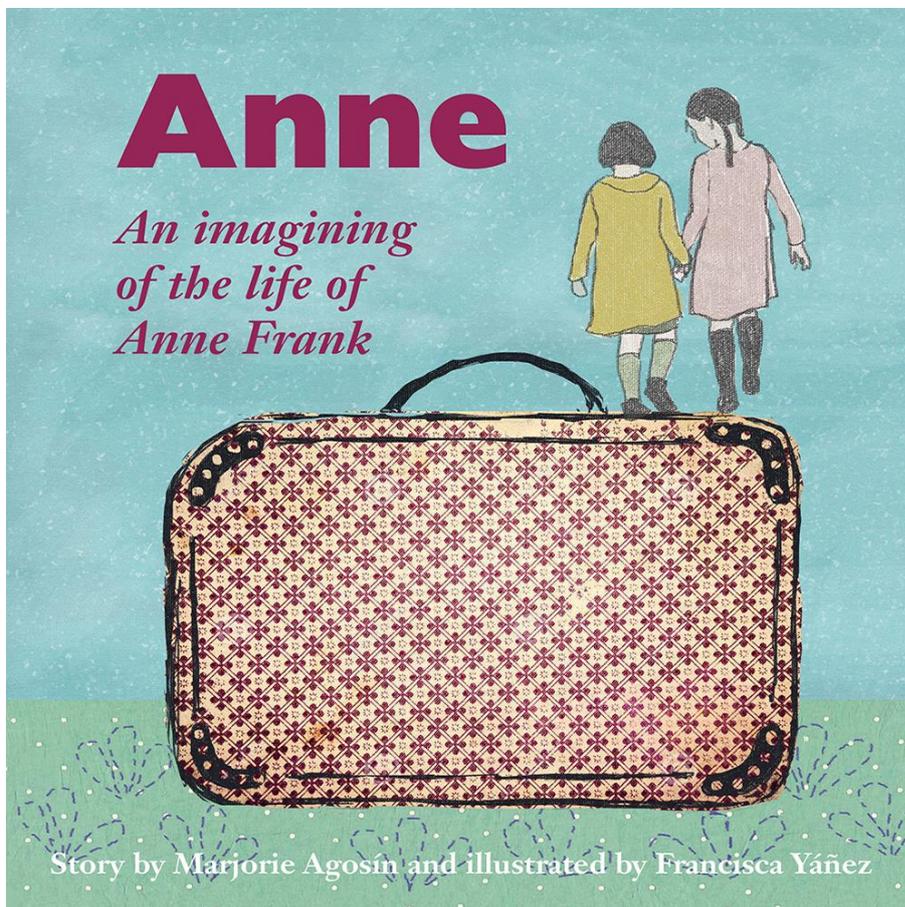


## NORTH WEST WORDS NIGHT “About War”

Thursday, 15<sup>th</sup> February, 8-10pm

Over 30 people turned up on a cold and sleety night to the second event associated with the **War-Torn Children** Exhibition.

Following welcomes, the evening began with Roberta discussing Marjorie Agosín’s book on the life of Anne Frank, creating the link between the exhibition and the book.



Cover image of “Anne – An imagining of the life of Anne Frank” by Marjorie Agosín.

This was followed by a brief guided tour of the exhibition



**Exhibition curator, Roberta Bacic giving a guided tour of the exhibition. (Photo: Breege Doherty)**

Then to the readings. Eight local writers read either their own work or pieces by others, all in response to the general theme of war. The contributions were diverse, but all thought provoking and powerful.

James Finnegan opened the evening with his poem on disappearance, written following a trip to Peru. His second poem, about a man crossing the street in Mosul, was written in response to a photo in The Irish Times in 2016.

Deirdre Hines followed, reading a poignant poem called "Birdsong". She then read her own composition "My essay on war for Miss Doherty", written from the viewpoint of a child, very cleverly incorporating a child's own experience of "holy war" in the playground or classroom with the bigger picture.

Catherine Laird read two beautifully crafted pieces. The first shared the thoughts of a young lad about to die on a First World War battlefield. The second very touchingly described letters to two grandmothers from their grandsons in 1916, one in France, the other in Kilmainham Gaol.

Imelda Maguire finished the first part of the readings with her very powerful poem "Shoes from Auschwitz", written in response to an exhibit of children's shoes from Auschwitz that she saw when her own son was a toddler. Anyone who had ever put a pair of shoes on a child could not but be moved by this poem.

Original music followed from Mary Ann McDonald.



**Listening intently to the readings. (Photo: Breege Doherty)**

Mary Turley McGrath, a local poet was unable to be present on the night but kindly contributed two poems to the evening. “The Valley of the Birches”, which won a Trocaire and Poetry Ireland National Competition in 2014, was read by Deirdre Mc Clay. Annette Patton read “New Exodus”, describing the thoughts of a young girl trying to journey through Europe with her family. Both very powerful poems.

Rose McDaid shared her thoughts on refugees, beginning with Annie Moore, the 15 year old Irish girl who was the first to enter Ellis Island, then recalling her own experiences with Kosovan refugees in a camp in Macedonia in the 1990s and ending with a challenge to us all to support the resettlement of refugees in Donegal, and welcome them as strangers would have been welcomed by early Irish society under Brehon law.

Averil Meehan’s poem was inspired by a visit to Prague, where she saw many flagstones on pavements, recalling the names of Jewish families who had lived in the adjoining buildings, but had perished in the Holocaust. Her very moving poem was from the viewpoint of one such family.

Guy Stephenson’s readings closed the night. His poem, “Flicker”, compared his feelings as a child watching scenes of refugees on TV and trying to understand them, and then fast forwarded to several years later, still seeing scenes of refugees on TV. This tied in so well with the photographic exhibition, where photos of fleeing people from the 1930s are alongside those from the present day.



**Exhibition curator, Roberta Bacic describing the textiles in detail. (Photo: Breege Doherty)**

The evening was very ably chaired by Eamonn Bonner from North West Words.

Many thanks to all contributors for their generosity in sharing their talents. An excellent evening.

Mary Ryan, Letterkenny Amnesty Group

19<sup>th</sup> February 2018