

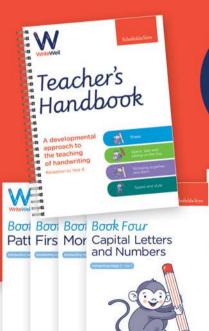




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## Hello...



...and a warm welcome to the latest issue of Teach Reading & Writing.

We're back! Although schools have officially reopened, Covid-related absences for both staff and students remain high. But in the face of the ongoing pandemic, teachers are still pulling out all the stops to make learning fun, engaging and relevant for their children, and nowhere is this more clear than in the joy of sharing stories.

And we are here for it. From poet Tomos Roberts on how poetry can unleash children's agency (p.26); to beloved comedian and author Ben Miller sharing his writing process, and how having teachers for parents set him up for success (p.9), we've got a lot to dig into.

Elsewhere, TV presenter, screenwriter and author Konnie Huq delves into how funny stories can help children embrace STEM (p.42) and teacher Colleen Lynch follows up with ideas on how to use robots to improve literacy (p.43). If that's not enough hands-on STEM for you, check out our engineering-themed book topic on Jarrett Lerner's *EngiNerds*, (p.53), which gets pupils to create their own gadgets and predict narrative twists and turns.

Pie Corbett is also back another amazing story, focusing on writing dialogue through mystery (p.46). Great to share with your class, especially with spooky season coming up... For those that would perhaps rather listen than read, we have three new Author in Your Classroom podcasts from legendary writers Jacqueline Wilson (p.10), Lauren Child (p.38) and Rhianna Pratchett (p.66). Each episode is split up into three easily-digestible sections – complete with bespoke lesson plans from Plazoom – ideal to play in the classroom and spark discussion.

If you're still fighting the battle to get pupils excited about books to start with, check out our roundups; ten titles to explore cities (p.12); and for a more timley topic, five books chosen by education experts at the National Literacy Trust to help you teach kids about Remembrance (p.59).

Last but certainly not least, we are absolutely delighted to announce the winners of this year's Teach Primary Book Awards (p.70). A panel of expert judges has chosen 32 astounding titles across four categories, and boy is it a list. Thank you and a huge well done to all that entered, and an everlasting salute to our brilliant judges.

So, whether your class is full of bookworms or decidedly-less-interested-worms, I'm confident there will be something in these pages for you.

With best wishes and until next time.

#### **Charley Rogers**

(editor)

#### Author in Your Classroom

Play the podcast, share the teaching sequence – and inspire amazing writing from every pupil!



JACQUELINE WILSON
Much-loved author Dame
Jacqueline Wilson discusses
how putting familiar faces
in new places can inspire
brilliant new stories, p10

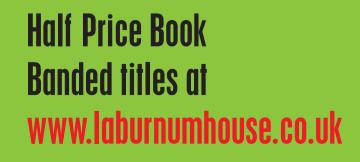


LAUREN CHILD
The creator of ever-popular
Charlie and Lola shares how
pupils can look for or notice
small things that they can use
to create ideas for a story, p38



RHIANNA
PRATCHETT
Storytelling with a twist!,
Encourage pupils to choose
their own adventure with
game writer and author
Rhianna Pratchett. p66







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#### DISTRIBUTED BY: Frontline Ltd. Peterborough

Tel: 01733 555161

#### ART EDITOR:

#### PHOTOGRAPHY: CliQQ Photography, cliqq.co.uk

ACCOUNTS: 01206 505995

#### DESIGN &

REPROGRAPHICS: Ace Pre-Press 01206 508608

#### CUSTOMER SERVICES: aceville@dctmedia.co.uk 0800 904 7000

PUBLISHER:

Helen Tudor

Published by: Maze Media (2000) Ltd. 25 Phoenix Court, Hawkins Rd. Colchester, Essex, CO2 8JY. Tel: 01206 505900

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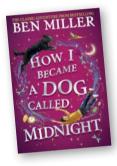






# 'The best stories work for everyone'

We talk to comedian and children's author **Ben Miller** about writing for children, the power of teacher parents, and why the best stories really are timeless and ageless



TR&W You're
well-known
amongst adults
for your
comedy
career. How
do children
compare as
audience
members?

BM My parents are teachers, and I was very, very lucky growing up that they had a great love for children's stories, and as a result, I have the same passion and enthusiasm for them. To be honest, there isn't any difference between making something for adults and for children, I think if you tried to write or perform in a way you think children would like, it wouldn't work. But what you can do is focus on the clarity of your storytelling, and think about what you want the story to do, what impact you want it to have. For me, I'm writing for adults and children ages seven and up, basically. The best stories work for everybody. They tap into something that goes much deeper than just your age.

How do your kids get involved in your writing?

The poor kids, they're so good. I have three children, and the one who happens to be closest to the age range of my readers at the time, tends to help out. So at the moment it's Harrison, who's

nine. He's my guinea pig for almost the whole process, but the main thing is just reading the story to him and watching his reaction really carefully. Of course, the worst criticism is that the kids just get up and walk off! In the latest book, there's a part of the story where the boy gets trapped in the body of a dog, and wants to send a message using Bananagram tiles. I asked Harrison, "If you were stuck in a dog, and wanted to send a message to a friend, what would you say?" And he replied, "It's easy, Daddy. I'd say 'Help, trapped in dog'." So that's what I wrote. [Laughs]. I like to keep it authentic.

Why do you think reading out loud is so important for developing literacy?

I think speaking stories out loud is probably how humanity [as we know it] first started. There is something so mystical and magical going on when stories are read out loud.

Storytelling is how we understand

the world,

and understand each other. And research shows that it does have real benefits for children's development, although we don't necessarily understand why. My hunch is that it's probably impossible to do the experiment that would tell us why, but that it's something fundamental to who and what we are as creatures. Kids are interested in everything, too, so even if they don't understand all the words, they're experts in singling out the important parts of a conversation, and understanding emotional undercurrents.

#### How has your own education journey influenced your writing?

I've always loved physics and science, and I did start a PhD. But the biggest influence on me was my own parents being teachers, and having so many stories read to me at a young age. I do enjoy adding some science into the stories; for example, in the newest book, there's a lot of information about the moon. My interest in science is quite childlike, and I think the kids of the age I'm writing for find those little bits of science really fascinating. Wrapping it up in stories can make it more memorable, as well as allowing children to explore something that interests them, through a narrative they can relate to and understand.

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# Reciprocal reading for MIXED ABILITY

Classes with a range of abilities can be tricky to engage, but with reciprocal reading, you can make sure everyone gets what they need

#### MIA BROUGH

re you struggling to juggle what seems like an endless number of reading abilities that require different level texts? This used to be me. But then I heard of reciprocal reading. Also referred to as reciprocal teaching, reciprocal reading is a technique which does not use differentiation through text difficulty during reading lessons (Cooper and Grieve. 2009). At its heart, it centres on the use of four key strategies of predict, clarify, question and summarise to develop comprehension. The technique uses the same text for all learners, and differentiation occurs through question styles relating to Bloom's Taxonomy.

#### Below are five top tips to begin your reciprocal reading journey:

Don't just choose an age-appropriate text you think the children will like; choose one that interests you or that you genuinely enjoy. This may seem pretty obvious, but I sometimes feel it's overlooked. If you're not excited to teach with it, how can you expect the children to be excited to engage with it?

Make reading part of your everyday classroom routine. The more children read and are exposed to a range of different texts and vocabulary, the more they will learn. You can achieve this through simple tasks such as displaying a 'Word of the Day' and providing an example of the word used in context, or by simply reading a book with the class. I have found reading a class text, even if it is just an online news article, is a great tool in helping to assess reading comprehension of unknown texts.

During reading sessions, use discussions by providing language stems to prompt readers to develop their own knowledge. (See chart below left)

Try to incorporate any of the four key strategies into your everyday teaching, regardless of the lesson or subject. Reading skills can be developed in any areas of the curriculum, and the prediction strategy can work particularly well in science, as you could ask learners to use what they already know to make a prediction.

Finally, make reading fun! I've found pupils have really enjoyed 'Prediction Puzzle'. This is where the class have to see if they can identify what we will be reading. I give the children three clues and they are allowed three questions to guess the topic of our next text. It has been a great tool in not only creating a real 'buzz' about reading, but also improving questioning and inference skills. It can also be used in any subject. As an English lecturer once told me, the more links you can make to reading, the easier the teaching will be.

Remember, throughout lessons try to explicitly model useful reading behaviours whenever possible. Point out the clues you are using to create your predictions, show how you use a sentence to identify a word's meaning, model how to find relevant information to answer a question, and demonstrate how to decide what the most important information is. YOU are the most important and crucial teaching aid in that classroom, and you do know what you are doing (even though it sometimes doesn't feel like it).



Mia Brough is a Year 5 teacher in a junior school in the West Midlands,



#### **SKILL**

#### Prediction

Use clues to make logical predictions

#### Clarify

Identify parts that are confusing and formulate understanding

#### Question

Ask questions based on the text

#### Summarise

Reiterate the main ideas in their own words

#### LANGUAGE STEMS

I think that...

I think we will find out more about...

I think (character's name) is feeling... because...

What does the word... mean? Can you explain what...? Why does (character's name)...?

Why does it say...? How/why did...?

How is... an example of...?

How do (character's name) and (character's name) compare?

The text is about...

The main ideas are...

The author's key points are...

The important concepts are...



## Putting characters in unfamiliar places

## with Tacqueline Wilson

Play the podcast, share the teaching sequence - and inspire amazing writing from every pupil...

Much loved author and former children's laureate, Dame Jacqueline Wilson, has written over 100 books that have been enjoyed by children and adults alike. Some of her most popular characters have been turned into popular children's television series, with audiences sharing the lives of Tracy Beaker and Hetty Feather; and her latest book, *The Primrose Railway Children*, reimagines E Nesbitt's classic story, for modern children.





In this teaching sequence, children will explore using characters that they are familiar with from their favourite stories and placing them in new surroundings. They will discuss how their characters might react to the new places that they visit using role play, before writing their own stories based on their ideas. Extracts from episode 20 of the Author In Your

#### "No one wants to make writing hard work"

Classroom podcast, featuring Jacqueline Wilson, are suggested to introduce each section of the teaching sequence – you can listen to the whole episode at bit.ly/ AIYCJacqueline Wilson



Nick Sharrat

#### SESSION 1

#### CHARACTERS WE KNOW

- 1 | Play the podcast from **9:52** to the end of part 1 at **19:05**.
- 2 | Explain to the children



that Jacqueline has used E Nesbitt's book *The Railway Children* as inspiration for her novel. Discuss what the children know about the characters in Nesbitt's classic novel.

3 Ask the children to think about characters in stories that they have read that they could use as inspiration for their own stories. Create a list as a class, using ideas from books that you have read as a class, in previous classes, or that children have read independently. Discuss how they could also use people that they know, such as their family

and friends, to base their characters on if they are stuck for ideas.

- 4 | Ask the children to jot down suggestions of characters that they could use from other stories in their own writing.
- 5 | Encourage them to think about how they might change the characters in some way for their own story. They could change the time that they are alive (and so the period the story was set in), their names, gender or something else about them, but remind them that the essence or characteristics should remain similar.



© Rachael Dean



#### **SESSION 2**

#### CHARACTERS IN **UNFAMILIAR PLACES**

- 1 | Recap the section of the podcast from session 1, thinking about how Jacqueline has placed her modern day children, Becks, Perry and Phoebe, in an unfamiliar place – an Edwardian railway station.
- 2 | Play the section 2 of the podcast that starts at 19:10 up to 29:31, where Jacqueline reads an extract from the book The Primrose Railway Children. Whilst she is reading, ask pupils to think about how the café and station are unfamiliar and how Jacqueline describes these places as the narrator, Phoebe sees them for the first time.
- 3 | Discuss what was new for Becks, Perry and Phoebe in the extract they have just

heard. Make a note of these as a class

- 4 | Ask pupils to think about how Becks, Perry and Phoebe feel when visiting the station for the first time. Pupils could be in role as one of the characters and describe their day including how they feel about it.
- **5** | Ask the pupils to revisit their ideas for characters. and decide which they would like to use in their own story. Discuss new places that characters could visit, and create a list as a class. Characters could go somewhere like the Primrose Railway, that shows how things were in the past. Or perhaps characters could move from the city to the countryside or vice versa. Pupils should collect ideas for places that their chosen



character or characters could visit that would be new to them, and make a note of them

6 | Give pupils the opportunity to discuss their characters and new places that they could visit in pairs or small groups. Opportunities for role play could help pupils to develop the character further. Pupils could be in role as their character and describe the unfamiliar places that they visit.

#### SESSION 4

#### WHERE NEXT?

- 1 | Play the podcast from **29:31** to the end of part 2, listening to Jacqueline's advice about writing stories using characters you know.
- 2 | Allow pupils time to review their planning from earlier, and ask them to discuss where their characters and setting might take them.
- 3 Discuss as a class the questions below, using characters and settings that the pupils have already created:
- How did the characters get there?
- Why are they there?
- What do they think of this new place/situation?
- What might happen next?
- 4 Ask pupils to jot down ideas for their own story, without necessarily planning how it might end.



#### **SESSION 3**

#### **DESCRIBING PLACES**

- 1 | Listen again to the extract from The Primrose Railway Children and explore the techniques that Jacqueline Wilson has used to describe the café and the station. How are the people described?
- 2 | Ask pupils to find examples of the techniques listed below.
- expanded noun phrases (many examples)
- using the senses (describing sounds as well as what characters can see)



- direct speech (Becks describing what ISN'T there)
- 3 | Find the section in the extract where the author

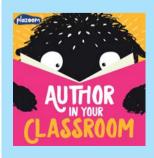
describes things that are missing in the paragraph that begins, 'It was like living in the past...' Discuss how this helps the reader to visualise the setting for this section of the story.

4 | Using their ideas from earlier, children should choose an unfamiliar place for their characters to visit and record their ideas. Once planned, children could create a description of the setting using the techniques identified in Jacqueline Wilson's writing either orally or in writing.

#### WRITING A STORY

- 1 | Ask pupils to use their ideas to begin writing a story. Remind them that they can use ideas from the story that their characters are originally from, just like Jacqueline used the trains from *The Railway* Children by E Nesbitt.
- 2 | Allow children time to write and edit their story, thinking about how they will describe settings; how are they different to where the characters are usually from? If possible, avoid giving pupils a very detailed story plan and let their characters ignite imaginations to see where the story goes. Some may benefit from more structure to begin.

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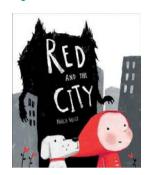


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Engaging books to help children explore cities' role in our modern world, and their impact on people and wildlife

#### FOUNDATION STAGE





#### FOUNDATION STAGE

Last Stop on Market Street

BY MATT DE LA PENA, ILL CHRISTIAN ROBINSON,



#### What's the story?

Colby gets to ride in a car after church, so why do CJ and his Nana have to catch the bus? And who wants to spend time in a city with graffiti and broken-down doors, anyway?

But there are wonders in every neighbourhood, and Nana is just the person to help CJ discover them. "When you're surrounded by dirt, you're a better witness of what's beautiful."

This picturebook is packed with kindness, but there's plenty of grit here, too. The keen ear and warm heart of de la Pena's text are well matched by Robinson's bold and stylish collages.

#### Thinking and talking

What happens when CJ and Nana get to the soup kitchen? Why do you think Nana takes him there?

Does CJ's city seem familiar? In





what ways does it differ from your neighbourhood?

CJ doesn't like taking the bus. How does Nana change his mind? Is there something you don't like doing? Could you see it differently?

#### Try this...

■ Prompted by the artwork, collect words to describe CJ's city. Paint a city street, then choose ten great words to describe it and add them to your picture. You could write

#### What's the story?

Red and her dog set off to visit Grandma in the city. Mum's issued instructions about staying safe, but Red strays from the path. Soon she's surrounded by so much choice and excitement that she doesn't know where to look – which is just as well, because there's something very strange about those buildings!



and unnerves in equal measure. Monochrome cityscapes are enlivened by a single colour – there are no prizes for guessing which – and Voigt's playful details will intrigue and reward young readers.

### Thinking and talking

Is Red's city a bad place, or a good place? Do Red and Grandma like it?

Is there a Big Bad
Wolf in this book?
Can we enjoy the good
things a city has to offer
and stay safe? How?

#### Try this...

■ Follow Woody through this book. What's he thinking? Where does he go when Red gets lost? Tell



the story from his perspective.

What are the 'wonderful things' that Red and Grandma talk about? What city activities do you enjoy? Draw pictures of your favourite urban pastimes, then frame for a display.

■ Using shades of grey plus black and white, paint pictures of city buildings and assemble to produce a cityscape. Cut a figure from red paper and add to your artwork. Why do you think there's so little colour in this book?

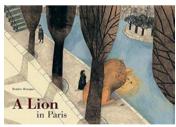


them very small so people have to look hard to find them, or **VERY LARGE** so they become a key part of your design.

■ Sometimes thinking positively isn't enough. What actions could you take to improve your neighbourhood? ■ Use the pictures to help you create a mural of a city bus. Populate it with painted and collaged passengers. Who are these people, and why are they riding on your bus? Tell their stories.

#### **KEY STAGE 1**

A Lion in Paris
BY BEATRICE
ALEMAGNA, TATE
PUBLISHING



#### What's the story?

A lion is walking through the streets of Paris. A recent arrival, he feels lonely and confused. Then he climbs the Eiffel Tower and sees the city smiling up at him. In the middle of a roundabout, he spots an empty plinth. Could it be waiting for him?

The lion's story was inspired by a real-life statue and will please young audiences, but it's Alemagna's whimsical, sophisticated artwork that takes this book somewhere special.



Mixed-media characters go about their business against a backdrop of architectural pencil drawings, and every spread is a visual delight.

## Thinking and talking

Have you been to Paris? What do we learn about it from this book?

Look at photos of Parisian landmarks. Can you match them to the artwork? Which would you like to visit?

What did the lion need most when he arrived in Paris? How couldyou help visitors to your neighbourhood?

#### Try this...

- Using coloured pencils, draw a street or city scene from observation. Add photos, textured papers and other materials to create mixed-media collages inspired by Alemagna's artwork.
- Explore Lion's movements as he tours Paris. Can you sit and stand and ROAAAR like him? Make a plinth and install yourself on it, in role. Who can strike the best pose?
- Choose a famous city and create a guidebook for Lion, drawing his attention to buildings to visit and explaining what he needs to know.

KEY STAGE 1

Belonging

BY JEANNIE BAKER, WALKER BOOKS



#### What's the story?

In a series of textured collages, this wordless picturebook depicts a changing city viewed from the same window over time.

Reading the visual clues, we meet a girl called Tracy and watch as her concrete yard becomes a garden. The neighbouring streets are planted with trees and flowers, and people come together to enjoy their green oasis.

#### Thinking and talking

Who does this window belong to? What do we learn about Tracy and her family? How do we find out?

What changes in Tracy's city? How and why does this transformation happen?

Have you observed any changes in your neighbourhood? What would you like to change?

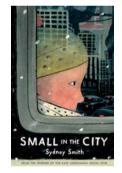
#### Try this...

- Hot seat an in-role volunteer as Tracy (or play the part yourself!) and interview her to find out what she knows about her changing city. Report on your discoveries.
- Plant seeds for a tub or windowbox to bring colour to a corner of your school.
- Use textured and patterned papers, fabrics and other materials to make a collage of a house. Join your houses to create a street, then give it some 'Tracy magic' by adding flowers, trees and other plants.



**KEY STAGE 1** 













#### What's the story?

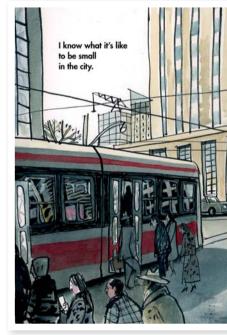
With loving kindness and patience, a boy tells a lost cat how to survive in a snowbound city. Danger lurks everywhere in this atmospheric picturebook, but the boy's advice is sound. All we can do is share his optimism.

