

Irish DANCING & CULTURE Summer Reading List



Maeve E Gillette is a champion Irish dancer who earned a medal at the All Irelands and danced at the Worlds before hanging up her competitive Irish dance shoes. She understands the pressure that competitive dancers face each time they grace the stage, and how reading can be a wonderful outlet for relieving the stress of competition. Maeve is currently a junior in high school and is captain of her state-qualifying dance team. As an award-winning English student, Maeve enjoys reading and writing, and is on staff at IDM as our official book reviewer. We hope you enjoy her summer reading suggestions.

LIFFEY RIVERS

**Audience: Middle School–Young Teen
Fiction/Mystery**

I've been a fan of author Brenna Briggs' mystery series, *Liffey Rivers*, now seven books strong, since I was a young Irish dancer. You will instantly fall in love with the main character, Liffey, who has a passion for Irish dancing as well as for



solving mysteries. If you are a fan of the *Nancy Drew* books and you are an Irish dancer, this series is the perfect summer reading for you.

Liffey's Irish dancing takes her all over the world, and she gets entrapped in odd situations, which call on her great mystery solving skills along the way. Although the books are geared for a middle school student, teenagers and adults will enjoy reading the novels, especially those involved with Irish dancing. Liffey, part-time detective and full time lover of Irish dancing, ultimately triumphs in each story, but the road to getting there is full of twists and turns. This series is the perfect summer reading for Irish dancers.



IRISH WITCH'S DRESS IRISH WITCH'S TIARA

Audience: Middle School–Young Teen Genre: Fiction/Fantasy

This is another series that has a wonderful Irish dancing connection and comes highly recommended by many of IDM's readers. The award-winning author of the *Kaylee O'Shay* Irish dancing fiction has written these two captivating fantasy stories. Both books use Celtic mythology to create the story of a lazy teen that uses a magical dress to gain success, despite the danger her actions will cause to the world. The second novel, *The Irish Witch's Tiara*, completes the exciting two-book *Irish Witch* series for teens that

began with *The Irish Witch's Dress*. In the second book, heroine Harp McCardle is now age 15 and returns to battle Mealla, the Celtic sorceress, on the dance stage in a lavish, mysterious castle in Ireland. Both books will keep you on the edge of your seat, wondering what will happen next. We recently learned that Mr Vick is working on the sequel to his novel, *Dance of Time*, which was the first book in the *Coins of the Dagda* series. Book two, entitled *Dance of Secrets*, is due in late summer!



Travels With Gannon and Wyatt - IRELAND

Audience: Middle School – Young Teen Genre: Fiction/Mystery

I highly recommend reading the book series *Travels with Gannon and Wyatt* by authors Patti Wheeler & Keith Hemstreet. The fifth book in the series, *Ireland*, takes the reader on a new adventure with the courageous and thrill-seeking twins Gannon and Wyatt. Brave and outspoken, Gannon and the highly intellectual and rational Wyatt visit Ireland with their parents. Always looking for a fun adventure, they become interested in working at the O'Leary farm but soon discover a deadly blight is wreaking havoc on the Irish farmland. Determined to discover

the true cause, they set out to expose the evil villain, Kilroy Maloney. Throughout the book, you will learn about some of Ireland's rich history and traditions as the brothers make new, outrageous memories to write about in their travel journals. Their adventure takes an unexpected and dramatic turn that puts their lives in jeopardy. Wondering what trouble the boys will find next, you'll be on your toes to see if Gannon and Wyatt overcome the obstacles faced in Ireland and end up saving the country from a villainous, manipulative man.



STEALING MAGIC

Audience: Middle School Genre: Fiction/Mystery

IDM did a call out on our Facebook page for summer reading suggestions, and I was happy to receive the recommendation from a reader for the book *Stealing Magic*. For readers who enjoy magic, mystery and adventure, this is the perfect summer reading. *Stealing Magic* is the sequel to author Marianne Malone's *The Sixty-Eight Rooms*. The series is inspired by the wonder of the Art Institute of Chicago's miniature Thorne Rooms.

To their surprise, main characters Ruthie and Jack discover miniatures from the famous Throne Rooms begin to disappear.

