed towards modern WiFi! She was an Austrian and American film actress and inventor born in November 1914. After an early and brief film career in Germany, she fled from her husband, who was a wealthy Austrian ammunition manufacturer, and secretly moved to Paris. There, she met MGM head Louis B. Mayer, who offered her a movie contract in Hollywood, where she became a film star from the late 1930s to the 1950s. At the beginning of World War II, Lamarr and composer George Antheil developed a radio guidance system for Allied torpedoes, which used spread spectrum and frequency hopping technology to defeat the threat of jamming by the Axis powers. With the knowledge she had gained about torpedoes from her first husband, and using a method similar to the way piano rolls work, they drafted designs for a new frequency-hopping, spread-spectrum technology that they later patented. Although the US Navy did not adopt the technology until the 1960s, the principles of their work are now incorporated into modern Wi-Fi, CDMA, and Bluetooth technology, and this work led to their induction into the National Inventors Hall of Fame in 2014. Lamarr had no formal training and was primarily self-taught.



CJ Walker

Sarah Breedlove born in 1867, known as Madam C. J. Walker, was an African-American entrepreneur, philanthropist, and a political and social activist. Eulogized as the first female self-made millionaire in America, she became one of the wealthiest African-American women in the country, "the world's most successful female entrepreneur of her time," and one of the most successful African-American business owners ever. Walker made her fortune by developing and marketing a line of beauty and hair products for black women through Madame C.J. Walker Manufacturing Company. As was common among black women of her era, Sarah experienced severe dandruff and other scalp ailments, including baldness, due to skin disorders and the application of harsh products such as lye that were included in soaps to cleanse hair and wash clothes. Around the time of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition (World's Fair at St. Louis in 1904), she became a commission agent selling products for Annie Turnbo Malone, an African American hair-care entrepreneur and owner of the Poro Company. While working for Malone, Sarah began to adapt her knowledge of hair and hair products to develop her own product line. Walker was an incredibly entrepreneur and will be played by Octavia Spencer in an upcoming biopic.



Ada Lovelace

Ada Lovelace is nothing but cool. As one of the first computer programmers she's someone that you must get to know! Ada Lovelace was the only legitimate child of the poet George, Lord Byron, and his wife Anne Isabella Milbanke ("Annabella"), Lady Wentworth. Ada Lovelace was an English mathematician and writer, she has gone down in history for her work on Charles Babbage's proposed mechanical general-purpose computer, the Analytical Engine. She was the first person to recognise that the machine had applications beyond pure calculation, and created the first algorithm intended to be carried out by such a machine. As a result, she is often regarded as the first to recognise the full potential of a "computing machine" and the first computer programmer. Between 1842 and 1843, Ada translated an article by Italian military engineer Luigi Menabrea on the engine, which she supplemented with an elaborate set of notes, simply called *Notes*. These notes contain what many consider to be the first computer program—that is, an algorithm designed to be carried out by a machine. Lovelace's notes are important in the early history of computers. She died of uterine cancer in 1852 at the age of 36 and was incredibly interesting.



AN EMOTIONAL CONNECTION

Music in all of its forms is one of our ultimate inspirations in Cinders. Recently Grainne Coyne had the pleasure of chatting with Athenry singer/songwriter Sinead Murphy about her musical inspirations, her new music video and what it's like to be an emerging artist on the Irish music scene.

YOUR recent music video, 'I'll Wait for You' has gotten 19,000 views and counting. How has the positive response of the song/video affected you and the experience of your music so far?

The response has been incredible I can't believe it got that much attention over a short space of time. The video was not even planned we had just booked the studio to record the song itself and a friend of mine came in and worked some magic and came out with this great video of us! The song itself is very personal to me as are all my songs really. It was one of the first songs I ever wrote and I was so pleased that it developed so well over the years .

I loved that people love it and are having an emotional connection to the song, which is what I always want to achieve.

In the video, we see that the song was being recorded in studio, what was that like? Was it your first experience recording one of your songs in a studio?