Bold cityscapes are punctuated by busier, multi-image spreads evoking a sense of isolation and unease. The text is minimal it's the pictures that do most of the talking - and although the verbal story is unresolved, the final image reassures.

NOTE: Way Home by Libby Hathorn and Gregory Rogers (see page 16) explores similar themes.

#### Thinking and talking

Have you ever been lost? How do you



think the cat feels in this book?

What do these pictures tell us about the city? Why do you think the artist painted them this way?

What does the boy tell his cat? Is it good advice for people, too? What would you tell this boy about staying safe?



write a poem about it.

- Imagine you're the cat. Tell the story of how you found your way back home.
- Sketch from observation in an urban street, exploring lines, marks and patterns. Back in school, create bold Sydney-Smith-style paintings using a dark palette highlighted with white.

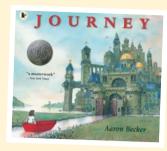


■ Choose one of these illustrations and imagine you're stepping into it. What can you see, hear and smell? How do you feel? Collect words to describe the city in this book, then



#### KEY STAGE 2





Journey
BY AARON BECKER, WALKER BOOKS



#### What's the story?

In this wordless and absorbing picturebook, a girl finds a magic crayon and draws herself into an adventure. Against a backdrop of towering spires and aerial waterways, an adrenaline-fuelled chase in a wonderfully improbable city ensues.

Aaron Becker's experience in the film industry is evident on every spread of this well-paced and immensely enjoyable book.

### Thinking and talking

If you had a magic crayon, what would you draw?

How do people solve problems in cities, like water supply and transport? How do they find new ways of building things? Is it useful to imagine a city that doesn't exist?

Would this book make a good film?

#### Try this...

- Look at the pictures of the castle-city. What can you see? List your questions about this place and invent answers. Tell another story in this setting.
- Trace roads and buildings from a photo of a real city. Add imaginary buildings and other features to create a fantasy city of your own.
- If you could fly somewhere on a magic carpet, where would you go? Find out about real cities you could visit (or invent your own!) Sitting on a red rug, describe your journey and tell everyone what you can see. Then write about it.

#### KEY STAGE 2







#### What's the story?

From snakes living in sewers to hawks hunting on a famous shopping-street, Wild City explores

> contemporary urban environments from the perspective of their animal inhabitants.

Featured cities include London, Warsaw, New York, Calgary, Sydney, Beijing, Tokyo, Mumbai, Singapore, Cape Town, Seoul and more.

Written by an award-winning natural history journalist and illustrated with appealing, stylized spreads in a muted palette, this book answers questions about adaptation and suggests ways that we can help.

#### Thinking and talking

Have you visited any of these cities, or observed wildlife in an urban environment? Pool your experience and knowledge.

Choose three facts you didn't know before reading this book and explain why you've picked them.

Which animals live in your city. town or village? Do they cause problems, or need your help?

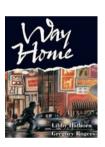
#### Try this...

- Imagine you're a journalist living in one of these cities. Present a TV report about urban wildlife. Include interviews with people who support these animals, and those who are worried by their presence.
- Collaborate on a wildlife mural by cutting paper into shapes and arranging to suggest an urban backdrop. Draw pictures of animals living in your chosen city (or cut from contrasting paper) then assemble your collage.
- Choose a city not included in this book and find out about the people and wildlife living there. Present your findings in the form of an illustrated, annotated spread for Volume Two.



#### KEY STAGE 2

**Way Home** BY LIBBY HATHORN **ILL GREGORY** ROGERS, ANDERSEN



#### What's the story?

When Shane finds a lone kitten in the city, he decides to take it home. But it's night-time, and the streets are full of dangers. Bullies and snarling dogs emerge from shadows, but Shane is streetwise and courageous,

and the pair make it to his place unharmed. As we watch them crawling into Shane's box, we know they're home, but the final page turn still hits hard.

The text in this realistic and affecting picturebook is understated but





NOTE: Small in the City by Sydney Smith (see page 14) explores similar themes.

pastel artwork.

#### Thinking and talking

What did you expect Shane's place to look like? Did the reality surprise you?

Would you describe Shane as homeless? Would other people? What does home mean to you?

Why do you think Shane wants to care for the kitten?



- From observation, sketch a street vou know well. Use charcoal and pastel, draw a night-time street scene in the style of the artwork in this book.
- How does the cat feel as this story unfolds? Does it understand what's going on? Tell the story from the cat's point of view, using observation, empathy and imagination to inform your writing.
- Find out about homelessness in the UK. What's being done to help? Plan an event to raise money for a homeless charity, or make posters publicising their work.

**KEY STAGE 2** 

The Arrival BY SHAUN TAN, HODDER



What's the story?

A man leaves home and travels to a city where everything is strange and new. He feels lost, but the kindness of strangers soon helps him to adapt and learn. Wordless, sepia-coloured drawings record the traveller's experiences in a series of full-page illustrations and small vignettes. Other stories are also told, and this powerful tribute to those who travel to faraway places – and those who welcome them – will challenge and reward older readers.

## Thinking and talking

What does this book remind you of? Share memories of new places, customs and ideas,

Tan described this book as "a story that depends on silence and mystery". Why do you think The Arrival is wordless? What questions does it raise? What do you think Tan meant by mystery?

Who was kind and welcoming in this book? How did they help? How

does your school welcome new arrivals? Could you – individually or as a class – do more?

#### Try this...

- Collect old photographs of people and cities. Use them to inspire new stories told in words and pictures. Tan built a model to help him create the artwork for this book. Using junk materials, build a 'strange city' of your own. Take photos from different perspectives and use to help you draw plans and maps.
- your experiences.

  Using examples from this book, present a school assembly about making everyone feel welcome.

Imagine you've just arrived

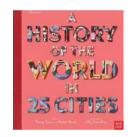
in this city. Write about

**KEY STAGE 2** 

10

#### A History of the World in 25 Cities

BY TRACEY TURNER AND ANDREW DONKIN, ILL LIBBY VANDERPLOEG, NOSY CROW





#### What's the story?

Twenty-five illustrated maps of famous cities at different points in history are featured in this enjoyable non-fiction book. The maps provide snapshots



of specific years, the chosen cities are diverse – *Jericho, Xianyang, Jorvik, Benin City, Venice, Delhi, St Petersburg* – and more general information is also included.

Appealing artwork in a contemporary palette draws the eye without cluttering the page, and specialist curators from the British Museum advised on content.

## Thinking and talking

What surprised you about these cities? Which interested you the most? Where (and when!) would you chooseto live?

Is it possible to tell the story of the world in 25 cities? What's missing? Is there only one story? Whose story should we tell?

What do we learn from looking at the artwork? How does it extend the text?

#### Try this...

Find these cities on a map. If you were

recommending cities for Volume Two, which would you choose?

- Imagine you're living in one of these places. Write about a journey you made across the city. Where did you go, and why? Who did you meet? Did your journey put you in danger or lead to change?
- Choose a city you know well (or one you'd like to visit). Research aspects of its history and present your findings.

NOTE

You might also like A Street Through Time by Dr Anne Millard and Steve Noon (Dorling Kindersley).



Carey Fluker-Hunt is a freelance writer, creative learning consultant, and

founder of Cast of Thousands (castofthousands.co.uk)

## Healthy VENDING

How Little Parndon Primary has sparked reading for pleasure amongst pupils with a book vending machine

SIAN COCKMAN

ave you ever walked past one of those grabby machines on holiday? More often than not, this draws my own three children in and I end up spending a fortune and not winning, which inevitably leads to disappointment, tears and tantrums. Another machine that has the same magnetism is a vending machine; even I struggle to walk past a vending machine and not look and see what entices me the most. The idea sounds so much more exciting than just going to the shop and buying the same thing. You put your money in the slot, you choose what you want by pressing the magic combination of letters and numbers and each time you are guaranteed a prize!

Making books fun

I wanted to bring this excitement to my school. Just a few years ago, reading wasn't seen as fur "We introduced
The Masked Reader
through lockdown
and soon had
the whole school
community involved"

and it certainly wasn't high profile. Don't get me wrong, the reading records were signed and children were reading at home and school, but there just wasn't that buzz of book talk. We began a mission - to get all teachers, children and parents reading. We obviously did all the usual things that bring reading to the front of everyone's minds... World Book Day costumes and activities; book fayres; competitions for reading in wild and wacky places; everyone reading at the end of the school day; but we were still missing the fun element of reading. Children were not getting excited

Children were not getting excited enough about books and we wanted this to change.

We started with introduce.

We started with introducing reading mentors (children based in Year 5 and 6) who would read to whole KS1 classes.

We set up reading buddies for those who may not get to read as much as they would like to at home, and began entering competitions that encouraged reading and exploring themes the books. We even won a contest that



challenged pupils to decide what career a book character should have, and had a visit from an author, which sparked excitement.

I then started to look at other things that get children talking on the playground. There was real buzz when children would discuss The Masked Singer TV show with us. I decided to try and recreate this excitement, but around reading. We had already tried bedtime reading stories with staff published on the internet, but this had a twist. Each day, pupils were given clues as to the identity of the teacher behind the emoji masks who read a book excerpt from the school's library. We introduced The Masked Reader through lockdown and soon had the whole school community involved. It wasn't just the children guessing, but staff and

parents, too!
We now had
families hooked
on reading, and
discussions
about books
were happening
at home as well
as school. This
felt like mission
accomplished –
but it wasn't.

"We finally
had every child
looking at
reading as a
good thing"

#### Go big

We had got to a stage where reading was happening at all times of the day, but many pupils were still only reading because they were asked to. This, in our opinion, was not enough. We tried various ideas, including building a reading shed and garden within the playground. Then, a new idea struck. I introduced the idea of book vending machines to our headteacher. There were of course questions... How would we fill the machines? Who would buy them? Where would the machine go? How could we afford this? Would this really excite the children? We decided to give it a go and held a sponsored read, challenging pupils to read as much as they could over a week. We raised £2,000, boosted with another £1,000 from a national book company. The money raised filled the vending machines with books I knew the children would love to read.

I began to worry that disappointment would fill the air once the children saw books instead of crisps and sweets, but straight after filling up the machines, I was so happy to walk out of my classroom to see teachers standing around the machine wanting a token to select a book. I knew this was going to be good - if it has excited grown adults, the children would love it! I wasn't wrong. Children often stop to look and see what books are on offer, and they have conversations with each other and adults about how they are going to try to win one. Some pupils have even asked for books to be reserved. We finally had every child looking at reading as a good thing and wanting to pick up books, talk about books and earn new ones.

#### How does it work?

We have a behaviour journey at school, that records the choices children make with their actions. We found that the children were so excited about the book vending

machine, that we could use books as behaviour prizes. Each child has their own bookmark, and when they make an 'outstanding choice' with their behaviour, they receive a sticker for their bookmark. If they earn three stickers in a row, they receive a golden token for the vending machine.

And, there we have it. The new vending machines are the talk of the school and I can now say that, at Little Parndon Primary Academy, we all read for pleasure.



Sian Cockman is assistant headteacher and ITT/NQT Lead at BMAT Primary, and

reading/phonics lead at Little Parndon Primary Academy in Harlow, Essex.

## How can you promote the love of reading in your school?

#### AIM BIG

If you want results, invest time and money to achieve them. Find ways to raise money to support your journey through things like sponsored events. Many book companies will offer free books if you raise a certain amount.

#### **DO YOUR RESEARCH**

What interests the children and gets them talking? Begin with completing a pupil survey to gauge children's opinions on reading. This includes finding the types of texts children like to read, where they like to read and with whom. Also, remember to listen to playground chat.

#### • INCLUDE THE WHOLE COMMUNITY

Get teachers and parents on board with your mission. Begin with staff meetings getting teachers understanding the whys of

everything you are planning to do. Make them part of the journey with you. Reading mornings, parent workshops (while the children have hot chocolate. cookies and bedtime stories with teachers), secret readers coming into school for reading time creates an element of excitement.



## MAKE READING THE CENTRE OF EVERYTHING EVERY CLASS TEACHER DOES

Think about the small things that all add up. Reading areas (the staff in our school have competitions with each other to try and make the best area), competitions in-house and countrywide, reading mentors, displays around the school promoting pupils' and teachers' favourite books, rewards in assemblies and in class to praise children trying hard with their reading.

## • FIND OR CREATE AREAS IN THE SCHOOL WHICH ARE DEDICATED TO READING

A reading area in the playground is a great start especially for those children who are not keen on running around. The comfier the better!

# FREE STABILO Pen Licences for your school!



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STABILO is dedicated to improving the handwriting of children in the UK, with our range of ergonomically designed pencils and pens.







DfE validated (June 2021)!

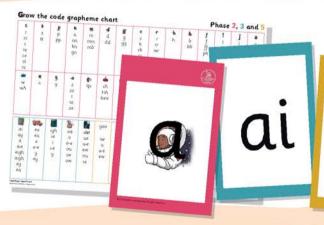
## Teach effective phonics

Resources to support Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised, a complete systematic, synthetic phonics programme created by Little Sutton Primary School and Wandle Learning Trust.

Help pupils to practice reading at the right level with 120 fully decodable readers matched perfectly to the Little Wandle progression







cl**ou**d /ow/ sh**ou**lder /oa/ t**ou**ch /u/



Support grapheme-phoneme correspondences with flashcards for each phase plus wall friezes and grapheme charts

Ensure no pupil falls behind with Keep-up Teacher's Guides and helpful lesson prompt cards!







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# How to find the best PHONICS PROGRAMME

**Gordon Askew** shares what you should be looking for in a Systematic Synthetic Phonics programme for your school...

he best phonics outcomes for the highest number of children are achieved when schools follow a high-quality systematic synthetic phonics (SSP) programme with fidelity. This is particularly important for schools with significant numbers of disadvantaged or underachieving pupils. But which of the available programmes is best?

Obviously, if a school is already achieving excellent results with their SSP, there is no reason to change. However, for those considering a different or revised programme, the Department for Education (DfE) provides a list of programmes validated against its basic requirements. Schools are strongly advised to use a programme from this list, as this ensures full coverage of necessary content, meeting all national recommendations.

However, the DfE does not offer judgements about the comparative quality of the programmes, or even of their effectiveness in practice. Schools must, rightly, make a final choice for themselves. So, what should they look for?

#### **Progression**

Any validated programme will offer a clear progression for learning the necessary phonics content, ensuring that by around the end of Y1 children have developed the skills to decode phonically most unknown words they are likely to meet. This is the best start they can have, and effective schools prove that it is achievable for most children, regardless of background.

#### Lesson plans

However, there is more to teaching phonics well than covering content. Lessons need to be delivered effectively using methods proven to support children in making the necessary progress. A good programme will provide teachers with realistic, accessible plans for lessons following a strong, clear structure that can be delivered consistently through the school. These will be accompanied by guidance and materials, ideally including clear modelling of good practice.

Does the programme include a full suite of attractive, engaging, matched resources? If so, these should include mnemonics that provide strong hooks to help children remember grapheme-phoneme correspondences in the early stages. It is also essential that the programme supports children quickly to become confident in reading regular print, without reliance on extraneous visual cues.

#### Decodable books

The use of fully decodable books, matched exactly to a children's stage of learning, plays a crucial role. Any of the DfE validated programmes will include, or be directly linked to, a full suite of matched books. However, the quality of such books may vary considerably, and a good programme will be paired with a rich and attractive range of decodable books which will interest and engage children at the same time as meeting their phonic needs.

#### **Assessment**

All programmes will offer some form of assessment, but this needs to deliver useful information, without being onerous for the teacher. Crucially, effective teacher assessment will measure progress reliably and help identify early those children in danger of falling behind. Equally, a good programme will provide all the materials needed to put in place effective keep-up support, when required, adaptable to children's needs.

Finally, schools should ask what evidence a publisher can provide of their programme being used successfully in schools. But the response needs to be evaluated carefully; sometimes a school with a high number of more advantaged children can have good results despite, rather than because of, their phonics approach.

Gordon Askew, MBE, was phonics adviser to DfE from 2010 to 2020, and founder and chair of the English Hubs Council.





Adopt a complete, book-based approach to Primary English

The Literary Curriculum from the Literacy Tree is an online, book-based primary English planning resource where teachers can download planning sequences from Reception to Year 7, as well as book-based resources for comprehension, spelling, assessment and home-learning.

"Writing has come alive!"

Matt Warren, Deputy Head Treloweth PrimarySchool

"The Literary Curriculum. Ask anyone here. Best decision we ever made!"

Headteacher, Bilton Infants

#### Go to:

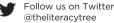
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Claire's dad is a top inventor

111111



## "Handwriting is the phonics of writing"

Dr Jane Medwell discusses the importance of handwriting in a modern curriculum

#### 30 SECOND BRIEFING

Happy Handwriting is a new handwriting programme

that helps to build confidence and fluency. Based on a wide range of research, it has been carefully structured to ensure that children learn automatic handwriting as efficiently as possible.

## Why is handwriting such an important part of the curriculum?

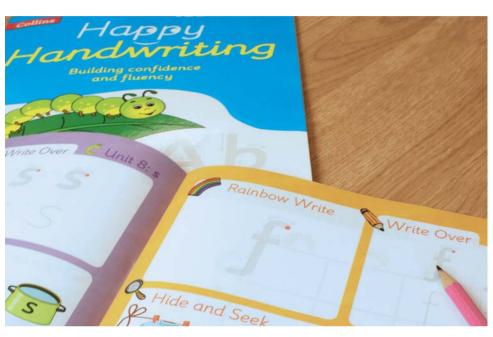
Handwriting contributes much more to children's learning than most people realise. Writing allows us to articulate our thoughts, and if you can produce the letters efficiently, you can focus your cognitive attention on composing what you want to say. If a child doesn't have automatic handwriting, they are giving part of their attention to generating written letters – which leaves less for the 'higher order' parts of writing.

#### How can teachers make handwriting fun?

Little and often! Short. structured teaching sessions with good models and clear activities provide chances to recognise and produce good handwriting. Practising anything for too long is boring, but short lessons, activities and home sessions add up to substantial practice. Creating opportunities for pupils to assess their own handwriting in other lessons encourages them to take pride in their workbook and help them recognise their own achievement.

#### How does handwriting fit in with phonics teaching?

Handwriting is the phonics of writing. However, they should be taught separately. Students concentrate on the skills and knowledge of phonics:



blending and segmenting sounds and learning grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs). Once children have encountered the letters in phonics, they need to learn how to form them efficiently and automatically - that's handwriting. The best time to teach handwriting is when children have already encountered and experimented with the letters phonetically.

#### How can teachers adapt to children's differing handwriting needs? Some children find handwriting easy



ABOUT JANE:
Jane is an associate
professor at the University
of Nottingham, researching
and writing into handwriting
and primary education.
She is the series editor
of Happy Handwriting,
a new handwriting
resource from Collins.

#### **Contact:**

01484 668 148 education.marketing@ harpercollins.co.uk Contact your local rep at collins.co.uk/findarep to master and others find it challenging, but every child needs to learn to do it efficiently. Improving handwriting gets more difficult as pupils get older, so it's important they get additional support as early as possible. Teachers and TAs must be able to identify these learners easily and offer them targeted practice. Happy Handwriting offers diagnostic support and additional activities to meet individual and group needs.

#### Do teachers need to be specialists to teach handwriting?

No. However, teachers do need to be consistent and have clear priorities in their teaching, so that students master different aspects of handwriting at the right time and are not confused. This is the role of a simple, whole-school handwriting programme. Happy Handwriting has clear priorities: to teach good letter movements, then effective joins, and finally flexibility in the degree of neatness and legibility children achieve for different tasks.