Is it the work of a clever art thief or has someone else discovered the secret of the Thorne Rooms' magic? Ruthie and Jack race from a modern day Chicago to 1937 Paris to antebellum South Carolina to discover the truth. The duo is in dire straits when the key that allows them to shrink and access the past worlds is stolen. They end up in a life and death race to solve this mystery. Will Ruthie and Jack catch the thief and help their new friends before the magic and the rooms are destroyed? Add this to your summer reading list to learn if they triumph in the end.





Dancing Together As One * One Brick At A Time * A Choice Of The Heart * Mary's Heart * Plowing Your Field

Audience: Young readers **Genre:** Folklore/Short story

Irish dance teacher and author, Gina Dewey, creates an elated and spirited tone in her new series of books, geared to the young reader. In every story, an Irish proverb is made the central theme, and it is designed to make a connection with the young dancer to encourage and help build his/her moral character.

Not only do the characters learn an ethical value, but they are introduced to the wonderful world of Irish step dancing. From learning the team dance of a ceili to the history of Ireland, Gina Dewey conveys to the reader many aspects of Irish heritage. The readers

will find each main character containing the values of perseverance, motivation and focus in order to achieve one's dreams.

Sometimes, like in the real Irish dance world, the going gets tough, but the reader will find each young dancer staying true to the central theme of the story in order to come out victorious. These books are a fun read for any Irish dancer, especially because each story is very relatable. Exciting, fresh and unique, these short stories show the true determination of Irish dancers and their great ability to grow inside and out.

No One's Watching

Audience: Teen/Young Adult **Genre:** Fiction/Drama

No One's Watching, a refreshing narrative told by young Kitri Othersen, is a great read for young adults, especially those interested in dance. Being only 14 years old, Kitri has already devoted her life to ballet because of her mother and grandmother, both of whom were professional ballet dancers. Engulfed by their pressure, Kitri annually goes to a summer dance camp to improve and eventually become good enough to follow in her mother and grandmother's footsteps. In a few hundred pages, author Sandy Green illustrates the hectic life of a dancer, and creates an intriguing series of events that will leave the reader wanting more. From mean girls to romance, teenage

Kitri has the most dramatic experiences at camp yet, and she discovers a new passion she never would have guessed she would love – Irish dancing. Surprisingly, she gets placed in an Irish dance duet that changes her camp experience, and her entire life. Brave and independent, Kitri unfolds her mother's unexplained hatred for Irish dancing and her father's true identity. This book perfectly relates to the crazy life of a dancer, and it conveys to the reader that everyone should follow his or her dreams. This novel provides entertainment and teaches a great life lesson we should all live by. As the book's jacket says: "If you aren't following your dreams, whose dreams are you following?"



TAKING FLIGHT

Audience: Pre-Teen/Teen/Young Adult/Adult **Genre:** Non-Fiction/Memoir

As both an Irish dancer and a modern dancer, I am captivated and inspired by the true story of Michaela DePrince, whose life journey takes her from an orphaned child in war-torn Sierra Leone, West Africa to becoming one of the top young ballet stars in the world. This memoir follows Michaela's journey from abuse and poverty in her hometown to the arms of her adoptive family in America who encouraged her love of dance, illustrating how one person's determination and courage, even in the face of incredible adversity, can triumph over tragedy.

Michaela, born with the name Mabinty Bangura to a loving family, was known as girl Number 27 at the orphanage in Sierra Leone. Here, she was tormented and labelled a 'devil child' due to a condition that makes her skin appear spotted. Her

spirit was unbroken, and she found hope in a photo from a magazine of a beautiful ballerina en pointe. In 1999, at the age of four, Michaela and another girl, Mia, were adopted by Elaine and Charles DePrince from New Jersey, and taken to the United States. Her American family encouraged her to dance by enrolling her in classes, which led to one of the most moving life stories you will ever read. In this memoir, Michaela, with the help of her adoptive mother, Elaine DePrince, shares her dramatic life story, including her determination to overcome stereotypes of conventional beauty and break the racial barriers in the world of competitive ballet. This story is inspiring for anyone facing challenges, but especially for dancers who believe anything is possible with passion, perseverance, hard work and love.