It was great, the fact that we weren't really aware that a video was being shot made us a lot more natural looking. We are all used to being in the studio from being in our music course. You are actually encouraged to use the recording studio as much as you possibly can because the facilities are fantastic and once you leave you have to pay for studio time so its best to use it up while we can.

"I'll Wait for You", "Sail Away", and "Old Church Street," are all beautiful and very, moving songs. Are they inspired by or based on any of your own personal experiences? Where does your main inspiration come from for your songs?

(Also the Athenry girl in me has to ask is Old Church Street based on Old Church Street in our hometown?)

All of my songs are based on either my own personal experiences or someone who I am close to.

My aim is that the listener will be moved in their own way by my songs. I like people to come up with their own stories about my songs and make it personal to them. I don't think that I have any main inspiration for my songs but I get ideas based on what is happening in my life at that time. From studying songwriting in college I have been influenced by certain songwriters like Carole King and James Taylor. My song "Old Church Street" is in fact based on Old Church Street in Athenry! I wanted to write a song with a place name in it and I wanted it to have some connection to Athenry so I ended up with that title.

What was the moment that inspired you to pursue music?

Well when I was younger I got piano lessons and just didn't take to it so didn't continue for very long. I loved music and musicals when I was growing up but I was also big into sport. When I was about 12 I got my first guitar and got lessons and took to it very well. I then decided to go back to piano and found it much easier.

I was big into singing from a young age but I suppose I didn't know much about how to make a career out of it.

Once I started to get vocal lessons I just knew this is what I wanted to do. It just made me very happy. I formed a band and began playing on my own and started writing.

Luckily I was surrounded by such an amazing group of musicians that I felt I could ask about how to go about becoming a professional at this!

"MY AIM IS THAT THE LISTENER WILL BE MOVED IN THEIR OWN WAY BY MY SONGS. I LIKE PEOPLE TO COME UP WITH THEIR OWN STORIES ABOUT MY SONGS AND MAKE IT PERSONAL TO THEM."

I remember being asked up to sing with this band in Athenry and I was so nervous because to me they were all so experienced at this and I was only starting off but the rush I got from just singing one or two songs with that band that night is something I won't forget because even though it was about 10 minutes of singing it gave me confidence to pursue music further.

You've performed a lot of gigs from in college to Athenry and Galway as well, do you have any funny backstage stories that you would like to share with our readers? Or even what do you find most enjoyable about performing on stage?

I don't think I have any funny backstage stories but most of the time the nerves take over and there isn't much time for laughing! Being backstage before a show always frightens me, I have no problem being on stage and singing away because I can control that situation but there's something about waiting to go on that makes my nerves come out. I love when you look out into a crowd and you see someone looking directly at you. You could just be singing a cover but for those 3 or 4 minutes that person is engaged in the experience. Whenever I do original music and someone says to me "I was very touched by your song", it makes all the pre-gig nerves worth it.

Are there any singers, musicians that particularly inspire you as an artist? Or is there any dream artist that you would love to perform with in the future?

At the moment I am inspired by Gavin James. I would love to get a support slot with an Irish artist like that. Most Irish songwriters are inspiring to me because it's a tough business and it gives me hope that others are achieving what I want to achieve.

What would be the best piece of advice you would give any budding artists who might be reading this?

Don't compare yourself to any other songwriter or musician. Any time that someone else gets a gig or publicity and I don't, that just encourages me to work harder so that next time I'll get the gig or whatever it might be. As a songwriter if you are stressing about a certain line or phrase just close the book and take some time. If it seems like work or seems stressful that is not what you want. Songwriting, in my opinion is about expressing yourself. It should be a relaxing form of stress relief. It shouldn't cause stress!! As a performer the only advice I could give is to enjoy every moment of it!

Keep an eye out on Sinead's Facebook page Sinead Murphy-music for more original music over the summer and updates about her gigs!