#### What's the difference?

- + Many schools report that writing confidence and stamina have declined following the Covid-19 pandemic
- + Writing at length and with quality hinges on being able to achieve automatic handwriting
- + Handwriting plays an integral and valuable role in a progressive curriculum

# Solving problems with poetry

Poetry can seem old-fashioned and elitist, but when children write about what really matters to them, it's magical, says Tomos Roberts

*he Great Realisation* is a bedtime story of hope for a time of change. I am grateful to Teach Reading & Writing be asked to delve into some of the ideas contained within the story and to consider the effect poetry can have on the developing minds of young children. I'll do my best.

Writing The Great Realisation was a challenge I set for myself. The challenge being, if there was a hopeful message to be found amidst a global pandemic, then it was worth finding.

#### Global impact

Since its release and subsequent attention, the poem has crossed so many borders, from New Zealand to New York, Peru to the Philippines, Lebanon to London. People from all over the planet wrote to me, sharing their common desire to feel hopeful. That said, one of the most humbling aspects has been the response of children from across the world who are eager to respond to these hopeful ideas. I have been moved by their responses and am glad that a poem has led to so many conversations between parents and children. Many of the concepts in the poem are things I wanted to know so much more about at a young age and so I am filled with optimism and belief that the next generation might grow up in a more

enlightened world.

Since The Great Realisation, I have done many creative writing workshops with children over Zoom, of both primary and secondary age, and I always begin with the proposition that a poem is an attempt to solve a problem. I didn't always think about poetry in this way, but a wise university lecturer suggested it once and since then I've never been able to shake it from my mind. Thinking about a poem as an attempt to solve a problem can also help clear up one of the great stumbling block questions for someone aspiring to write one. Often my little brother or sister, Cai and Sora (who are eight years old at the time of writing this) will ask me, "What shall I write a poem about?" It's a good question. A difficult question. Because there are billions, if not infinite things you could write a poem about. So, what if I ask you this instead: What problem would you most like to solve? What is bothering you right now? What would you like to fix? What are you grateful for?

Suddenly, we have more ideas. Suddenly the poem has stopped being so ethereal and become way more accessible and tangible. A poem, after all, can be anything you want it to be. It can be an epic, earth shattering, world-building, mammoth like John Milton's Paradise Lost. Or, it can be a well woven, delicately balanced, contemplation on love like Shakespeare's Sonnet 18. Or, it can be a quaint, neat, dainty and distilled reflection on the beauty of a moment like Matsuo Bashōhaiku's, The Old Pond. The point I mean to make is. I don't think it makes any sense at all to start by thinking about the poem. A 'poem' is just a vehicle for a thought. A vessel for whatever it is you

want to say. So, what do you want to say? What is on your mind? That's what we need to know. What is the problem? Forget about the form, start with the message.

Solving problems

One thing I always try to make clear when I say this, is I don't mean 'problem' in the classically negative sense.

A problem, in my view, can be good or bad. Falling in love. There's a real problem. It's a problem because it's complicated. What do you do when you fall in love with someone? What are you supposed to say? How are you supposed to act? What if they don't feel the same way? This is why you could fill football stadiums with the amount of poetry dedicated to the solving of this very problem. Because we all yearn to learn more, to know more, to examine every nuance of this problem and hopefully prepare ourselves more for when this manifests in our own life and comes knocking on our door.

These problems can also seem benign or simple and often not feel like problems at all. I remember in one class I did in a school in Wolverhampton, a little boy put his hand up and said, "I like writing descriptive poems about how my garden looks in the morning, after it has rained. I don't think I'm solving a problem when I do that." I told him that I think he is. I think he is solving the problem of how to capture the beauty of nature within language. You could say, "This is a garden". Great. Does the job. But it doesn't tell me much. It doesn't evoke any emotional response within me, though on the surface it is perfectly true. But what about the colours, the smells, the taste of the air, the way the light hits the raindrops and refracts into scattered rainbows, the millions of tiny life forms, scrambling, bumbling, wriggling and foraging away about their day in that garden. Human beings have a deep affinity for beauty. It is the difference between a cathedral and a carpark. Both are buildings, though I have never seen tourists queueing up with cameras to wander about while gazing longingly at a carpark. So perhaps he was solving an important problem for us after all.

Demystifying poetry

But how does all of this relate to children? If you are thinking that, then I can hardly blame you. I think it relates to children because they are new, uncorrupted and unspoiled. They have a great eye for spotting the problems.

I once took my little sister Sora to see the London Eye, and as we were walking under a bridge in Waterloo, she spotted a

"There are infinite things you could write a poem about. So, what if I ask you this question instead: What problem would you most like to solve?"

homeless man. She turned to me and said, "Tom, why can nobody see him?" The question gave me goosebumps. From her six-year-old perspective, people were walking past this man whose life was in crisis without stopping, helping or even looking, and the only explanation was that they couldn't see him. Many of us adults have, through necessity, grown hard to some of the problems of the world, often for lack of a solution, but children have a natural empathy that we can learn so much from.

When I wrote *The Great Realisation*, I asked Cai and Sora, "What problems do you think there were in the world before this virus came along?" My little sister was very concerned about plastic in the oceans. My little brother was concerned about, as he put it, "some people have lots and lots of money and others have none at all." I myself was concerned with tobacco, alcohol and gambling lobbies after a book on power and influence I had just read.

TEACHING TECHNIQUES

We used these problems as the scaffold for our story. I guess my hope is that poetry can be demystified for children. I don't want it to seem like an elitist art form that they only know about from archaic mid-century thinkers, spoken in language no longer used. Poetry can be like that, and I am grateful that it was. But what it could be, is millions of adults and children alike. articulating themselves, and finding the words that can reduce any problem, any obstacle to a collection of well-chosen words. By doing that, I believe we all benefit, as we are able to think, communicate and grow together. That is the kind of poetry I want to read.





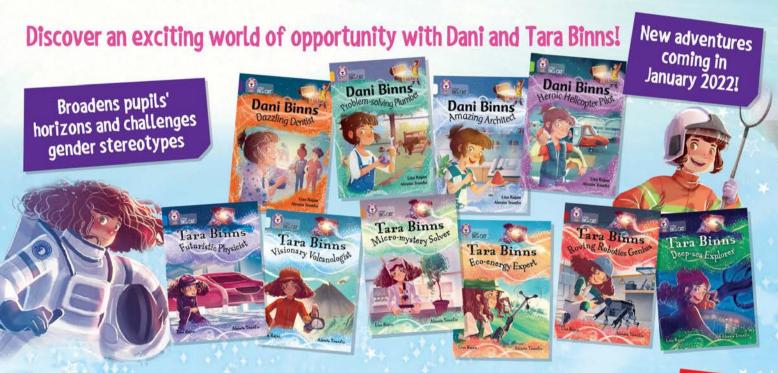
Tomos Roberts is a spoken-word poet

and filmmaker. His new book, The World Awaits (£6.99, Farshore) is out now.

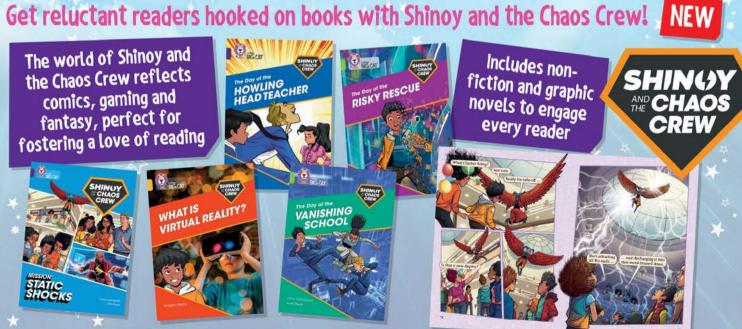




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# Take stock of reading in YOUR SCHOOL

You've got your clipboard and newly sharpened pencil ready. But what exactly should you looking for when you audit your school's reading provision?

#### RACHEL CLARKE

udits can seem daunting, but I hope the below advice will help you feel more prepared and confident for undertaking an audit of all things reading.

In the first instance you need to feel assured that you have robust approaches in place to teach reading. This means looking at how your school teaches phonics and comprehension.

**Phonics** 

The Deep Dive into
Early Reading is
a good place to
start with your
audit into phonics.
This statutory aspect
of the Ofsted inspection
asks you to consider the
suitability and effectiveness
of your phonics programme,
whether you
have a range of decodable books,

have a range of decodable books, the nature of your ongoing pupil assessment, and the provision of staff training. If you're not teaching in England or are in an independent school (and so not subject to Ofsted inspections) these are key aspects of what you do in phonics and should still be at the heart of your audit.

#### Comprehension

There are myriad ways to teach reading comprehension. Some schools favour whole-class approaches; some small, guided groups; others use a combination of methods. Whichever approach you use, ensure that continuity is included in your audit. After all, do you really want one class in Year 3 using whole-class guided reading and the other class using written comprehension tests? In addition, you should also find out how confident the other teachers in your school are about using your preferred teaching methods and how effectively they use them. If you find there is a lack of confidence or expertise,

seek training so that everyone, including yourself, has the best knowledge of how to teach comprehension effectively.

#### Assessment

Think about how you assess reading, and how you use those assessments to shape future teaching and learning. Reading ages, test scores and numerical data all have their place. But finding that teachers in Year 4 have discovered most children are struggling to summarise and so are shaping their teaching and learning based on this data will give you the assurance that comprehension teaching is data-driven and responsive to the needs of the children.



"I've never quite recovered from the book I found in one school that proudly announced, 'one day man may even walk on the moon'"

#### **Book stock**

Take a look at your book stock with critical eyes. I've already mentioned the all-important decodable books for the fledgling readers, but you also need engaging, relevant and representative texts within your daily reading, take-home and library stocks. An often-overlooked question to add to your audit is, 'How much of the book stock is replaced each year?' According to the Primary School Library Guidelines, you should replace 10% of your book stock each year. You should also take account of the age of your stock too - you've only got limited shelf space, so make sure the books earn their place on it. Between you and me, I've never quite recovered from the book I found in one school that proudly announced, 'one day man may even walk on the moon'.

#### Reading for pleasure

Do ensure that reading for pleasure has a place in your reading audit. Find out if all teachers ring-fence time for children to read for pleasure in school – sadly. not all children have the time. space or support to read for pleasure at home. Also explore when and for how long teachers are reading aloud to their classes (yes, I know the timetable is full but the evidence in favour of reading for pleasure is compelling). If your teachers are

#### AT A GLANCE



is a good place to start with





struggling, a super deputy head I know uses one of his whole-school assemblies to read to every class. Consequently, he delivers an assembly of only modest preparation, the children hear compelling expressive reading, and the rest of the staff have the assurance that for one day of the week they don't have to find time to read to the children: win: win· win

Celebrate the wins

Once you've completed your audit, take time to analyse what you've found.

Celebrate what's going well and make sure everyone involved receives praise for their successes. Next identify those areas of provision that are satisfactory but not yet solidly good. For example, practice that is not consistently good - such as teachers in some year groups not feeling confident to use your preferred method for reading

comprehension, or having sufficient decodable readers for children

in Reception but not enough for children in Year 1. Finally, if you have any areas of weakness, such as finding that large numbers of staff need phonics training, work to put them

right immediately by working with colleagues or drawing on subject experts from outside the school.

Do keep your audit and its findings so that you can repeat the process further down the line as you work to provide the best reading outcomes for your children that you can.



Rachel Clarke is a freelance education consultant and writer, and edits the Scholastic Reading Audit which you can complete free of charge by visiting

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"Do ensure that reading for pleasure has a place in your reading audit"

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## How we revolutionised TEACHING WRITING

**Jasmine Kay** shares how her school's new approach to grammar and writing sparked inspiration and better outcomes for pupils

e all know as teachers that we are required to teach grammar. However, these lessons can often seem clunky and uninspiring, leading to frustrated teachers and disengaged pupils. Our school experienced these same challenges, until we shook up the way we approached writing in the classroom. I hope our journey can help inspire those of you that are looking for a new way to communicate this subject, and finally get your class interested in the whats, whys and wherefores of grammar and composition.

contextualised teaching, transforming our writing process, which previously lacked creativity.

In the past, the children were fixated on cramming impressive terminology and sentence structures into their writing. In hindsight, this was rather robotic, and consequently our students lacked creative flair. By using books, videos and songs to inspire the writing process, our students are now engaged and their lessons are memorable. We take pride in providing purposeful writing tasks which prepare our children for the real world. For example, recent notable writing experiences have

"We've moved away from discrete grammar lessons to more contextualised teaching, transforming our writing process"

#### Strength to strength

Historically, our writing lessons were often uninspiring. Our staff were left wondering why, despite being taught grammatical rules, pupils continued to make common errors, including missing punctuation and misused homophones. It didn't seem to make sense; our children could articulately explain grammatical rules, but were often unable to apply them. Something had to change. We have since paved a new path for our young writers and we are proud of the journey that we have undertaken as a school.

To start with, reading is now at the heart of our school curriculum, which has transformed the way we deliver our English lessons. We have prioritised a knowledge-based curriculum, which is rich in diversity, language and meaningful experiences. We've also moved away from discrete grammar sessions to more

included writing welcome cards to newly-arrived Afghan refugees in KS2, and replying to humorous text messages from Rapunzel in KS1.

#### What is contextualised teaching?

A contextualised grammar approach empowers the children to make choices as a writer. It encourages flair and promotes the idea that students make conscious choices about the linguistic patterns they use. Our pupils are not having to naturally apply taught strategies. For instance, we spend a long time discussing the impact of grammar within texts to show how it can be used to avoid ambiguity and add clarity. Song comprehension can be an engaging way to entice children within grammar lessons.

In Year 6, we dissect songs including 'The Fiddler on the Roof' when teaching the subjunctive voice, which highlights

Tevye's longing for a better life. We use the song 'You're a mean one Mr Grinch' in LKS2 to explore the use of similes to hyperbolise the Grinch's foul character, and in KS1, we use 'You've got a Friend in me' from Toy Story to introduce contractions. All three of these songs are used to pre-teach a concept that we would like to see within the children's writing.

#### Whole-class feedback

Within our verbal conferencing sessions, oral feedback triumphs over monotonous marking comments, which we found were largely unread and negatively impacted teachers' wellbeing. In addition to personalised feedback. whole-class feedback is used to address common misconceptions. Within these sessions, we also consolidate objectives taught in previous years to embed spelling and punctuation rules. We don't waste time teaching children what they already know, but rather give them gentle reminders along the way to prompt them, which we find is effective in practice.

We also encourage the children within all year groups to facilitate their own and their peers' learning. Our children are invited to peer correct by adopting the role of Grammar Police Officers. They wear a helmet and fluorescent jacket while scanning their friends' work for common errors like missing capital letters. We coach our children to deliver the feedback courteously and this task also encourages children to edit their own work before it is checked by a friend.

#### Structured support

Teachers are a school's most important resource, especially for those pupils that may require some extra support, such as interventions. If children are leaving the classroom for an intervention group, it is vital that the work they are doing away from their peers is more important than what is going on inside the classroom. When the purpose of an intervention group is to regurgitate facts, progress can be limited. Instead, they should

be encouraged to discuss words and rules in correspondence with the books that they study and

the texts that they are writing. They can then transfer the content of these discussions within their own writing tasks. Within our school, when errors do occur, the children are invited to same-day bespoke interventions where they can discuss their writing process with an adult.

#### Inspiration is key

We believe that good readers are good writers, and therefore children need access to impressive models to inspire their own writing. We tell our pupils that their voices matter and that their words make a difference, which helps ignite their passion throughout their literacy journey. We choose books that we know our children need to hear and in turn, our enthusiasm becomes their enthusiasm.

We have also developed a Reading Spine which tracks books throughout the school and demonstrates how books can be used to inspire writing. This document, available to all teachers, clearly states which SPaG objectives should be taught while studying each text type. The children are also have 'vocabulary vaults', which are booklets containing technical terms and ambitious vocabulary, and are helping us close the word gap at school. Pupils are explicitly taught vocabulary which can be found within their vaults, including transferable words which are modelled within varied sentence structures. The children are encouraged to apply this vocabulary across different text types, and we explore similar themes within each year, and across years, to ensure that the children are able to access prior knowledge and layer this vocabulary within different pieces

We have seen that the retention of vocabulary has improved when links can be made to a familiar

text. The vocabulary
vaults allow
children to access
quality writing
models which
they can tweak
and transfer
for their own
writing, and
were praised
during a recent
Ofsted inspection. The
interconnected approach

to teaching grammar, spelling, writing and reading ensures that learning is purposeful as the children make links between the focus areas.

#### Prepared to grow

Consistency across the school is also a key contributing factor towards our success. We have revolutionised the way we teach writing, but this did not happen overnight. My dedicated team worked tirelessly to create our bespoke curriculum which meets the needs of our pupils brilliantly. I work alongside staff to produce writing models, which

display our expectations as a school to the children. We are also prepared to grow as a school. We know that we will need to continuously adapt and adopt new strategies, and to enhance our understanding of the teaching of English, we have introduced a staff CPD library. We book cover staff to relieve teaching staff, to ensure that they have time to access the reading materials. Staff are also encouraged to share strategies that they have learned within their designated CPD time, to ensure pedagogy is consistently developed across all key stages.

This has been quite a journey for our school, but we're seeing great results. If you're feeling stagnant in your current approach to grammar and writing, I thoroughly encourage sweeping away the cobwebs with a contextualised approach. You may even be surprised and delighted at the outcome - I was.



Jasmine Kay is an experienced UKS2 teacher who leads English across her school.

#### 5 WAYS TO SUPPORT CONTEXTUALISED TEACHING

use to inspire writing. Choose books that reflect the needs of your locality.

could be made up of past are also great to share to encourage the children to improve



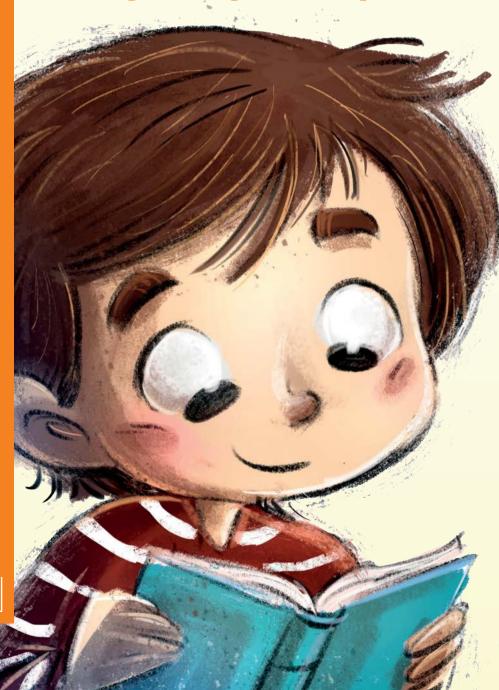
Pre-plan vocabulary that will be explicitly taught within each unit of work.

Match grammatical features to teach with

wider curriculum and books that are used to inspire writing. Encourage the children to transfer knowledge, skills and vocabulary between texts and year groups. Vocabulary can be categorised in correspondence with the text studied.

 Make use of whole-class marking discussions to reinforce common mistakes as opposed to monotonous grammar worksheets.



