

Two compelling stories of teenage angst and heartbreak

TEEN FICTION
BRUISED
SIOBHÁN
PARKINSON
(Hodder £5.99)



FLICK
GERALDINE
MEADE
(Little Island, €8.99)



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As Ireland's first Children's Laureate, Siobhán Parkinson's new book for teenagers is bound to attract critical attention. *Bruised* is a gritty novel set in contemporary Ireland, narrated by 14-year-old Jonathan. When his alcoholic 'Ma' hits his lit-

tle sister, Julie, Jonathan has had enough. The siblings go on the run, first to their recently deceased 'Gramma's' house, and then on to Galway. It's a life-changing journey for both.

The characters' voices are occasionally inconsistent, which jars a little. Julie, who is eight, describes a confessional box as smelling like 'the inside of a cutlery drawer,' and Jonathan's expressions are downright dated at times — I've never heard one of today's teenagers say 'tickles my fancy', 'chop, chop' or 'oh, lordy me'. However, this is a minor quibble.

Bruised is carefully and lovingly crafted, an exemplary piece of writing, especially for teenagers and a strong, brave and humane book, worthy of the Laureate.

Parkinson was also the editor of another book out this season, *Flick*, the stunning debut by Geraldine Meade. Sixteen-year-old Felicity Costello ('Flick') is in turmoil. She knows she should like boys but is increasingly

drawn to girls, namely her brother's girlfriend, Becks.

When Flick is date-raped at a party by a boy she trusted, and one of her friends posts a picture of her kissing Becks on Facebook, Flick can't cope, so decides to end it all by taking an overdose. Luckily she's discovered in time, and the second half of the book chronicles her journey to recovery.

There are a few flaws. Meade's use of nicknames for every character, even Flick's doctor — 'Dr Rodge' isn't safe — grates after a while, and some scenes are thrown away while others are too long.

Overall, however, this is a brilliant first novel, full of compassion, with an utterly believable and compelling main character. I'd be surprised not to see both *Bruised* and *Flick* on the Bisto Award shortlist next time around.

SARAH WEBB

Sarah Webb's latest book for age 10+ is *Ask Amy Green: Bridesmaid Blitz*