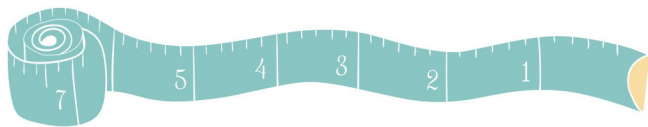


We at Cinders love a good crafting session and are hoping to get you started on our new fave - cross-stitch! **Roisín McNally**, of Rosy's Cross Stitch Designs was generous enough to give us a basic intro to cross stitch. A simple and easy guide to starting cross-stitch, so you too can have fandom inspired embroidery hoops hanging on your wall!

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Scissors
- Needles
- Fabric (aida)
- Threads (I recommend DMC threads)
- Embroidery Hoop
- Pattern





STEP 1

Pick the pattern that you'd like to cross stitch. You can find loads of patterns online for free and magazines in shops or even sites like Esty, where you can buy full cross stitch kits.

STEP 2

After you choose your pattern, fold your fabric in four to find the exact centre of the fabric. It's important to note that you always start from the centre and work outwards.



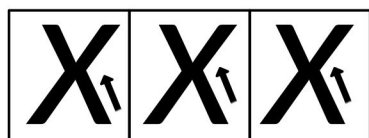
STEP 3

Thread your needle and get started! Start from the centre and count how many X's you need to do for that row. In cross-stitch you work from the centre out, row by row.

For example – if it's 3 stitches you need, go from bottom left to top right 3 times, and then work back the way from bottom right to top left.

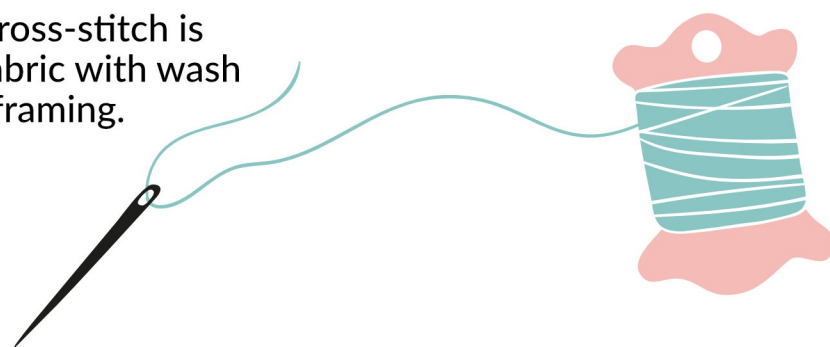


It should look something like this:



STEP 4

Then take it from there! When your cross-stitch is finished, you should hand wash the fabric with wash and soap, and allow to sit dry before framing.



17 things to tell my 17 year old self ...

Continuing our series of letters to our past selves is co-editor **Gráinne Coyne** who, after celebrating her 27th birthday last month, decided to write back to her 17 year old self.

1. It's okay not to be okay, and most importantly, it's okay to talk about not being okay too.

2. I WANT TO TELL YOU AT 27 THAT YOU WILL HAVE EVERYTHING FIGURED OUT LIKE YOU THOUGHT YOU WOULD. THE TRUTH IS, LIFE IS A LITTLE MORE CONFUSING AND UNPREDICTABLE, BUT TRUST ME, THAT'S OKAY. IT CAN BE SCARY AT TIMES, BUT YOU ARE A LOT STRONGER THAN YOU REALISE AND CAPABLE OF MORE THAN YOU KNOW.

3. Listen to your nanny/godmother, listen to your mother, listen to your sister, listen to your sisters(in law), listen to all the women in your life. They do know what's up, their perspective is key.

4. Those diaries you can't bear to sleep without writing to first, will become a thing of the past. I'm sorry but it's true. You will eventually move out of home, stay up later, discover social media and everything that was embarrassingly private, now becomes embarrassingly public. But don't stop writing in them though, they will bring a smile to your face in your twenties for sure.