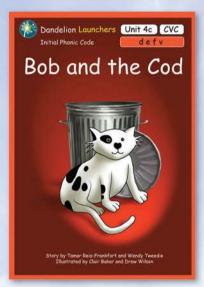


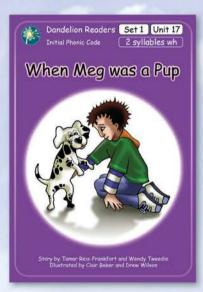


Perfect for post-COVID catch-up

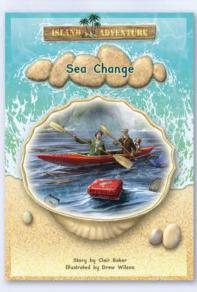
## Decodable Books for Beginner and Catch-up Readers

#### Submitted for DfE validation













Essential Resources to Master Reading

## Read on...

#### Four ideas for engaging literacy lessons



#### **Books for all**

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#### **Book-based literacy**

Now used by over 25,000 teachers, The Literary Curriculum is an online resource for primary schools looking for an innovative, creative and immersive book-based approach to primary English. As a whole-school approach, with a school membership, it provides complete coverage of all National Curriculum expectations for writing composition, grammar, punctuation, spelling and reading comprehension. A school membership entitles up a school to access over 150 high quality book-based planning sequences, 130 Spelling Seeds<sup>™</sup> for spelling and vocabulary, and 60 Literary leaves<sup>™</sup> to support the teaching of reading comprehension. Individual membership is also available where tokens can be exchanged for resources.

e: literarycurriculum.co.uk t: 020 3196 0140



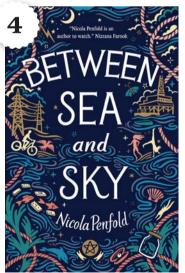
#### Good news...

As the last eighteen months have shown, the need for children to have access to a regular, reliable, age-appropriate source of news is more crucial than ever. First News is an independently-owned, non-partisan newspaper written especially for children aged 7-14 years. First News Education combines First News newspaper and award-winning learning resources to provide schools with a complete news-based learning solution, for the classroom, libraries and home-learning. Their goal is to equip children with an enriched knowledge of the world and the fundamental reading, writing and oracy skills they need to succeed throughout school and beyond. Try for free at

#### **Eco-adventures**

schools.firstnews.co.uk/discover

Dive into Between Sea and Sky - a thrilling and thought-provoking eco-adventure from Nicola Penfold, author of Where the World Turns Wild. Pearl lives on a floating oyster farm with her sister and father, refusing to



set foot on land following the death of her mum. But when Nat comes from the mainland to spend the summer with the family, he shares a secret that forces Pearl to risk everything. Exploring themes of climate change and social responsibility, Between Sea and Sky is an urgent and immersive read that taps into current ecological questions. Perfect for starting conversations ahead of COP26. littletiger.co.uk



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Teach 🦊 Learn 🗯 Shine



Creating a cast of characters

with Lauren Child

Play the podcast, share the teaching sequence – and inspire amazing writing from every pupil...

Characters are vital when creating great stories. They guide the reader through their journey and great authors give us more information about their fantastic creations along the way.

Lauren Child has come up with many 'larger than life' characters, such as Charlie and Lola and Clarice Bean – and through her artwork, she has also reimagined the classic character of Pippi Longstocking, written by Astrid Lindgren.

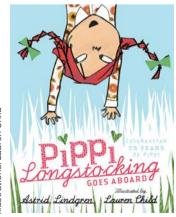
In this teaching sequence, children will have the chance to create their own cast of characters, producing illustrations and thinking about their back story. They will then look for or notice small things that they can combine to create ideas for a story using some of the characters that they create, either bringing them into Pippi's world or writing their own stories. Extracts from Lauren's interview on episode 18 of the Author in Your Classroom podcast are suggested to introduce each section of the teaching sequence – you can find the whole episode to listen to, absolutely free, at **bit.ly/AIYCLaurenC** 



#### **SESSION 1**

#### A CAST OF CHARACTERS

- 1 | Play the podcast from the beginning to **8:22** (the end of part 1).
- 2 | Discuss with the children how Lauren Child's characters are brought to life through her drawings, but also through their adventures. Discuss



### "Characters come from all kinds of places"

what children know about the characters in Lauren's own books such as Charlie and Lola, Clarice Bean and Ruby Redford.

- 3 | Remind the class that Lauren illustrated the book *Pippi Longstocking* and that these stories were written 75 years ago by Astrid Lindgren.
- 4 | Ask the children to think about young characters that they could create who may appear in Pippi's world, or in one of Lauren's own books. Pupils should jot down ideas for characters, beginning to create their own cast of characters that they could choose from in their stories.
- 5 | Children should then discuss their character ideas with friends, noting down any extra ideas that may develop through their discussions.





#### **SESSION 2**

#### **DEVELOPING A** CHARACTER

- 1 | Play the section of the podcast from the beginning of part 2 (8:35) up to 15:30, where Lauren reads an extract from Pippi Longstocking Goes Aboard and discusses Pippi.
- 2 | Use the questions below to discuss what the children know about Pippi Longstocking from the extract and the podcast and also from their own or class reading of the book.
- Who is the character?
- What do they look like?
- · What are their characteristics?
- What do they love?
- What do they dislike?
- · How do they interact with others?
- What do we know about their family?
- 3 | Children should go back to their character ideas and



choose one that they would like to develop further. Using the questions above, they should begin to create a profile for one of their characters. Explain that the character they create will be included in their own writing later

4 | Encourage children to discuss their characters with their friends, discussing the answers to the questions above. Children can add rough illustrations showing different aspects of their character's personality, recapping how Lauren shows that Pippi is always moving by sometimes only showing her plaits or legs as she wanders off the page.

#### **SESSION 3**

#### WHAT DO YOU NOTICE?

- 1 | Listen to the section of the podcast again from 15:22 to 24:00 (end of part 2).
- 2 | Discuss why it is important to practise inventing, problem solving and creating, and share examples of when the children might have an opportunity to do this in or outside of school. 3 | Ask pupils to sit quietly for a moment or two to look (and listen) to what is going on around them, or to look out of a window. Create a class list of what they observe. Discuss

when the children might have other opportunities to sit quietly and allow thoughts to come and go into their heads (walking to school, on the playground, looking out of a window etc).

4 | Children should note things that they have seen when they have allowed themselves time to really look. This could be after time spent in the classroom or walking around school, after a walk in your

local area or after an activity set as homework. Explain that the things that they notice could then be built upon to create ideas for stories.



#### DOWNLOAD NOW!



To download a full set of FREE resources for this teaching sequence - including planning sheets, teaching slides, themed writing paper and more - visit bit.ly/AIYCLaurenpack

To subscribe for free, just search for 'Author In Your Classroom' wherever you get your podcasts!



#### **USING YOUR IDEAS**

- 1 Ask pupils to look back at their planning from earlier, and their ideas from section 3. What might their character notice or explore from their
- ideas to create a story? 2 | Allow pupils time to discuss their ideas and how this might develop.
- 3 | Explain that they will be writing a new chapter of a story where their character and Pippi meet. Perhaps they will find something, or maybe the new character might be doing something that the children have noted earlier.
- 4 | Children should plan their ideas before writing their chapter.
- 5 | Ask them to share their work with a partner, working together to identify parts that they are especially pleased with and parts where they could make improvements. Then give children time to go back to work and make changes, rewriting any parts that they think could be improved.
- 6 | If you have a working wall, extracts from children's work could be displayed for everyone to see, perhaps as a 'before and after' with children's original section and then the new, improved section after they've rewritten it.

#### **AFTER THE UNIT...**

- Explore other stories that the children could write using the cast of characters they have created.
- Read other examples of stories written by Lauren Child and discuss how she presents the characters.
- When reading other books, children could think about what the author tells us about his or her characters, and how this is conveyed.

# Letters and Sounds lives!

Despite the DfE pulling funding and support, Wandle Learning Trust has proved its revised Letters and Sounds programme remains useful and valid...

#### RACHEL DAVIS MBE AND MARK SISWICK MBE

f Letters and Sounds was a person, it might right now be tweeting 'reports of my demise have been greatly exaggerated.' We like to think we would be tagged in those tweets in recognition of the reviving role our schools have played!

#### DfE has spoken

In May, 14 years after its publication, the Department for Education (DfE) announced that the 2007 Letters and Sounds Framework was no longer fit for purpose. As such it would cease to be a validated phonics programme after 2022.

Widely interpreted as DfE reading Letters and Sounds its last rites, this impression was compounded by the Department also pulling out of the revised Letters and Sounds programme it had commissioned our schools to produce. Their support and funding ceased almost immediately.

Running Outstanding schools serving vastly different communities, both with Phonics Screening Check results in the top five percent, we know that Letters and Sounds is effective. Our schools had already committed so much time and passion to the revised programme, neither of us were prepared to see Letters and Sounds disappear. With the Department out of the picture, we felt we had no choice but to plough our own investment into continuing the work. Schools had to have the option of a quality, validated Letters and Sounds programme, of that we were in no doubt.

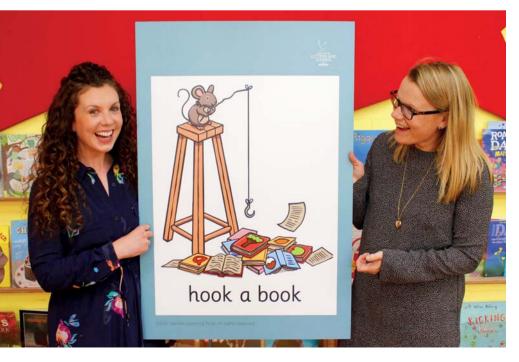
Now, just a month after launching our own SSP (Systematic Synthetic Phonics) programme, named to recognise our partnership, Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised is already th

enjoying the support of hundreds of member schools. We are delighted to concur that news of Letters and Sounds' demise was indeed greatly exaggerated!

#### **Developing Little Wandle**

The seeds of what would eventually become Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised were sown back in March 2020, with a commission from the DfE to create daily Letters and Sounds phonics videos for schools to share with families during lockdown.

Within the space of a few weeks our own teachers, working alongside early reading experts, had written a term's worth of lessons. We had all hands on deck to create lessons which were based on strong, direct teaching and were engaging and visually appealing for children. While for most children these would not be their own teachers, we wanted to create as authentic a lesson experience as possible, complete with plenty of warmth and positive praise. Like the PE sessions from Joe Wicks - who generously provided an intro clip for some of our videos - we hoped our lessons would become a regular,





reassuring part of the new morning routine. Alongside our YouTube channel we also provided a website with a full list of upcoming lessons to aid teacher planning.

Understandably, not every teacher in our schools felt ready to be beamed across the nation's front rooms. However, we could see those that did visibly grow into their roles as the weeks went on. As teacher/presenter Emma says: "At first it was very nerve-wracking when we started to see how many people were accessing the videos. However, it soon became part of the weekly routine, and you could easily forget how big the audience was. It was also reassuring when we received lots of positive feedback about the lessons and how much people appreciated them."

#### Success story

To date, our lockdown Letters and Sounds lesson videos have received 8.5m views and our teacher presenters have found unexpected fame as 'YouTube stars,' being recognised when visiting other schools and even in the supermarket!

Distilling our best practice into videos for use during lockdown and seeing how well-received they were, whet our appetites to do more.

We knew Letters and Sounds schools around the country were creating their own adaptations of the programme to make up the missing features. But we didn't know what impact this had on teacher workload, or how consistently adaptations were being applied across classrooms in the same school. Equally, how does current Letters and Sounds practice incorporate everything we now know about how children learn best? These were all questions we asked ourselves and to which we decided our revised

programme could provide answers, as well as meeting the expectations of Ofsted's deep dive into reading in the process.

Developing our own daily practice into weekly lesson content for every Reception and Year 1 lesson created the core of Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised. Around that we wanted to make excellent, accessible written and video guidance modelling all aspects of the teaching, plus clear, concise getting started materials and online whole-school training. The aim of this is to give schools the reassurance of knowing how Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised should be used to bring about the best possible outcomes.

Teachers who honed their presenting skills in our YouTube lessons during lockdown now feature in our Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised videos. In selecting those to feature, we felt a responsibility to reflect back to children people who look like them, as well as communicating to the wider world that teaching is an inclusive profession. In the words of class teacher and presenter Josh: "I believe the involvement of male teachers in the production process has been vital, especially considering that the proportion of males teaching in Key Stage 1 is still extremely low. I hope that my participation in this programme might inspire other males to teach phonics - it is such an enjoyable subject with such significant rewards!"

#### Making phonics fun

As well as building a resource that is purposeful for teachers, we were equally determined to create something joyful for children. Mnemonics and catchphrases were something that was missing from the original Letters and Sounds and provided the perfect way to appeal to





children. We felt confident we were on the right track when one of our trial schools fed back: "The catchphrases are a great addition. 'Chair in the air' [represented by a teddy floating away on an armchair tethered to a huge bunch of balloons] really makes my children laugh."

Our experience of creating Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised has also challenged us as senior leaders to demonstrate the qualities we expect from others - boldness, determination, resilience, and leadership. As an opportunity to make a difference to children's lives, it's hard to imagine anything more fulfilling than creating this programme.

For us, six-year-old Michael, who played a starring role in our pronunciation videos for Little Wandle members to share with families at home, sums it up perfectly: "It made me feel really happy and excited to be involved. It helped me with my phonics too! I hope I have helped other children with their phonics."





Rachel is the headteacher of Little Sutton Primary School in Sutton Coldfield. Mark is the executive headteacher of Wandle Learning Trust, a multi-academy trust based in Wandsworth, south London. littlewandlelettersandsounds.org.uk

# When STEM and stories COLLIDE

How fun, engaging books can help rebrand STEM and help children understand the joy of science

#### KONNIE HUQ

hen my parents came to the UK in the 1960s, one of their main objectives was to give their kids a good education. It can't have been easy to leave friends and family behind, and make a 5,000-mile journey to an island on the far-edge of a foreign continent where the language spoken is not your mother tongue, especially when you're only in your early twenties. Let's not forget, this is pre-cheap travel so hopping back and forth was out of the question.

My parents had visions of their children becoming STEM professionals. In Bangladesh and much of Asia back then, doctors, engineers, accountants and mathematicians all belonged to the club of revered career paths. If you were any of these things, you had made it. Unfortunately, my folks had come to a country where their kids would grow up in an environment where footballers, pop stars, fashion designers, actresses, TV presenters, etc. were viewed as the glamorous



jobs. Unlike in Bangladesh, for many years, the stereotype of a scientist in the UK has been pale, male and stale, and even those that weren't stale were usually portrayed as mad, wacky professors or square, socially awkward introverts.



#### **Rebranding STEM**

So, when it came to me writing my Cookie book series, I was determined to flip-reverse the stereotype. Although I fulfilled my parents' dreams and took physics, chemistry and maths A-levels, stumbling into a job in television meant I didn't quite become the engineer I intended to be. This background, however, and my keen interest in science, is now being put to good use not only in my book writing but also by being a STEM ambassador.

The third and latest Cookie book, Cookie and the Most Mysterious Mystery in the World is all to do with computers, puzzles, problem solving and coding. My two young boys introduced me to the world of coding through Scratch and



Python, as being a grown-up. I didn't know Scratch from an itch, or Python from an adder! I. in return, introduced them and the readers to Bletchley Park and the Enigma Machine, Charles Babbage and Ada Lovelace, and a funny, laugh-out-loud story, which, for once, embraces screen time! Like it or not, computers are the future, so if our kids are going to spend their lives on screens. why not get them into coding as early as possible? Education should be entertaining and. definitely for my boys, coding fulfils this remit.

All too often, children get to secondary school and the sciences almost seem like a foreign language to them. That's not to say they shouldn't be doing sport and drawing and drama and all the other things that will keep them well-rounded. but the UK lags far behind our European counterparts when it comes to our young people entering STEM professions. The earlier we subject children to STEM, and even what we perceive as quite complicated concepts, the earlier they will start to take it in and the easier it will become for them.

#### Stealth science

In all of the Cookie books, there is stealth science and education sewn in, but disguised as a comedic adventure. The first book in the series, *Cookie* and the Most Annoying Boy in the World introduces the reader to Cookie's love of

science, briefly mentions the electro-magnetic spectrum, and includes notations such as pie-charts, graphs, Venn diagrams and dichotomous keys displaying funny thoughts from Cookie's head. In a similar vein, book two, Cookie and the Most Annoying Girl in the World, covers climate change and saving the planet.

When it comes to children, I've always felt that education should be entertaining and that entertainment should be educational. (Well, at least not dumbing down or lowest common denominator.) It's so easy for a child to switch off or glaze over when uninterested or unengaged in a topic; education should be a pleasure not a chore. Which is why luring kids in under the guise of an engaging story or a funny,

laugh-out-loud book is a really good way to do it. I often liken it to the hidden vegetables

in a pasta sauce; kids think they're just getting a delicious tomato-y sauce, but little do they know, snuck in there are carrots and all manner of other veg! I like to hope that with my book, kids think they're just getting a hilarious comic strip story but, really, snuck in there are nuggets of knowledge, education and information.



Konnie's latest book, Cookie and the Most Mysterious Mystery in the World is out now.

(Piccadilly Press, £10.99)

# Reading 'n' robots

Help your LKS2 children improve literacy with step-by-step processes... using robots

#### COLLEEN LYNCH

hat's great about working with robots in the classroom is not only the reaction from the children - it's one of the best behaviour management tools I've ever used - it's also that there are so many really helpful online teaching resources that you can tap into whatever level you and your class are working to.

I had never used a robot before introducing one to my class, so it was a really interesting learning curve for all of us, and the children enjoyed the fact that I was learning with them. We used Marty the Robot because Marty looks and moves like a human, which the children connected with, but there are other basic spherical or wheeled educational robots out there, too.

To begin, we went right back to basics, looking at the process of offline programming, what coding is, and then familiarising ourselves with the app that came with the robot. But as the term progressed, I found that rather than just a novelty, or a lesson in its own right, we could use the robot to help augment other areas of the curriculum, especially literacy.

#### Recontextualising literacy

When it comes to fiction or non-fiction writing, there's a huge amount of structure involved. From 'Beginning. Middle, End' to the finer details of persuasive prose, there are multiple steps to consider. This can be tricky for some pupils to master, especially if they're not

> handwriting or spelling. The step-by-step process of coding can

comfortable with

help with this hugely. As a hands-on experience rather than an abstract theory, working with a robot can give pupils the tools to verbalise or write using their own writing process outside of a pencil and paper, with some added coding knowledge!

Realising there are multiple ways to be creative can help a lot of children become more involved in literacy exercises than they otherwise might be.

I hope the following will help you with some ideas to combine robotics with literacy, adding an extra sense of fun (for you and your class):

- Mark making/pencil control/early writing - get the children to draw routes and then program a robot to follow them. Their routes could be based on their walk to school, to the park, or even on their favourite shape.
- Presenting ask children what their favourite thing about the robot is. What question would they most like to ask it? You can go around the class getting pupils to answer different questions, and later on asking each other questions. This helps develop skills including listening and talking, turn taking, discussion, sharing thoughts and opinions, and effective questioning.
- Playwriting provide a block of code for the robot to walk

through, and ask pupils to create a storyline or script to match the action (or vice versa, where you provide a

simple script and children must create the movement to match).

- Persuasive writing create a poster or advert for the robot that could be used in magazines and catalogues. Why should people use this robot? What makes you excited to learn with it?
- Spelling and vocab write vocabulary (spelling words, WOW words, common words etc.) on coloured pieces of card, and ask pupils to use their programming skills to get the robot to the correct word. For example, you could ask them to find an adjective, or even a specific word they might be struggling with. To help with constructing words, write single letters on cards, ask the children to program a route out to spell out the words they are learning.
- Celebrate progress many robots like Marty can be programmed to do a dance on a particular colour of card, so children will be able to see straight away when they have the correct answer to activities such as the spelling game above. Turning the often-dull process of spelling and vocabulary into a robot dance party will engage even the least interested children trust me!



Colleen Lynch is a Primary 4 (Y3) teacher at St Mark's **Primary** School in North

Ayrshire, Scotland. Follow Colleen on twitter @misslynch90



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# 5 MANTRAS for rich writing

Share these inspiring pointers to help pupils throw off the yoke and get excited about creative writing

#### LAURA DOCKRILL

Just write! If you're worried about where or how to begin, quite simply - don't! Enjoy having fun being creative, playing about on the page with words and language. Writing should always be fun, even if you're writing something tricky or challenging or a story that is sad, it should never feel like homework. You don't need a fancy posh pen or a brand-new notebook to get started - you can write with crayons, pencils, pens, a phone and any paper will do! Just get it down and get it done! (Remember you can still tell an amazing story with few words or even no words drawing, painting, cutting and sticking are all wonderful ways to tell a story.)

