Laureates and Book Doctors

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Author and illustrator PJ Lynch is the fourth Laureate na nÓg, Ireland’s laureate for children’s literature. He was accompanied on his visit to Montreal in October by a representative from Children’s Books Ireland (CBI) the organization that initiated the popular and unique Book Clinic program in Ireland.

A term as children’s laureate lasts for two years, during which time the laureate is expected to accomplish a legacy project based on a theme. PJ’s chosen theme is “The Big Picture”. His plans are to “create a landmark image in a prominent place or places in Ireland as a permanent reminder of the power of pictures to incite the imagination.”

Born in Belfast, PJ has illustrated over twenty beautiful books. He has won the Kate Greenaway Medal twice. The first medal was awarded for his illustrations in The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey (Walker Books) written by Susan Wojciechowski, and the second was for his work in When Jessie Came Across the Sea written by Amy Hest. PJ is also a three-times recipient of the prestigious Christopher medal. His website displays beautiful examples of his work and you can visit it here: http://www.pjlynchgallery.com/
A gallery of pictures from the book *The Boy Who Fell Off the Mayflower* was presented at PJ’s recent lecture; and what a great event organized by Dr. Susan Cahill! You can view the gallery PJ presented here: https://www.theguardian.com/childrens-books-site/gallery/2015/nov/17/the-boy-who-fell-off-the-mayflower-in-pictures

Traditional stories, legends, and fairy tales are recurrent subjects in PJ’s work. However, his next project offers a change of pace as he has collaborated with Ryan Tubridy on his upcoming book *Patrick and the President*. The story is about John F Kennedy’s visit to Ireland and it will be published in 2017.

The audience was thrilled to learn about the Book Clinic offered to children in Ireland during PJ’s Q&A. Book Doctors travel around the country visiting libraries and they provide prescriptions to children in need of advice. Is that not sweet? Young readers are asked about the books, activities, films, and video games they enjoy, and the book doctors offer their expert advice. Any particular problems such as what to read once the *Harry Potter* series has ended are
addressed with a personalized prescription.

PJ’s work is funded by the Arts Council and Dublin UNESCO City of Literature. Their goal is to reach out to all children in Ireland. You can visit their website using this address: http://childrensbooksireland.ie/book-clinics/