5. THE BATTLE YOU HAVE WITH YOUR BODY AND SELF-ACCEPTANCE, I WON'T LIE TO YOU, IT GETS A LITTLE HARDER AND THINGS AGAIN WILL GET A LITTLE BIT MORE COMPLICATED. IN TIME YOU WILL LEARN TO RESPECT YOUR BODY, NO MATTER ITS SHAPE OR SIZE AND ON EVEN OCCASION, LOVE IT. BUT FOR NOW STOP COMPARING YOURSELF TO OTHERS, AND LOVE THE SKIN YOU'RE IN.

6. Those friends you long for, the friends who find you funny, who you can be yourself around and like you for you. They're there, seriously, they are. Some are right under your nose, some you have yet to meet. But trust me they are worth the wait.

7. You have this negative view of feminism which is not really your fault; it's just a more complicated time with limited internet access. That will change and you will soon realise how important feminism is to you, your friends...well really, to everyone.

8. WRITE, WRITE, WRITE. SERIOUSLY, YOU'RE NOT AS BAD AS YOU THINK YOU ARE AND YOU MAY ACTUALLY WEIRDLY GET SOME FORM OF A CAREER OUT OF IT.

9. Those things you are too scared to do, because you're afraid you'll embarrass yourself, or you're just not "good enough": Just do it. Seriously you will be older, and wondering why you didn't embrace this side of yourself when you were younger.

10. Again stop comparing yourself to others and trust me, nothing is ever what it seems. You are far luckier than you know.

11. THERE WILL BE OTHER AND FAR BETTER SHOWS BESIDES LOST AND DESPERATE HOUSEWIVES, SO DON'T GET TOO HUNG UP ON THEM. SERIOUSLY, DON'T.

12. You are your own worst critic. Seriously, listen to your mother, and your father too, their praise is not completely biased. They're also the ones who will give you the guidance you will need the most.

13. I know right now having a boyfriend seems to be the be all and end all. But trust me in time, it won't be that big of a deal. As a matter of fact, in a few years' time you'll actually realise that you prefer being by yourself. And that's okay too.

14. HEARTBREAK CAN COME IN MANY FORMS THOUGH. I WISH I COULD PROTECT YOU FROM IT, BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT EASY TIMES FOR SURE. BUT THOSE TIMES AS TOUGH AND LONG AS THEY MAY SEEM AND BE, ARE THE ONES THAT DEFINE YOU AND PUSH YOU TO PURSUE THINGS YOU NEVER THOUGHT YOU WOULD. LIKE I SAID YOU ARE STRONGER THAN YOU REALISE AND CAPABLE OF MORE THAN YOU KNOW. BUT DON'T FORGET, IT'S OKAY TO TALK TO OTHERS DURING THESE TOUGH TIMES, YOU'RE ONLY HUMAN.

15. You're already an aunty, but in a few more years you will become a godmother, and you will have someone looking up to you, your goddaughter. So you don't have to be perfect, but make sure to enjoy as many of those precious bonding moments with her as much as you can.

16. Seriously you're going to love your friends, and like I said some are closer than you think, one of them being your big sister. So give her little more credit when it comes to her life advice. She really does know what's up, and she will always be there for you.

17. YOU WILL FACE MANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE FUTURE, MOST OF THEM BEING FROM YOURSELF. WHEN THIS DOES HAPPEN, JUST REMEMBER TO INHALE, EXHALE AND REPEAT; "YOU ARE STRONGER THAN YOU REALISE AND CAPABLE OF MUCH MORE THAN YOU KNOW". TRUST ME WHEN I SAY, IT'S GOING TO BE OKAY, REALLY, IT IS.

Pathways

by Méabh McDonnell

for May McDonnell

My favourite city streets are old:
crumbling with scattered memories
and ghosts that pass forgotten homes,
once filled with lifelong dreams.
I imagine footsteps walking,
tracing my unsure feet,
Sure of where they were going.
I used to wish that we could meet
so I could see my city then
and take a night-time walk with you,
my half remembered friend,
a woman I never really knew.
When I walk we meet a thousand times
in these well-lit streets, once yours, now mine.