There are no rights or wrongs. There are no good ✓ or bads. All writing is good writing. And the great thing about writing is that everyone can do it. Forget 'perfection.' Forget lovely handwriting. Don't worry about trying to 'sound' like an 'author', or 'write' like a 'writer'. Write like you. If you are writing, then you can call yourself a writer! And as for spelling or grammar - forget perfection! It can block your creativity, so if you can't find a word you're looking for? Invent it! Create new languages and have fun exploring words. Writing certainly doesn't have to make sense! Enjoy the experience of writing how you talk rather than trying to sound like somebody else or if you'll get top marks for anything. So long as you're writing from your brain and heart, you're doing it right and you can't go wrong!

Play! Live and get out in the wild! You can't write if you don't have anything to write about, can you? So, experience life in all its rich juiciness. Be curious, be adventurous, be nosy and playful. Read as much as you can, reading is the best way to open a door in your mind, but you have to live too!

Live out loud! Ask questions, listen, watch, taste, touch and smell. Tromp about outdoors, go swimming, get near the sea, a lake or river (or a puddle will do), bake for no reason, meet up with a friend, hang out with an animal, watch a film, take a nap, phone a loved one - say hello! Make a wish upon a star, smell a flower, taste something different. Something new. Read the newspaper. Go for a walk. Go to a gallery or museum. What do you see? Learn a new word. Make up a new word and teach it to your family. Have a go at playing an instrument. Be close to nature, put your hands in the soil, watch bugs, put your hand on the bark of a tree, look up at the sky. Laugh - really belly laugh. Dance around the kitchen. Jump on your bed. Immerse yourself in a busy place, how does that feel? Get outdoors, it's all waiting...

Keep a notebook and scribble everything down. This doesn't have to be a diary. These are your ideas. Don't cross anything out, don't throw anything away. Try writing down simple things, like how does brushing your teeth feel? What did you have for breakfast? What do your shoes look like? Write down

your dreams, what you see when you look out of your bedroom window? Try jotting bits down on your journey to school. Colours, sounds, texture. Practise looking at the big picture and then zooming into something small. Detail is everything. Take a pencil with you and sketch too, to help you remember. Add to it as you go. It might not be useful now but one day this book could have just the very idea you're hunting for.

Write for yourself. Don't worry what anybody else will think or say, this is your work and not to be judged by anybody. Write for yourself, from your brain and heart about it all. You never have to show anybody what you write. As long as you are having fun or you are moved, or you find yourself time-travelling to escape to a new land, then you are doing it and it belongs to you. Always. If you do ever share your work (very well done) and somebody does not quite like it or say 'that's amazing' that is ok. Sometimes people don't always say what they mean. Plus, not everybody has to like what we write. And that is no reason to stop or give up. If you like it, or feel better for getting it down, then that is all that matters. And you should feel very, very, very proud of yourself.





Laura
Dockrill is
the author
of many
children's
books,
including

the popular Darcy Burdock series. Her new title, The Dream House (Piccadilly Press, £9.99) is out now.

🏏 @LauraDockrill

lauradockrill.co.uk

## THE WAY HOME

Dialogue can help to build realistic and interesting characters, says **Pie Corbett**, and this new model text shows your class how

et's not cut through the churchyard," said Kabir, slinging his rucksack onto his back.
Raj stared at his friend and grinned. Mr Jenkins watched as the two boys left the afterschool football club and headed off for home.

"What have you got in there? It looks as if it weighs a ton," replied Raj, laughing. "We'd better get a move on. You look like a packhorse!" He wrapped his Bolton scarf round his neck as they made their way to the High Street, chatting and joking. "Is your mum going to let you go to the match this Saturday?" Raj asked, tugging his coat tighter as the wind whipped a few snowflakes down the road.

Streetlights lit up the road and the snow had begun to settle. They had hung around playing footie after school for too long and getting home late might mean trouble. The High Street glittered with Christmas lights and there were plenty of late-night shoppers hunting for bargains. The mini-market Tesco was doing a roaring trade in tinsel and wrapping paper. Mr Singh waved to them as they passed his grocery store.

"My mum will be furious,"
muttered Raj, "but we can save a few
minutes if we cut through Eden
Grove." They turned
into the alley and,
without thinking,
increased their pace.
It was dark and quite
narrow. The houses
here were back-to-back
and lots of families
parked their cars on
the pavement so that there
wasn't much room.

At the top end, they could just see what looked like a furniture van parked up. Two men were opening the back doors and tugging something out. It looked like a bulky roll of carpet.

"Hurry up!" snapped one of the men, lugging his end of the carpet.

"Ok. Keep your hair on," replied the other. "Let's get inside in without dropping

him!" They both laughed as they staggered across the alley and into the back door of an old building. The boys froze and stepped back into the shadows so that they would not be seen.

"Did you see what I thought I saw?" hissed Kabir.

"I reckon they've got a body in there and they're hiding it in that old building," replied Raj. "Come on, let's take a closer look."

"I'm not sure about that," whispered Kabir. He hung back as his friend edged down the alley towards where the van was parked. Sighing, he followed and the pair of them soon reached the back of the van. They peered in and could just make out that it was full of clutter – old bits of furniture, boxes and crates, some ancient paintings

and what looked like African face masks and a bundle of spears.

Kabir tugged Raj's jacket and hissed, "Let's get out of here before they come back." A light shone through the doorway of the old building and they could hear the two men thumping about. It sounded as if they were hauling the carpet roll up the stairs. There was a lot of huffing and puffing so the boys knew it had to be pretty heavy.

At that moment, the light from the doorway went out and they were standing in almost total darkness. "It must have been on a timer," muttered Raj, not sure whether he should investigate or wait for a while until the coast was clear. Kabir had already begun to make his way back up the alley, towards where the lights of the High Street waited invitingly.

Kabir hadn't taken more than a few steps when a hand grabbed him and a voice hissed, "What are you two up to, creeping about?" A torch beam shone directly into his eyes, making it impossible to see. "The front entrance is round the other side of the museum, you know, and the exhibition doesn't open till tomorrow."

"The what?" stuttered Kabir.
"The exhibition. It's going
to be amazing. Statues from

around the world. We're just the delivery team but at least we get to see it all being set up. We've just taken in an amazing statue of a warrior. Well-wrapped, so it wouldn't break. Nearly broke my back though!" The man laughed. "It's free entry from tomorrow. You lads might enjoy it." He peered at the two boys.

A few minutes later,
Raj and Kabir were back on
the High Street, taking the long way
home. "What a couple of prize prunes
we are!" laughed Raj, punching his
friend's arm. "I thought they were
carrying a dead body!"

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#### **Teaching notes**

Lots of children want to write mystery or detective stories. This story provides a simple idea. One or two main characters mistake something that they see for something ominous. This misunderstanding leads them into trouble before the ending reveals that it is an innocent mistake.

#### Hook

Tune the children into the story by reading some mystery and detective stories. These three books romp along wonderfully, Murder most Unladylike by Robin Stevens, Diary of Detection by Julia Lee, or MG Leonard's Highland Falcon Thief. To further help them get into the idea of the story, make a list of the sorts of things that might happen in a detective or mystery story, e.g. something or someone is either stolen, kidnapped, or goes missing.

#### Oral comprehension

Tease away at the developing and deepening understanding through close questioning:

- Why didn't Kabir want to go through the churchyard?
- What might the fact that the rucksack 'weighs a ton' have a bearing on what happens later in the story?
- Find clues for the time of year
- Why might the boys be in trouble?
- Why did they increase their pace, without thinking?
- How does the author make the alley sound dangerous?
- Explain what is meant by 'keep your hair on'.
- Why do you think the two men laugh?
- What was really in the van?
- Discuss the use of the phrase 'huffing and puffing'.
- Why did the light go out?
- What does Raj mean when he says that they had been a 'pair of prunes'?

#### Vocabulary

Read the story through, underline difficult vocabulary and discuss any words or expressions that might present a barrier to understanding. Provide simple, child-friendly definitions. List examples or synonyms and then try using the words in sentences. Use the words over a number of days for grammar games as well as rapid reading, spelling and when writing creative sentences. Ask the children to skim read

the text and underline any words or phrases that 'need talking about'.

Ton, Bolton scarf, tinsel, back-to-back, furniture van, bulky, lugging, edged, hauling, investigate, invitingly, exhibition, museum.

#### Explore through drama

Drama is a key strategy to help children deepen their imaginative and emotional engagement with a story. Once the children can read the text fluently and have discussed it in depth, deepen understanding of the main focus on character and dialogue with the following drama tasks:

- "What am I carrying?" In a circle, a child comes into the centre, picks up something imaginary and carries it around the circle. The mime should suggest the size, shape, etc. Everyone then has to guess what it might be.
- In a darkened hall, pretend to tiptoe down the alley, hide in the shadows and peer into the van.

 In pairs, role-play lugging the heavy carpet out of the van and into the museum. • Form groups of three or four - pretend

role, gossip about what happened. Imagine that you were an eyewitness - what did you see and hear?

Role-play what the two men said after the boys had gone.

• Retell the story as a monologue in role as either Raj or Kabir, remembering to think about their different viewpoints. Follow this by writing in role a diary entry about what happened from either character's viewpoint.

**Contrasting characters** 

This story lends itself to exploring contrasting characters and how they react differently to the same event. Get the children to find all the clues that they can that suggest the differences between Kabir and Raj. Model how to do this by using the

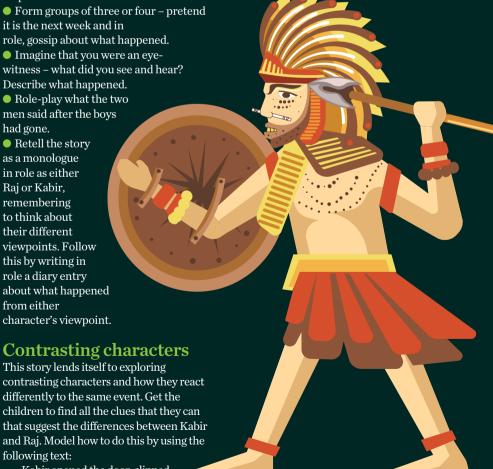
Kabir opened the door, slipped into the room and sat down

behind the others. "Sorry, I'm late," he mumbled, staring at his toes, trying not to catch anyone's eye. Mr Jenkins droned on and on about fronted adverbials while Kabir chewed over what had happened. He could not forget the look on his mum's face when she had slammed the door.

A moment later, Raj shoved open the classroom door, ambled in and chucked his school bag down beside an empty space at a table, "Morning Mr J." he exclaimed. interrupting the Year 6 SPaG lesson with a grin. "I would have been with you earlier but I was doing social distancing at the bus stop and missed it."

Raj wrestled a notebook and pencil out of his bag, sat back and gave his best impression of being fascinated by Mr Jenkins' explanation concerning the way in which adverbials were a 'moveable feast'. Kabir didn't hear what was being said as he replayed the events of the morning, but Raj pretended to listen as he planned his next step; Maxine drank in every word.

- Choose two different characters
- Think about how the character is feeling



- Show this through what they say or do
- Reveal a character's thoughts
- Drop in a few descriptive details

The children could then write a short piece about Kabir and Raj in the main story. Draw attention to useful phrases and words they need to write about contrasting characters:

I think Raj is a more confident character because he wants to 'take a closer look'. This means that he is not afraid of investigating what the two men are doing. By contrast, Kabir is more afraid of the consequences. We know this because he says, "I'm not sure about this" and because 'he hung back'. This suggests that he may be reluctant because he is afraid, but it might also mean that he has more common sense than Raj.

#### Positive characteristics

kind hearted thoughtful happy-go-lucky lively generous quiet enthusiastic brainy

#### Negative characteristics

bad tempered spiteful lazy frightened bossy worried greedy mean

#### Setting out dialogue

Work with the class to generate 'rules' for writing dialogue. When writing this story, I decided early on that I would have Raj as the more confident character and Kabir would be more hesitant and in some ways more sensible! Once I had made that decision, it was easier to write the story as I could imagine what each character might say or do. Here are the basic dialogue punctuation rules:

- For younger writers, write what is said, starting with a capital letter, and the punctuation inside a speech bubble
- Burst the bubble to leave speech marks round what is said
- Start a new line for each speaker
- Start the spoken words with a capital letter
- Put punctuation inside the speech marks
- Put the speaker before or after what is said or in between:

Sam said, "So, let's go." "So, let's go," said Sam. "So," said Sam, "let's go."

One useful piece of advice for writing dialogue is to suggest that children only use a few exchanges as it is easy to lose control and confuse the reader. Initially, it can help to have the dialogue at the start of the story. It helps to choose and decide how a character feels, thinks or behaves and show this through what they say - "I'm scared!" It can help to use powerful synonyms for 'said' that reveal how different characters might say something – hissed, squealed, roared, whispered. However, this can become overplayed. An alternative is just to use 'said', or use said plus an adverb to add emotion he said nervously.

Another way to bring a character alive is to use quirky expressions, e.g. "Crazy cats," she muttered. Explore a variety of formal and informal techniques to develop a character's voice, such as apostrophes for omission and question tags: "We was lovin' that vesterday, weren't we?"

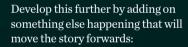
Have characters discussing other characters and reflecting on events -"I cannot believe Sam ignored me earlier," Kabir muttered.

#### The speech sandwich

Try tagging on an extra clause to show what a character is doing as they speak, now you can develop a 'Start with what a character says' and tag on a stage direction:

"Hello," said John, waving to his friend.

Now add to the speech sandwich by adding on the listener's reaction -"Hello," said John, waving to his friend. Tim gasped.



"Hello," said John, waving to his friend. Tim gasped. Coming down the road was an elephant.

Finally, add in what the listener says:

"Hello," said John, waving to his friend. Tim gasped. Coming down the road was an elephant.

"Run for it!" squealed Tim.

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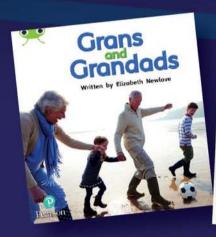
PIE CORBETT is an education consultant, poet and author known for Talk for Writing. His most recent book is Transforming Learning across the Curriculum (talkfor writingshop.com).

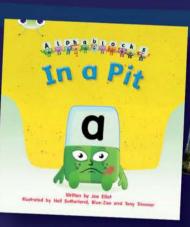
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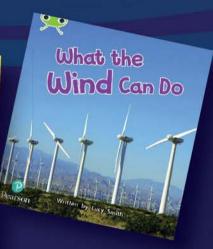


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# GROWING IDEAS

Before pen even hits paper, it's the thinking, planning and wondering that really makes a difference to creative writing lessons, says author and former teacher Emma Carroll

h no, miss, not again!" Yup, this was the common reaction to my creative writing lessons. I don't mind telling you: I'm not proud! Though I loved teaching English for nearly nineteen years, there was a point when I realised I was a writer trapped in a teacher's body, and no amount of enthusiasm for writing on my part was going to win over the majority of my students.

Yet it wasn't until I started taking my own writing seriously that I began to see why I'd failed at teaching my students to do the same. It wasn't enough to give them just a lesson, a title, a theme. Nor was it right to focus so much on language use, structure, editing their work, when we'd completely ignored the very first part of the writing process.

#### Warming up

So much of the work in creative writing is done before your pen even touches the page. Ideas need to grow. Worlds must be built. We have to get know our characters. This takes time. It's messy. It might involve scribbling notes, drawing mind-maps, listening to music, looking at pictures, reading other stories. For each book I've written, I have notebooks full of this stuff: it's illegible scrawl, mostly, but it's also the true starting point for the story I'm trying to create.

These days, as a full-time author, I'm often asked to deliver writing workshops to KS2 children, and I love to do so: it's one of my favourite parts of the job. Teachers will ask me to mention editing because it's an important part of the writing process. But what I've learned through my own experience is that editing - and writing - comes later: first, we have to nurture our ideas. I tell students it's like warming up for a football match - that to give your best performance, you've got to be fully prepared.

- "What's the title, miss?" a keen pupil might ask, pen and ruler poised.
- "There isn't one," I tell them.
- "So what are we going to write?"
- · "Nothing yet," I'll say. "You're going to think."

First, I ask the class to think of their favourite book, and then explain that this choice alone might shape the type of stories they're drawn to, and therefore more likely to enjoy writing. Then we'll consider other personal traits - likes and dislikes, talents, fears and dreams. All these things make us individuals, and will in turn help make our writing unlike anyone else's. It's also worth mentioning that characters in stories will often have traits and quirks that somehow relate - directly or through association - to the author's own experience. In other words, YOU are a great resource when it comes to creative writing. Set scenes in your favourite places or in countries you'd like to visit. Give characters interests or talents that are yours: it makes writing them much more fun.

Next we look at interesting pictures, images I've found online of mysterious-looking places, or of someone who looks as if they've a story to tell. In fact, the task works with any picture, just as long as its

intriguing enough to catch your class's attention. I'll ask three simple questions:

1. What type of animal is just out of shot?

2. Why is the date 13th June important to this person or place?

3. If you were in this scene what would you hear?

You can extend the questions (or adapt them), change the pictures, add a second picture and ask how it links to the first. All the time re-iterate to students that there are no right or wrong





1 Show your class an old black-and-white photo of a person and ask them to tell you three things about it: what's the person's name? What are they looking at? What are they hiding in their pocket?

Name generator: look up top baby names for a particular year, choose one then create a surname. The surname should give us some idea of what sort of character the person is. You could also discuss famous book character names and how they enrich the story.

Jimagine your house 100 years ago. (If your house isn't that old imagine a previous house once standing where yours is now). What can you see from your bedroom window? What does your bedroom look like? What sounds can you hear inside and outside?

Find a dramatic event or intriguing landmark, possibly from local history; an air raid shelter, maybe, or a missing person case. Only give pupils the smallest amount of info, before asking them to come up with five more things they want to know about it. Then, using their imaginations, ask them to provide the answers to their five things.

5 Show two different pictures or words on your whiteboard. Ask students to decide what links them. This is brilliant way of creating original story ideas out of seemingly random things. I use this approach often!

By the time students have built up a 'world' for their character to exist in – this might include maps, house plans, lists of era appropriate words and phrases – the 'writing a story' part feels so much easier. In fact, it can feel like taking the brake off, as students dive into the worlds they've created.

At the point where they're ready to write, they're invested in their stories. I've seen this stay with them through the editing part, too, because they're able to see that at each stage their work is improving. Yes, the process takes time, but the end result is worth it, because the students are surprised – and delighted – in what they've achieved.

The very best creative writing comes when you truly connect with a concept. It's not just about a cognitive understanding of the task. It's about feeling it, getting a buzz from your best

ideas. All this takes time, space, a bit of digging around, exploring and playing with what gives you inspiration.

I'm sure there's a baking metaphor for it: the better the prove the better the rise

or something. Or maybe I'm just looking forward to the new series of *Bake Off* a bit too much...

"So much of the

work in creative

writing is done

before your pen even

touches the page"

Emma Carroll is a bestselling, award-winning author, with 20 years of teaching experience. Poet Ted Hughes once told her

that her writing was 'dangerous'.

answers – they are simply using their imaginations.

To give the session further focus, I might then nudge students towards a specific genre of writing – in my case, historical fiction, as that's the

genre I write myself.

This can work
well if you're studying
a particular period

WW2 for examplesince students will

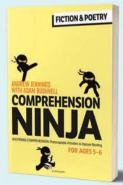
- since students will already have some knowledge of the

period. Historical fiction is all about creating a world that's a slightly altered version of our own. It's not the dry, history-book facts, but the everyday domestic details of what it felt like to be alive at that time; food, clothes, sights, smells, views from the bedroom window, favourite item of clothing, what you're scared of, what you want more than anything. In incorporating a genre's traits and stylistic features, it really can make for better, more sophisticated outcomes than just 'writing a story'.

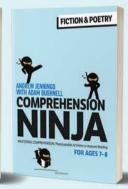
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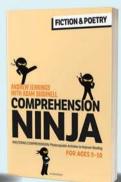


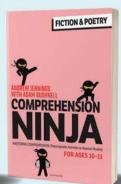












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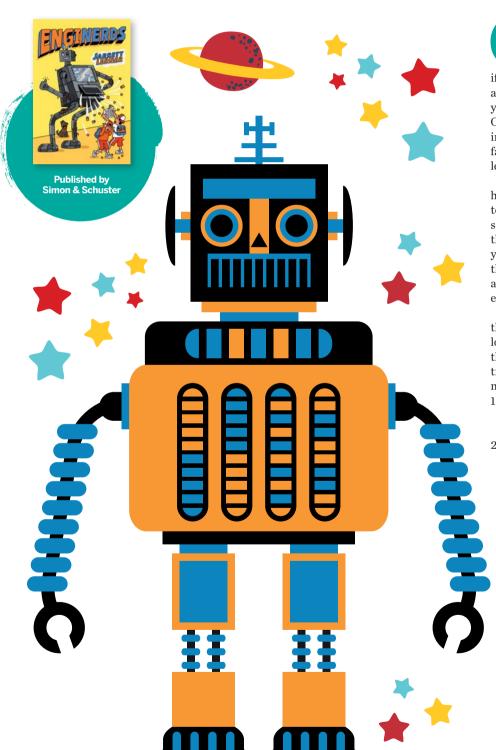


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# EngiNerds

Help students soar to new creative heights by using this STEM-inspired novel as a launchpad

JARRETT LERNER

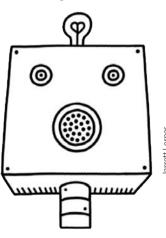


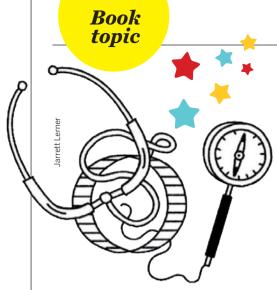
rowing up, I was rarely given a good reason why I should read my school-assigned books. Most of my teachers, if questioned about it, said something along the lines of, "Because kids your age read this book every year." Or, "Because this is a famous and important book." These reasons were far from persuasive. If anything, they left me more confused.

Why do you read? Surely you have lots of reasons. But I'm willing to bet that when you pick up a book, settle into a cozy spot, and dive into the pages, you do so in the hopes that you will be getting something out of the experience, whether it's diversion and distraction, information and edification, or whatever else.

My goal is always to make books that offer something - and hopefully lots of things - to kids. EngiNerds, the first novel in my EngiNerds trilogy, was created with two major goals in mind:

- 1. To prove to or confirm for kids that reading can be a thoroughly enjoyable activity
- 2. To show kids how books can serve as sources of ideas and inspiration for their own creative journey, and that it's when we are creatively engaged that we do our very best learning.





The first goal was accomplished by conceiving and writing a fast-paced, action-packed, humour-filled story about a group of awesome kids battling a horde of farting robots. (Yes, you read that right: farting robots.) The second goal was a bit more involved, and achieving it requires your assistance as a teacher...

#### **SHARING THE BOOK**

EngiNerds is a book that begs to be read aloud. I put in a great deal of time and effort to capture the voice of a real, relatable kid narrator (his name is Kennedy, though he goes by Ken), and the book's humour comes through all the more strongly when there's a

The story takes place over the course

crowd to giggle

along with.

of just a few days, and is broken up into dozens of relatively short (sometimes super short) chapters that often end on cliffhangers. This means that it's easy to read short sections of the book over days or weeks, depending on how much time you have in class, and you can break the story down for less enthusiastic readers.

I've been fortunate enough to read kids the opening chapters of EngiNerds hundreds of times, in groups as small as five and as large as five hundred. engaged that we Although pupils usually love the fast do our very best pace and want to hear more, that energy the momentum that the story has built up inside of the kids -

#### **CREATIVE WRITING ACTIVITIES**

#### **Predicting**

"It's when we

are creatively

learning"

Have you just stopped your read-aloud of *EngiNerds* in the middle of a particularly tense scene? Do you have a classroom full of kids bouncing on the edges of their seats, crying out for just one more chapter? Well, instead of telling them

what I wrote next, have them finish writing the scene.

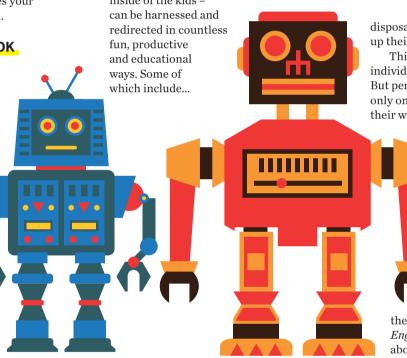
Before letting them loose, it may be helpful to organise some information together as a group. Who are the characters involved? What is the setting? What is the conflict or problem? This will help kids grasp the ingredients at their

disposal before they begin to cook up their own solutions.

This activity can be done individually, in pairs, or in groups. But perhaps the best learning begins only once pupils have completed their work. Have children volunteer

> to read aloud their creations, then compare them. Were they all different? How so? Were any similar? In what ways? What specific elements or details of the book led kids down a similar storytelling path?

This work and the resulting discussion will help uncover the careful construction of EngiNerds, and by thinking about how authors craft



### **Beyond Writing**

#### DRAW A ROBOT

In addition to my fiction, I make activity books, and have a collection of free activities available on my website (jarrettlerner.com). You can use my 'How to draw a robot' activity along with EngiNerds in a variety of ways. Once pupils have mastered the basic shapes and lines needed to draw a robot, have them draw what they think the robots in EngiNerds look like, or have them draw the robot they created in the robot-making activity above.

#### **FINISH THIS COMIC**

Robots are uniquely exciting characters to tell stories about. They exist in the gray area between human and inanimate object, and are constantly evolving in the real world. Use my robot-related 'Finish this comic!' activities to spark ideas about robot-to-robot and/or robot-to-person interactions and stories. If children need more than just the blank panels provided on the activity sheet, have them jump over to a new sheet of paper. (Or print off some of my free

blank comic book pages at jarrettlerner.com)

#### EXPLORE THE JUNK DRAWER

The EngiNerds are wildly crafty, clever, and creative. They borrow their parents' vacuum cleaners and use them to build hovercrafts. They make catapults out of chopsticks and rubber bands and use them to save their town. Have children explore their junk drawers and/or recycling bins and see what they can create. You can provide tape, rubber bands, glue, or anything else you think it may be helpful for everyone to have access to.

scenes in particular and stories at large using tools and techniques such as, say, foreshadowing, it will help kids be more intentional in their own writing.

#### Remixing

EngiNerds begins simply, with Ken finding a box on his doorstep. The box is a mysterious one. It's got his name on it, but that's all – no information about who it's from or what's inside.

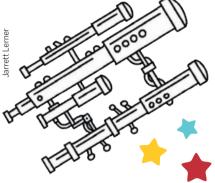
This situation is absolutely packed with storytelling potential. It takes a common, relatable experience – pretty much everyone, young and old, has opened their front door and found a package sitting there – but, by omitting certain key information, infuses it with infinite possibilities. Anyone could have sent that box to Ken. And anything could be waiting inside of it.

First have pupils decide who their main character will be. Themselves? A made-up kid? An animal? They can even use my narrator, Ken. Then have them craft their own stories using the mysterious box premise.

It may be helpful to list the questions that the mysterious box situation presents, and think back to how and when they were answered in *EngiNerds*. For instance: Who sent the box? Why? What's inside? Does it make the main character happy? Sad?

Scared? Excited? Confused? All of the above? What does the main character do once they discover what's in the box? What sort of problem might the contents of the box create? What will the main character do to solve that problem?

The children can actually write their stories,



or simply outline them.

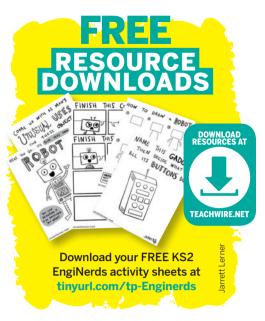
No matter what, the work will help them make discoveries about narrative structure and help them strengthen their own writing.

#### **Robot-making**

While the robots in *EngiNerds* malfunction rather spectacularly (that is, *flatulently*), they were designed, built, and distributed for a good reason. Ask kids to identify a problem in the world, preferably one that is important to them. These problems can be big, small, or any size in between. Could a robot (or some similar machine) help solve this problem, or at least alleviate some of its consequences?

Have the kids write about their robot. Pose some questions before they begin to make sure their descriptions are thorough. What size will the robot

be? What will it be made out of? What will it do? What are some ways that the robot could malfunction? What could be done to prevent that from happening?



Pupils' robots can be plausible or fanciful. Regardless, it will help them explore the ways in which their creativity can help them problem solve, and the ways in which writing can help them clarify and clearly express their thinking.

You can add a research element to this activity, too, by having the children look into real-world uses of robots. Have them identify where they are being used and what problems they are solving.



Author-illustrator Jarrett Lerner is the creator of the EngiNerds series of Middle Grade novels, Geeger the Robot chapter books, Give

This Book a Title and Give This Book a Cover activity books, Hunger Heroes graphic novels, and more, all of which are published by Simon & Schuster. Jarrett can be found at jarrettlerner.com and on Twitter and Instagram @Jarrett\_Lerner.

This activity can also be done by giving everyone in class access to the same materials, and then comparing what people make. Either approach can be done individually, in pairs, in groups, or even as a whole class.

Truly any materials or items can be used, but some great and super fun ones include: plastic utensils, toothpicks or wood skewers (not recommended for the youngest creators!), packing peanuts, paper clips of all sizes, rulers, dental floss, wooden clothespins, cardboard of varying size and thickness, chopsticks, buttons, and plastic cups.

#### REPURPOSE EVERYDAY ITEMS

Encourage kids to practice thinking like an EngiNerd. Gather some everyday objects and, after identifying the item's usual, typical use, have kids come up with as many alternate uses they can. For instance: a ruler is used to measure – but could double as a backscratcher! This activity can easily, naturally be combined with the one above. For instance: tape a plastic fork onto the end of your ruler-turned-backscratcher, and it's longer and more effective!

If everyday objects can't be gathered, or you wish to use objects that aren't easily available or are implausible to bring into the classroom, draw them for the class, or print out pictures of them online. You can also use my activity sheet based on this concept.

#### **INVENT A GADGET**

The EngiNerds love their gadgets, and as the series progresses, those gadgets play an increasingly important role. Use the 'Name this gadget' activity sheet to get kids imagining gadgets of their very own. If a pupil gets particularly excited about their creation, encourage them to write a story or make a comic in which the gadget plays a part.

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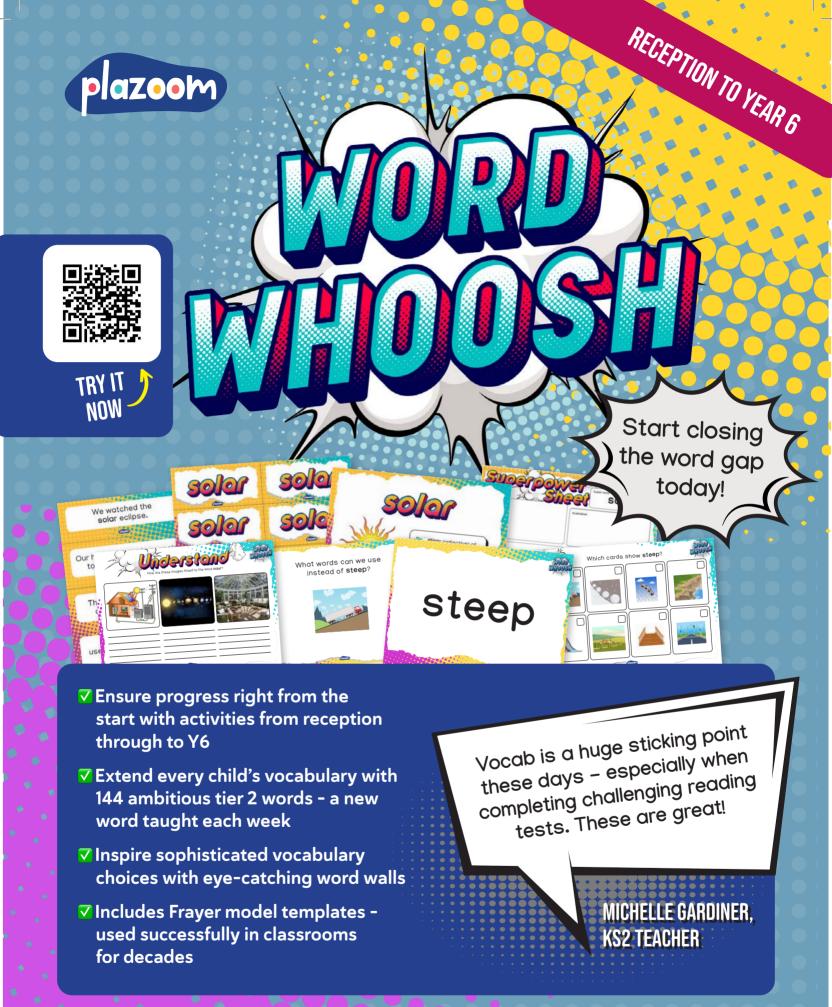
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# 5 BOOKSFOR TEACHING Remembrance

**Fay Lant** rounds up titles exploring themes of conflict and service to provide a helpful starting point for conversations about Remembrance

#### What is Remembrance?

Remembrance is how we honour those who serve to defend our democratic freedoms and way of life. For 100 years, Remembrance has been part of the fabric of society, reminding us of our shared history, and today it continues to unite people across all faiths, backgrounds, communities, and generations. We remember the sacrifice of the Armed Forces community from Britain and the Commonwealth, and pay tribute to the special contribution of families and the emergency services.

As the national champions of Remembrance, the Royal British Legion is committed to ensuring Remembrance is understood by and accessible to all children in every community in the UK.

#### When do we Remember?

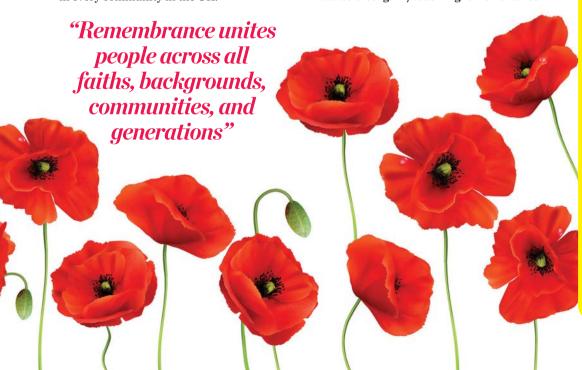
A two-minute silence will be held at 11am on Armistice Day (11th November) and Remembrance Sunday (14th November), but Remembrance is deeply personal and can be observed all year round.

#### How to get involved?

The Royal British Legion's new range of free teaching resources help children understand the importance of Remembrance and its relevance to all of us today. The new resources include:

- · A primary whole-school project
- Remembrance book club stories for KS2
- A range of assemblies for all Key Stages

To find out more, visit: www.rbl.org.uk/teachingremembrance



KS1



PSHE, history, and English Creative writing whole-school activity
Take part in Remembrance through creative writing and the voices of children from WW2 through the short story 'Tomorrow Today' by Leila Rasheed.

Download the activity pack at tinyurl.com/
trw-KS1Remembrance

#### KS2

PSHE, history, and English Book club
Explore Remembrance
through Bali Rai's novel
Now or Never, featuring
guided discussions,
creative writing, fact files,
original photographs
and more.

Download the activity pack at tinyurl.com/ trw-KS2BaliRai

See page 60 for more information about *Now* or *Never*, as well as some additional discussion starter questions.

Now or Never is available now (£6.99, Scholastic)

#### Our Castle by the Sea BY LUCY STRANGE (CHICKEN HOUSE)



#### What's the story?

Pet loves living in a lighthouse, but when her mother is arrested, it throws the family into turmoil. Why is her father acting strangely? Why does her older sister keep disappearing? This gripping and sometimes tragic adventure story explores some of the ways the Second World War was fought on the Home Front and touches on the experiences of German-British families.

#### Try this...

■ Pet loves finding clues and solving mysteries. Explore why she's so

interested by writing a message of Remembrance in a secret code.

- Research the different jobs in the UK that were important to supporting the war effort.
- Write a story about how the 'Daughters of Stone' came to stand by Pet's lighthouse.
- Using the book club





Now or Never: a Dunkirk BY BALI RAI (SCHOLASTIC)



Cook an Indian meal and give Remembrance for the contribution of soldiers from pre-partition India like Fazal, Sadiq and Mush.

■ Use our Stories of

Remembrance book club resources (linked above) for chapter discussion prompts and more activity suggestions.

#### What's the story?

15-year-old Fazal lies about his age in order to enlist in the Royal Indian Army Service Corps and starts work distributing supplies across France with the help of devoiced mules. It isn't long before the Company joins the evacuation attempts at Dunkirk, amid endless enemy bombing. However, Fazal overhears his Captain receiving orders that the Indian

troops are to be left behind in Dunkirk, with priority for evacuation going to the British soldiers. Based on real events, this story shines a light on a contribution to the war effort that is seldom recognised.

#### Try this...

- Discuss what was different about Fazal's experience of the war compared to the British soldiers.
- Imagine you are Fazal, writing a letter to his grandfather. What would you tell him about the war?

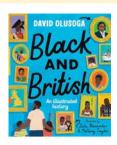




Illustrations: Jake Alexander and Melleny Taylor

#### Black and British BY DAVID OLUSOGA

(MACMILLAN)



#### What's the story?

This non-fiction book details Black history in Britain from the Romans to the Twentieth Century. The chapter focused on the Second World War explains the contributions of Black servicemen and women from countries across the Commonwealth, including examples such as the experience of Sergeant Arthur Walrond who travelled from Barbados to work as a wireless operator for the Royal Air Force. An illustrated version, Black & British: An Illustrated History by David Olusoga, illustrated by Jake Alexander and Melleny Taylor will be published in hardback on 11th November 2021 (£16.99, Macmillan Children's Books).

#### Try this...

- "Black men and women from the West Indies and Africa also fought for Britain in the war." Did the children already know this? Discuss why they think the author has chosen to write about this contribution to the war effort.
- Choose one of the examples of service listed, research the unit further and produce an information leaflet or poster about it.
- Plan an act of Remembrance that includes the contributions of people from Commonwealth countries
- Imagine you work for the **British Government and have** received Sergeant Walrond's letter of complaint. Have a go at writing a response.



What's the story?

It's 1940 and Joseph is sent

When he starts work at her

the gorilla and the pair soon

develop a bond. Inspired by

a true story, this brilliantly

decisions and dyslexia.

Try this...

written novel set on the Home

Front touches on loss, difficult

zoo, Joseph meets Adonis

to the city to stay with Mrs F.



#### what happened to animals during the war. You could research the role of animals in the military or look at government guidelines on how to keep your pets safe.

- Recreate your favourite scene from the story in a shoebox.
- Mrs F says: "All I know is, sometimes doing the right thing feels completely wrong.' Discuss what she means by this and whether or not the class agree.



#### We Will Remember

BY S WILLIAMS AND **OLIVER AVERILL** (HACHETTE)



#### What's the story? Find out more about

This non-fiction picture book introduces the origins of Remembrance for Lower KS2 readers, including explanations about the symbols and traditions of Remembrance. Produced in partnership with The Royal British Legion.