BOOK ~~REVIEW~~ CORNER



LIKE OTHER GIRLS BY CLAIRE HENNESSY

LIKE OTHER GIRLS is an important book. And it's an honest book. In short it's a book that every Irish girl needs to read.

It tells the story of bisexual teen Lauren, who finds herself up against a wall when she discovers she's pregnant and definitely does not want to be. Not many novels so obviously beg to be read in one sitting but *Like Other Girls* does. Lauren does.

Lauren is a character who grabs the front of your shirt and insists that you listen to what she has to say. Her story is strong and bold and a little bit confused - but then so is she. It's been a long time since I've read a teenager who felt so realistic. Because despite how intelligent she clearly is and how eager to learn, Lauren doesn't have all of the answers. She asks the reader a lot of questions throughout the story and questions herself a lot. She then - in a way that felt so familiar to me- proceeds to assume that she knows everything about everyone else's problems. Lauren is real to a fault. And that's what makes her story so powerful. It could be the story of any Irish teenager. Of any girl who finds herself in a crisis pregnancy and has to figure out what she is going to do.

One of the most refreshing aspects of *Like Other Girls* is that although Lauren's abortion is the centre-point of the story - it's not the 'whole point' of the story. Hennessy manages to examine her relationship with her parents, with alcohol, with discovering that her best friend is trans also while having Lauren's abortion happen on the side. And that's what is so chilling. Lauren's abortion is a secret that she carries with her and the weight gets heavier and heavier as the story progresses.

"IT COULD BE THE STORY OF ANY IRISH TEENAGER. OF ANY GIRL WHO FINDS HERSELF IN A CRISIS PREGNANCY AND HAS TO FIGURE OUT WHAT SHE IS GOING TO DO."

It's so easy to identify with Lauren in these moments. It's so easy to wonder - as Lauren does - how many other girls have gone through this - this secrecy, the fear and forced shame? I imagine it would have been simpler to write a story where Lauren 'learns a lesson' from her abortion - or write a story where she wishes she hadn't done so. But instead we get a much more empowered narrative. Any problems Lauren has aren't caused by her decision to terminate her pregnancy - they're merely heightened because of the secrecy and fear she endures and she begins to overcome them by telling her story. By talking about her abortion.

Lauren isn't a perfect character, she has flaws that can be uncomfortable to read but for my money that's what makes her realistic. It's in her earnest anger that I identified with her the most and in her brilliant pop culture references that I wanted to be her friend (there are very few people out there who share equal love for *Hamilton* and Darrell Rivers but I am one of them).

Like Other Girls is a book that I wouldn't be surprised to see on a mandatory reading list for Irish students in the future. It's a book that simultaneously captures the gravity of what teenagers have to deal with on a day to day basis while also focussing on the 'lighter aspects' that are equally important - like getting a part in the school musical. And I don't know about the rest of you - but that was so me growing up.

That's why the only regret I felt on reading *Like Other Girls* is that I wished I could have met Lauren sooner. She feels like someone who could have been my friend. She feels like someone I know. She feels like me. And that's why her story is so important.

- Reviewed by Méabh McDonnell

Creative words to inspire your day

"You can't use up creativity. The more you use, the more you have."

— Maya Angelou

"What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make."

— Jane Goodall

"You have power over your mind - not outside events. Realize this, and you will find strength."

— Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*

"Fairy tales do not tell children the dragons exist. Children already know that dragons exist. Fairy tales tell children the dragons can be beaten."

— G.K. Chesterton

"Creativity is contagious, pass it on" — Albert Einstein

"It is our choices that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities."

— J.K. Rowling

"Go and make interesting mistakes, make amazing mistakes, make glorious and fantastic mistakes. Break rules. Leave the world more interesting for your being here. Make. Good. Art."

— Neil Gaiman

"Do what you feel in your heart to be right, for you'll be criticized anyway."

Eleanor Roosevelt