#### Try this...

■ Make a poppy from paper or fabric, just like Anna Guérin the originator of the

Rembrance Day Poppy - did.

- Taking inspiration from the poems shared in the book, write a class poem about Remembrance.
- Research the contributions made by people in your own community by talking to grandparents, visiting local war memorials, conducting research in the local library etc.
- Listen to The Last Post and hold a minute's silence in Remembrance of those who have served and sacrificed to protect our freedoms.

■ Write your own story inspired by an unusual Second World War job.

> Fay Lant is head of schools programmes at the National Literacy Trust. Find out more about their work at literacytrust.org.uk

# Let's Get REAL

How non-fiction books can help develop vocabulary, spoken language skills and debates in the classroom

#### HANNAH RIX

othing makes me happier than a lesson that's gone slightly awry because you and your students are lost in discussion. Not only does this create a tantalising atmosphere, it's also conducive to an excellent learning experience for students.

The skill of speaking and listening really is an art, and it's an invaluable attribute of education. Learning to listen to the speaker, digest what's been said and coming up with a response is tricky to master.

Although many class reads spark marvellous debates among students, some find the abstract and emotive topics difficult to express an opinion on. That's why I love using non-fiction books as a source for a great debate.

However, I would argue non-fiction books have an equally weighted position. The informative content and structured layout can be (in my experience) more engaging for some students.

Using non-linear and short formats, engaging images and diagrams, means readers can consume as much or as little as they can tolerate. This means non-fiction can be a gateway into reading for those 'reluctant readers'. Additionally, tailoring these selections to linguistically stimulating texts with narrative components to them, will still ensure these students have an enriching learning experience without feeling like they've had to trudge through a novel.

#### Classroom approaches

• Chapter titles – ask students which titles interest them, why do they stand out?

> Are there any words or topics that are familiar to them? Do pupils notice anything about the order of the chapters? Are they chronological or topical?

Grapple the glossary – opportunity to introduce and tame some of those unfamiliar words and gets learners familiar with what the purpose of a glossary is.

Confidence check - when starting a new topic, some students love to think of themselves as an expert. To curb this excitement, get them to rate themselves and prior knowledge as you

Questions - the children will inevitably want to ask

questions throughout reading. To keep momentum in your teaching, allow them to make notes of their questions. This can be a great way to open up discussions and monitor progress.

Comment on layout – ask students to pick out helpful and engaging formatting tools used by the author such as bold font, text boxes, speech bubbles, and diagrams. Students will be able to use these to support their own learning as well as develop their understanding of structure.

#### **Supporting vocabulary** teaching

A large portion of language development happens before pupils even reach school. But there's a lot that we can facilitate to develop vocabulary further. In many classroom settings, students learn from interactions with their peers and adults. Naming objects, places and people significantly supports their speech.

Non-fiction texts are a great resource for supporting this vocabulary building. The very nature of these texts lends themselves perfectly to this type of learning as they're filled with labelled images, bold words, and interesting diagrams.

Some methods I like to use to support vocabulary teaching are:

 Using a selection of labelled images, getting the children to



identify 'clues' in the image that help them understand the word's meaning.

- Encourage students to build sentences of their own using new words.
- Build on previous knowledge of words that are similar or linked to that word, eg 'Arctic' - frozen, cold, snow,
- Create index cards for key words. including a guide to pronunciation. definition and a sentence using the word for context.

#### Non-fiction book focus: Be a Tree! by Maria Gianferrari (\$19.99. **Abrams Books for Young Readers**)

There aren't many non-fiction books that I can say have moved me. At first glance (and to younger readers), this book is about the life of trees. However, on closer inspection, the book teaches us about humanity.

The prose is both lyrical and informative (a tough thing to achieve) and is accompanied by stunning illustrations which highlight the majesty of trees and how we can learn from them. The book can also be applied to a variety of subjects across the curriculum, including:

#### English

The trees are personified throughout which is a great model for students to use to inspire their own writing. On first reading, ask students how the tree's features are similar to our own. What words has the author

used to show this? What does this word make you think of? How does this phrase make you feel? How do humans communicate? Are there any similarities with trees? With phrases like 'Your spine is a trunk' you could ask students to colour code 'human' words and 'tree' words. Once pupils have grasped the author's use of language, you could get them to try to write a short poem or story using personification. For example, a book has a cover for skin and a spine as a backbone, the pages are its personality coming to life etc.

#### Science

Gianferrari goes into excellent detail about the anatomy and biology of trees. There are diagrams of leaves which could be inspiration for a trip outside to find matching ones, as well as leaf tracing and bark tracing. At the back of the book is a labelled diagram of a tree which can inform discussions of photosynthesis. Compare the cross section of a trunk to a human bone. How are they similar/different?

#### Geography

The species of trees that are mentioned come from all over the world. Students could research the origin of each tree and the country it came from.

#### PSHE/Citizenship

Gianferrari makes references to immigration and community which could be a lovely basis for discussion on immigration as well as creative writing. How do you think it would feel? There's also mention of the roles of

different trees. Who are the caregivers in our society? Where do we go if we need help? How can we look after each other? What

do you think makes a happy and healthy community?

#### PE

On first reading you could get the children out of their chairs and follow the commands of the book. 'Stand

tall. Stretch your branches to the sun'. How do you feel? What are you thinking?

Not only is this book a lovely read aloud but it's a centre piece for so much learning potential. Students of all abilities and preferences will love this!

SOME OF MY **FAVOURITE** FICTION FOR KS1/KS2:



- Seasons by Hannah Pang. Not only is this visually impressive but students can flick through the nature changing landscapes, description of each season is teeming
- The Usborne Book of the Moon by non-fiction as every page is packed with information and references, but the The layout is thoughtful and absorbing for writing in different formats. Students can enjoy this book as a 'pick up and put down' read, as it's very visually pleasing.
- The Book of Hopes: Words and ctures to Comfort, Inspire and Entertain, edited by Katherine Rundell with contributions from over 100 like a traditional chapter book, the to share with the whole class. Some advanced readers may enjoy this



Hannah Rix is a SEND English teacher and has been teaching in both secondary and SEND schools for over eight years. This experience led to co-founding

Readingmate Ltd. More information about Readingmate can be found at readingmate.co.uk



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# Choose your own adventure

### with Rhianna Pratchett

Play the podcast, share the teaching sequence, and inspire amazing writing from every pupil...

Gaming is a popular pastime for children and the unique demands of creating a world that can be explored by players in different ways, where the player takes control of the narrative and makes choices, can be a motivating and challenging way of developing children's writing.





In this teaching sequence, children will have the chance to think about some of the aspects involved in writing for videogames, a type of writing that is very different from that usually encountered in the primary classroom, exploring world building, environmental storytelling and non-linear narratives through the work of the accomplished writer of video games, comics, scripts, non-fiction and novels Rhianna Pratchett.

Once they have learned about some

of these concepts – and perhaps decided on a new career plan – the children will have the chance to experiment with the ideas by creating their own narrative where the reader can influence the story by deciding on the ending. Extracts from episode 18 of the Author in Your Classroom podcast, with Rhianna, are suggested to introduce each section of the teaching sequence – you can find the whole episode to listen to, absolutely free, at bit.ly/AIYCRhiannaPratchet



#### SESSION 1

#### LEARNING FROM WRITING FOR GAMES: WORLD BUILDING

- 1 | Play the section of the podcast that starts at **03.26** to **04.25**.
- 2 | Ask the children if they knew that video games had writers and if this is a type of writing that they might be interested in. Discuss how they think this type of writing might be different from creating a story.
- 3 | Rhianna talks about how a video game writer has to think about 'the journey that the player is going on'. Ask the children if this is true of other types of narrative writing?

- Is it important to be aware of your reader when telling a story?
- 4 | Tell the children that they will be drawing on some ideas and approaches that are common in video game writing to help them write their own stories where the reader chooses what happens at the end, including:
- World building
- Action = character
- The reader's choices informing the story
- 5 | Play the section of the podcast that starts at **06.48** to **07.56**.
- 6 | Ask the children to think about the world in which they could set their story. Working with a partner, ask them to use the following questions to



guide their discussion, thinking about 'the body of the iceberg' - details that might not make it into their story but will help them to picture their setting or character as clearly as they can:

- Where is your world?
- What makes it special?
- What makes it different from here?
- Who lives there?
- What makes it an exciting place?

They might record their ideas on big sheets of sugar paper (for the working wall) or in their books.

7 Once they have completed this task, give the children time to share their worlds with the rest of the class. Invite pupils to feed back to each other, perhaps suggesting the sorts of adventures that could happen in each world. If you are creating a working wall as you go, you could share some ideas there.



#### **SESSION 2**

#### **ACTION = CHARACTER**

- 1 | Ask the children to think about the sorts of characters that might inhabit their world. Ask them to note their ideas, considering:
- Will their characters be human? Aliens? Animals? Robots? Something else?
- What will their hero/heroes be like?
- Will there be a villain or monsters to defeat? What will they be like?
- 2 Play the section of the podcast from **04.43** to **06.19**.
- 3 Ask the children what they think Rhianna means when she says that 'character equals action'. Draw out the idea that we can tell lots about a character from what they do and say, as well as from direct

description of them.

- 4 | Ask children to think carefully about what a character's action might suggest about them. Ask the children to think carefully about their hero - how their actions will give the reader an insight into their nature, how action will equal character. Remind the children that they might not need to use all of these actions; what their character will do will depend on the story (and in this case what the reader decides to do), but planning in this way also helps them to think carefully about their character.
- 5 Once they have done this, they can share their ideas with a partner. Ask pupils to take it in turns to read one of their character's actions aloud. Then the partner has to guess what the writer was trying to communicate about



the character. If they don't manage to guess correctly, the writer might want to think of another action to illustrate the character trait they are aiming for. The partners can work together to think of a new action which suggests this.

#### **EDITING AND** REDRAFTING

- 1 | Play the section of the podcast again that starts at 19.05 until 23.30.
- 2 | Ask the children how the part of the story that Rhianna and Helen enjoy reading/playing is different from many other novels. Draw out:
- It is written in the present tense as if the action is unfurling right now
- It uses second-person narration, with the reader right in the heart of the action being told what is happening (you go to...; do you want to...?)
- It describes carefully what the reader can see, hear and what happens as if they were there
- 3 Ask the children to write their own stories with a choice of endings. Remind the children that although they have planned three possible endings, if they have a better idea when they are writing they can use that instead - their plan is a guide, not

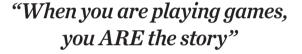
something they have to follow.

4 Once the children have finished their writing, ask them to share their work with a partner or look at some examples together as a class, asking children to share the parts that they are especially pleased with. Once they have had some feedback, they can look at their work again and make some changes to improve it. If possible, these stories would make wonderful books, with the different endings each

on different pages, with children

given the opportunity to read

and enjoy each other's stories.





#### **SESSION 3**

#### **GIVING THE READER CHOICES**

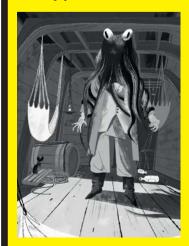
- 1 | Play the section of the podcast from **12.12** to **18.07** where Helen and Rhianna are talking about creating choose your own adventure books. 2 | Ask the children if they have read a 'choose your own adventure' story before. What might be the particular challenges of writing a text like this?
- 3 | Explain that the children are going to draw on Rhianna's ideas to create a story with three possible different endings, which the reader can choose from.
- 4 | Explain/recap the idea of a resolution to a story. Ask the children to return to their previous planning, considering the world they have designed and their hero. Ask the children to plan a story set in their world featuring their character which has three possible endings.

#### DOWNLOAD NOW!



To download a full set of FREE resources for this teaching sequence - including planning sheets, teaching slides, themed writing paper and more - visit bit.ly/AIYCRhiannapack. To subscribe for free, just search for 'Author In Your Classroom' wherever you get your podcasts!





## Bright ideas...

Four great options for improved literacy



#### Unlock handwriting with WriteWell

Help every child to achieve clear, confident and speedy joined handwriting with Schofield & Sims WriteWell, a structured scheme that supports pupils' handwriting from Reception to Year 6. Comprising eleven pupil books and one accompanying teacher's handbook, WriteWell allows children to progress at their own pace whilst also supporting the statutory requirements for handwriting. WriteWell is also ideal for intervention use and targeted catch up, with pupil books focusing on the development of key skills affected by school disruption, such as stamina, speed and letter size. schofieldandsims.co.uk/writewell



### FFT and Success for All join forces

Great news for schools! The data expert FFT has recently acquired the renowned literacy provider, Success for All (UK). Success for All's reading and literacy programmes have been used by schools for 20 years and provide evidence-based literacy teaching programmes, fully aligned to the National Curriculum. Both not-for-profit organisations, both with a shared belief that success in life is built on a solid foundation of learning, their first venture together is a relaunch of the phonics programme, Success for All Phonics, fully validated by the DfE. Find out more at fft.org.uk/phonics



### Create writing experts with STABILO

STABILO specialises in ergonomic shaped pens and pencils which are specifically designed for left and right handers. Learning to write is an important skill to master and with the EASY Start range of handwriting pens and pencils this can be made EASY. Within the range you'll find something suitable for all school ages and abilities. Also, the EASYgraph and the EASYoriginal are not only loved by kids but they are also approved by UK teachers. stabilo.com/uk



#### **Extinction Escapades**

TV scientist Professor Ben Garrod presents the story of life on Earth told through the major mass extinctions. Get ready to discover evolution's superstars, the most incredible animals ever to swim, stalk, slither or walk our planet. From Hallucigenia, a super-weird, spiky, armoured worm, to the famous and super-misunderstood Tyrannosaurus rex. The Extinct series makes top level science fun for all ages with full-colour illustrations, Ask the Expert contributions from leading scientists, and a glossary, pronunciation guide and timeline in each volume. Visit readzephyr.com to find out more!



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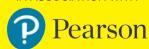




32

AMAZING BOOKS SURE TO INSPIRE YOUR CLASS

IN ASSOCIATION WITH







Discover the best children's books to share in your classroom - and beyond

he annual Teach Primary Book Awards are always a glorious celebration of the very best the world of children's writing has to offer – and this year has been no exception. From the arrival of the first entries, back in June, through the hugely challenging process of shortlisting, to the final verdicts of our fantastic judges, it has been, as ever, a journey full of surprises and delight.

Unlike other literary reward schemes, the Teach Primary Book Awards don't just recognise exceptional writing and beautiful illustration (although these are, of course, attributes shared by all the shortlisted titles) – they also take into account factors that are particularly significant for teachers who are looking for books they can share with pupils, and use to create and teach outstanding and unforgettable lessons. To this end, alongside the words and pictures, our judges also considered such factors as learning opportunities, points for discussion, emotional complexity and language play when deciding on their scores. We are thrilled to be able to share the results of their assessments with you now; 32 stunning titles that we know will enhance library shelves, inspire writing, entice reluctant readers and nourish bookworms. Enjoy!

"I have really enjoyed reading all of the books. There are certainly titles to support teaching and learning within the classroom and I will be passing these on to teachers, as well as adding them to some of our recommended lists!"

Judge, Leah Chin

**Educational manager at Tales on Moon Lane** 

### Meet the judges



**KONNIE HUQ** (judging our non-fiction category) is a multitalented television and radio presenter, screenwriter and children's author. Her novel Cookie and the Most Annoying Boy in the World was shortlisted for last year's Teach Primary Book Awards.



**LIZ FLANAGAN** writes for children and young adults, having been a lifelong reader of children's books. Her debut novel *Eden Summer* was nominated for the Carnegie Medal.



**BROUGH GIRLING** co-founder of the Readathon charity. A qualified teacher, he has written over 30 children's books, broadcast widely and lectured in children's reading from Canada to Cairo. He was head of the Children's Book Foundation in London and founding editor of the Young Telegraph.



**MEGAN SMITH** is a book lover who works on the Young Readers Programme – the National Literacy Trust's flagship reading for enjoyment programme.



**LEAH CHIN** has been the educational manager at Tales on Moon Lane, having worked there for 12 years following several years as a nursery teacher.



**DAN SMITH** led three lives growing up: the day-to-day humdrum of boarding school, finding adventure in the padi fields of Asia and the jungles of Brazil, and in a world of his own, making up stories. He now spends his time writing books for adults and children.



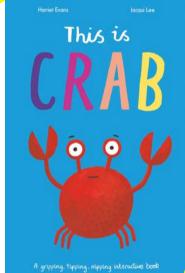


# WINNER

#### This is Crab

#### Harriet Evans (Caterpillar Books, Little Tiger Group)

Proof that a printed book can be every bit as interactive as any screen-based game, this delightful story encourages children to join in on every spread – counting, waggling their fingers, rubbing the pictures, shaking the pages, and much more – developing their communication and fine motor skills. Jacqui Lee's bold, bright illustrations are adorable, and Harriet Evans is a marvellous narrator; together, they have created something truly special.



#### KEY CRITERIA

Memorable illustration

Read-aloud-ability

Opportunities for discussion

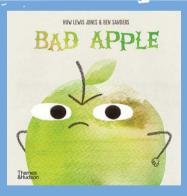
Encourages language play and development

"Gorgeously interactive,
this book invites
the reader to be an
engaged and active
participant in the
reading. It's huge fun,
with lovely, bright,
vibrant illustrations"

Liz Flanagan



Runner up



#### Bad Apple,

#### Huw Lewis Jones and Ben Sanders (Thames & Hudson)

Apple really is a nasty piece of fruit – stealing Pear's chair, drinking Pea's tea, and getting up to all kinds of rhyming shenanigans before going a step too far and eating Snake's cake... Children will love the shameless naughtiness and relish the rhymes; but what on Earth will happen when Apple meets Orange?

Also shortlisted

"Really love this!
The illustrations
are basic but suit
the story perfectly,
and there's lots to
talk about"
Dan Smith

IMAGINE! Patricia Forde (Little Island Books)



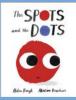
WHEN THE SUN GOES HOME Momoko Abe (Hachette Children's Group)



THE GREAT PAINT
Alex Willmore
(Tate Publishing)



THE SPOTS AND THE DOTS Helen Baugh (Andersen Press)



NATIONAL TRUST: THE WIDE, WIDE SEA Anna Wilson & Jenny Løvlie (Nosy Crow)



A LITTLE BIT WORRIED Ciara Gavin and Tim Warnes (Little Tiger Press)







#### KEY CRITERIA

Breadth of appeal

**Use of illustration** 

Pacy, engaging story

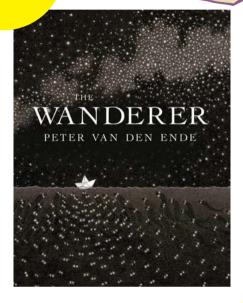
Learning opportunities

## WINNER

#### The Wanderer

Peter Van Den Ende (Pushkin Children's Books)

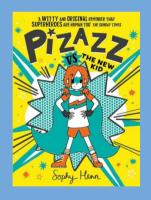
Without a single word, Peter Van Den Ende uses art to tell an incredible story; following the journey of a little paper boat through a succession of strange, wonderful - and occasionally frightening - scenes. Dreamlike (perhaps nightmarish in places) and haunting, this is a book that children and adults alike will come back to time and time again. finding new details and adding layers to the narrative with every read. It's an extraordinary work, surely destined to become a classic, and a profoundly exciting prospect for any teacher.



"Stunning, original, unforgettable. It should really be in a category of its own for 'the most assounding and disturbing book without words you've ever opened'!"

Brough Girling





#### Pizazz vs the New Kid

Sophy Henn (Simon & Schuster Children's)

In this follow up to Henn's first story about Pizazz, things really heat up for the reluctant schoolgirl superhero when a potential rival appears on the scene - and once again, the mix of prose and comic-book panels keeps the hilarious adventure bouncing along at a rollicking pace.

#### Runner up

illustrations - this has great appeal

#### Also shortlisted

**MAGNIFICENT MABEL AND** THE EGG AND **SPOON RACE** Ruth Quayle & Julia **Christians (Nosy Crow)** 







**AN ALIEN IN THE** JAM FACTORY **Chrissie Sains** 

(Walker Books)

I WISH YOU MORE Amy Krouse Rosenthal, illustrated by Tom Lichtenheld (Chronicle Books)





**MONSTER MAX** AND THE BOBBLE HAT OF **FORGETTING Robin Bennett** (Firefly Press)

WILD IS THE WIND **Grahame Baker-Smith** (Bonnier Books UK)









### KEY STAGE 2

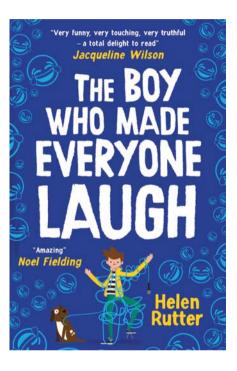
#### **KEY CRITERIA**

**Originality** 

Compelling plot

**Emotional depth** 

Something to think about?





#### The Boy Who Made Everyone Laugh

#### Helen Rutter (Scholastic)

Funny, tender, and full of the kind of perceptive observation that can only come from lived experience, Helen Rutter's debut novel is a triumph. The protagonist, Billy Plimpton, is an eleven-year-old boy with dreams of becoming a stand-up comedian – but if he's going to achieve his ambition, he'll have to overcome multiple obstacles, including a school bully... and a stammer. This is a book for any child struggling to find their voice, and a celebration of what it means to be proud of exactly who you are.

"A heart-warming,
moving story about
overcoming adversity
with adorable
memorable characters
- I loved it!"

Liz Flanagan





### The Life and Time of Lonny Quicke

#### Kirsty Applebaum (Nosy Crow)

This captivating story is based on a fascinating premise: what if someone had the power to extend the lives of others – but only at the cost of shortening their own? It's a tale that will keep readers gripped, and leave them with plenty to talk about.

Runner up

big questions
in a fresh and
interesting way.
Very thoughtful"

Megan Smith

#### Also shortlisted

#### A GIRL CALLED JOY Jenny Valentine (Simon & Schuster Children's)



BETWEEN SEA AND SKY Nicola Penfold (Stripes Publishing)



THE VALLEY OF LOST SECRETS Lesley Parr (Bloomsbury)



RUMAYSA: A FAIRYTALE Radiya Hafiza (Macmillan Children's Books)



CRATER LAKE EVOLUTION Jennifer Killick (Firefly Press)



WHEN WE GOT LOST IN DREAMLAND Ross Welford (HarperCollins Children's Books)







#### KEY CRITERIA

**Quality of information** 

**Presentation** 

Is the writing entertaining and age-appropriate?

> Will it provoke further curiosity?

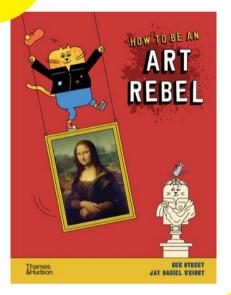
## WINNER



#### How to be an Art Rebel

#### Ben Street (Thames & Hudson)

"Art can make us think about scary things like death, and what it feels like to be happy. It can tell us stories, challenge our ideas, and make us feel understood." So says the edgy, feline narrator of this irreverent yet hugely informative book; a fantastic introduction to the art world for children that never lectures, but rather, empowers young readers with the knowledge and understanding they need to form their own opinions - and express them with confidence.





"Entertaining and engaging, humorous and visually appealing"

Konnie Huq



#### It's Her Story: Rosa Parks

#### Lauren Burke (Sunbird Books)

Packed with information and insight, this short but comprehensive graphic novel does a fantastic job of contextualising Rosa Parks' life, helping readers to understand just how brave and transformative her act of rebellion was, and why it remains so important to remember.

### Runner

Konnie Hug

#### Also shortlisted

WILD CHILD: A JOURNEY THROUGH NATURE

**Dara McAnulty** (Macmillan Children's Books)

IS THERE ANYBODY OUT THERE? Dara Ó Briain (Scholastic)





**QUEENS: 3,000** YEARS OF THE MOST INCREDIBLE **WOMEN IN HISTORY** Victoria Crossman (Scholastic)

**USBORNE BOOK OF** THE BRAIN AND HOW IT WORKS Dr Betina Ip (Usborne)





THIS IS OUR WORLD **Tracey Turner** (Kingfisher)

ON YOUR MARKS, **GET SET... GOLD!** Scott Allen (Nosy Crow)













The CLPE School Membership has been awarded 5 stars in the English category of the Teach Primary Awards 2021.

# **Build a book-based curriculum** in your primary school with the CLPE's whole school Membership

#### The CLPE School Membership includes access to:

- Over 230 Power of Reading teaching sequences based on tried and tested children's books
- Home learning teaching resources
- CLPE's curriculum maps to show how to plan a text based curriculum
- Priority access to book CLPE conferences and events
- Plus access to all free membership resources and content.

The CLPE School Membership supports teachers under immense pressure and offers ideas and structure for their literacy curriculum, to raise literacy standards and develop a love of reading and writing.

100%

of members who completed an evaluation survey in 2021 would recommend the CLPE School Membership to other schools. It has enabled staff to plan lessons creatively with vehement energy and this has reflected on pupils' enjoyment of their literacy lessons.

TEACHER, 2021

Join the thousands of schools enhancing their curriculum with the CLPE School Membership. www.clpe.org.uk/membership

The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE) is a UK based children's literacy charity working with primary schools. The CLPE's mission is to raise the literacy achievement of children by putting quality children's literature at the heart of all learning.

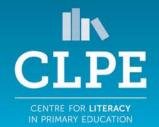
CLPE also provide training, consultancy and INSET to support its book-based learning approach. Discover more on their website: www.clpe.org.uk











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Mark Hayhurst, The Headteacher Editor

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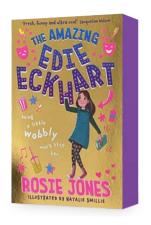
ISSUES FOR JUST

6



# The Amazing Edie Eckhart

A wonderful story by comedian Rosie Jones, targeting disability stereotypes with a fun tale



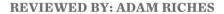




Scan the QR code to access Edie Eckhart school resources for your class!

#### AT A GLANCE

- A lighthearted book aimed at KS2 students
- A realistic fictional take on the challenges of young people moving to high school
- Told through the eyes of 11-year-old **Edie Eckhart**
- Written by comedian Rosie Jones
- Heartwarming, funny and unendingly endearing







Children's literature is flourishing, now more than ever. Young people, as well as their teachers and their parents have a huge range to choose from... but The Amazing Edie Eckhart is one that has stood out for me this year. In fact, I'd go as far as to say it is one of the best things I have read in a long while.

Written by TV comedian, Rosie Jones, the story follows the 11-year-old protagonist Edie Eckhart. Edie is about to start high school and the narrative follows her trials and tribulations of acclimatising to the changes from primary school. Edie has cerebral palsy, meaning she speaks slowly and trips over, all traits that she takes in her stride.

The Amazing Edie Eckhart is such a lighthearted book but deals with significant and challenging issues that Edie faces. The realism of the characterisation and the narrative make the story completely relatable to the target audience and there is so much relevance in the way in which the feelings are portrayed.

Edie starts high school and finds herself separated from her best friend, Oscar. As such Edie is exposed to

situations and has experiences that she didn't first anticipate, finding herself in a plethora of situations every child does when they move up to high school!

There is, of course, so much more to the story. Through Edie, the reader is brought into the world of a child with a disability. From Jones' own experiences of cerebral palsy, readers are drawn in the challenges that young people with disabilities face in school – something that in many cases can be misunderstood and for me, is massively underrepresented in children's literature. Jones uses Edie to perfectly show that disabilities don't have to be debilitating I love that Edie's disability doesn't define her.

The Amazing Edie Eckhart adds a new voice to the established go-to titles that so many children read. We need more books like this that challenge stereotypes while completely conforming with the realities that the target readers face. Not only is this an empowering book for all those who live with disabilities, it is a book that shows life is a challenge for all young people, whoever they are... but it's a lot of fun too!

#### VERDICT

- A brilliant book to widen the understanding of learners about transition
- ✓ Brilliantly written, highly engaging
- ✓ Deals with challenges in an open and honest way
- Challenges stereotypes and stigma around disability

#### **UPGRADE IF...**

You are looking for a text that will both make students laugh and learn about the realities of life in one sitting!



### **Jolly Phonics**

149 engaging decodable phonics readers to use at school and at home



#### AT A GLANCE

- A range of phonics texts that encourage confidence and fluency of word and sound decoding
- Beautifully designed from start to finish
- Complete with instructions for parents
- Comprehension questions allow for reflecting after reading
- Available in both physical format and eBook format





#### **REVIEWED BY: ADAM RICHES**

Navigating phonics can be tricky for children as well as parents, and resources need to be engaging, yet navigable. Jolly Phonics have got it just right with their range of decodable reading books, perfectly balancing the level of intrigue and topics with the practicalities of phonics and learning to read.

Jolly Phonics have a trademark usability in their books. Each text in their range is colour-coded with progressive stages of difficulty. Topically, the content ranges from fiction to nonfiction, encouraging both word and sound familiarisation, but equally as importantly, a range of engaging topics and ideas. As readers progress in each stage, they are gradually exposed to more complex sounds and vocabulary.

Introductory word books in the Read & See and Little Word series allow learners to start applying their newly acquired letter and sound knowledge. Designed to build confidence in reading, these books boast simple, easy-to-follow instructions with just one or two single words on each page to encourage young people to start formulating words from letters.

Their range then progresses to six levels of decodable readers, allowing learners to build confidence, fluency and knowledge through a precise exposure to sounds and words. The first set of books, Jolly Phonics Orange Level, provides a gradual and structured start for children who are just beginning to learn

to read. These general fiction readers include regular decodable words made up from the 42 letter sounds across seven sets, with each set covering one particular group of sounds.

The books then progress through the colours to Purple level, where more complex sounds and spelling patterns are encouraged, alongside an increasing number of 'tricky' words, which cannot be taught phonetically.

Comprehension questions and discussion topics are provided at the end of each book, as well as guidance for teachers and parents. Topics include the sea and dogs – things that young people have an interest in, but most importantly, the things around them that they can relate to. The texts are well written with nicely selected pictorial choices to further support the word/symbol association.

Within the Reader range, Jolly Phonics offers its brand-new Our World Series. These nonfiction readers contain the same content as the rest of the range, but are photographic rather than illustrated. They are also designed with a fresh new look, marrying up with the company-wide refresh seen across all Jolly Phonics resources over the last 12 months.

What Jolly Phonics does well is making sure their books are usable. Parents can have little to no prerequisite knowledge of phonics and simply use the instructions in the book to successfully support their child at home. This has always been one of their key strengths.

## Reading & Writing

#### VERDICT

- ✓ Impressive instructions make phonics easy for parents
- ✓ Huge range of texts and text types meaning learners are exposed to different types of reading
- ✓ Illustrations and pictures are well selected and designed
- Sequential steps make it easy for learners to sustainably grow

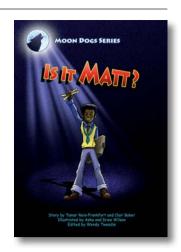
#### **UPGRADE IF...**

You are looking for an all-inclusive phonics reading package that allows tailored reading experiences for all learners.



### Moon Dog series from Phonic Books

Engaging, decodable books and activities aimed at older, novice readers



#### AT A GLANCE

- Starts with the most basic reading skills, introducing the initial sounds of the alphabet
- Closely follows standard phonics progression through sequential sets of books
- Age-appropriate stories for SEN and EAL pupils aged 8–14
- Appealing manga-style illustrations
- Supplementary photocopiable activities available
- · Each book set is accompanied by a workbook



#### REVIEWED BY: MIKE DAVIES

These days, perhaps more than ever in our history, literacy is essential. Therefore, it is vitally important that we should not let anyone who cannot read to some extent pass through our education system.

Sadly, there are youngsters for whom time is running out. For whatever reason, they have not been able to acquire the necessary skills and they need to catch up fast. The trouble is, much of the material designed to get children reading is, understandably enough, aimed at those in Early Years or KS1.

That's why Phonics Books has created a range of catch-up resources designed to help pupils aged 8–14 to gain competence and confidence with their reading. Even so, there are children within that age group who just need to go back to the very first steps of phonics, which is where the Moon Dog series comes in.

Carefully and deliberately, Moon Dogs introduces novice readers to the symbols and sounds of written English and builds from there. It does this through a series of reading books that follow the same structured steps you would expect from a quality phonics programme.

The eight books of Set 1 cover the alphabet and some double consonants using only CVC words. Set 2 (also eight books) moves on through slightly more complex consonant digraphs. There is also a series of 14 books that covers vowel spellings. Each set is accompanied by a

workbook, packed with photocopiable games and activities that relate directly to the books.

Of course, to be engaging, these resources have to appeal to the target age group. That is why they are based on the adventures of a handful of older children who are part of a music group called the Moon Dogs.

"These books should be perfect for older SIN pupils, whether in mainstream education or special provision, or perhaps EAL children who really need to start with the basics"

Given the reading levels at which they are pitched, these books rely heavily on the quality of the images. In this regard, Phonics Books has done a particularly good job in choosing an age-appropriate, manga-esque illustrative style that can make sense of even the most elementary sentences. For example, it takes a fair degree of artistic skill to bring the sentence It is Matt! to life!

In short, these books should be perfect for older SEN pupils, whether in mainstream education or special provision, or perhaps EAL children who really need to start with the basics. I can easily imagine their teachers howling for them, though not necessarily by the light of the moon.



#### **VERDICT**

- Created by phonics experts
- ✓ Visually appealing to an older age group
- ✓ Well-resourced with practice materials and workbooks
- ✓ Includes useful teacher guidance and background information

#### **UPGRADE IF...**

You want to help older, novice readers begin their reading journey with engaging, age-appropriate resources with age-appropriate, manga-esque illustrative style that can make sense of even the most elementary sentences.

Moon Dog series sets from £16; workbooks from £15 www.phonicbooks.co.uk





## Reading Solutions UK – Reading Plus



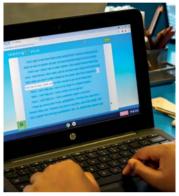
A web-based reading platform, helping readers gain confidence and ability

#### AT A GLANCE

- A web-based reading platform
- Designed to help readers become more efficient and effective
- Adaptive intelligence matches learners to texts and continues to do so throughout
- Huge range of fiction and non-fiction texts
- Compatible with most web-based devices

#### **REVIEWED BY: ADAM RICHES**





Getting students reading is no mean feat. With the slow (and sad) decline of libraries, schools are looking to online options to supplement their offers. Reading Plus is more than just an online library though; it is a whole-school solution – something that really gets students reading.

Guided by the most prominent reading and pedagogical research from the last 30 years, Reading Plus builds and sustains fluency and reading efficiency whilst exposing pupils to a diverse range of topical content in line with their ability. The platform has a simple aim – to make readers better.

The science behind the functionality is phenomenally impressive. Each reader is given a short baseline test upon first login. This baseline is adaptive, testing and assessing the reader as they move from text to text. At the end of the process, the pupil is matched to a level aligned with their reading ability.

There are 14 levels in total, with each level consisting of 70–80 texts on each level. One of the huge draws is that the content is suitable for KS2–4 – perfect for a number of contexts.

What strikes me about Reading Plus is it actually makes children read better. Not just in terms of exposure to different texts, but literally, read better.

Features such as the guided window are pure genius. This particular

feature trains the learner how fast to read by utilising a moving box. Not only does this reduce the extraneous load for readers as they look at the whole page, reducing the temptation to skip ahead, it also sequentially speeds up, stretching the reader to progressively increase their words per minute over a period of time.

Reading Plus is designed to build vocabulary confidence and expose learners to a plethora of different words. The vocabulary section boasts 2,500 words and the accessibility and functionality of vocabulary exploration is seamless. In addition to this, Reading Plus encourages visual skill building, getting pupils to strengthen their reading muscles and training their eyes to move in an effective and efficient way. This is a particularly helpful feature for weaker readers and EAL learners who may read from right to left in their mother tongue.

One of the most notable factors for me as a teacher is the detailed and precise use of pedagogical approaches to support reading. The scaffolding, consideration of cognitive load and impressive range of text types highlights the pedigree of the creators and staff of Reading Plus. It was designed by people who know about learning. The online platform is also compatible with the majority of web-based devices.



#### VERDICT

- ✓ Impressive assessing functionality to ensure reading is pitched right for each learner
- ✓ Huge range of texts and text types meaning learners are exposed to different types of reading
- Online functionality and usability is second to none
- Content applicable for KS2 through to 4.

#### UPGRADE IF...

You are looking for an all-inclusive reading package that allows tailored reading experiences for all learners.

# No two days in education are ever the same'

From unusual animal visitors to fated Ofsted inspections, teachers from across the UK share their unexpected incidents...

#### SARAH MULLIN

eachers have the best job in the world: we are the profession that creates every other profession. It is teachers who shape the hearts and minds of children for the rest of their lives, maximising their learning potential.

No two days in the world of education

are ever the same, and that's what keeps things interesting. Our hearts could be bursting with pride one moment, whilst we desperately try to stifle laughter following an unanticipated humorous moment the next. We are working with children after all, who can be very unpredictable. No matter how much we try to plan for every possible eventuality in

schools, sometimes there will be incidents that take us completely by surprise.

I asked the wonderful world of #EduTwitter to share their funniest, most unexpected moments with Teach Primary readers. Prepare to be entertained as you read this selection of laugh-out-loud chronicles from the primary school classroom and beyond...

I was walking down a corridor and heard a teaching assistant say to a child who was entering the toilet: "wash your hands in the sink this time!

A child was hysterical that they had lost their tooth down the toilet and the tooth fairy would not come. I had to put some gloves on and retrieve it.

66

First lesson of the school year and I fell off a table whilst trying to catch the wasp that was destroying my lesson! I ended up being wheeled through the school on a wheelchair in tears — I had fractured my leg! I was stopped mid-inspection by an inspector who whispered, "Sorry miss, but the child has just eaten a glue stick." I went over to check and the child had indeed unscrewed and then eaten it – he was even still chewing...

> I decided to wear my new flip-flops to school on the day a child was sick directly onto my feet. It was thick, so when I walked away there were two perfectly formed footprints in the vomit!

99

In a phonics lesson, a child drew a circle on the carpet with his whiteboard pen to make a portal that he could disappear down because he was bored!

I was making jam tarts with Reception children. They had a go at everything including rubbing the ingredients in to make the pastry. Once the jam tarts were made and eaten one child said, "I love making pastry. I had really dirty

nails but now they are clean." I had eaten one of them, too!

I wrote a 'punctuate the sentence' question on the board during an Ofsted inspection. I didn't leave enough space between the words 'pen' and 'is' in the sentence 'the pen is blue'



We had a pet day as an end-of-year treat. One child held out a stick insect to show me, I screamed, fell over and flattened his mum, landing next to a tortoise!

"

Sarah Mullin is the executive headteacher of a primary school and nursery in the West Midlands.

For more unlikely classroom antics, see Sarah's books *What They Didn't Teach Me on My PGCE* and *Chronicles from the Classroom*, available on Amazon.



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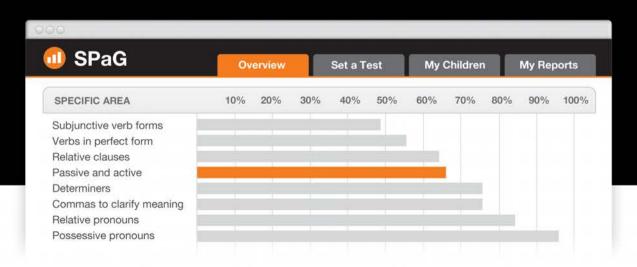


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