

The magazine of Creative Education Trust schools Issue no.20 December 2020

Connected

2020 Sixth form prizes

What Books Are
Good For What

Best reads from the
Primary schools

Training

Upgrading assessment
and facilities management

No-Mighty

Ellis Guilford's game-
changing lecture series

Where You From?



What Books are Good for What

Creative Education Trust's best primary school reads of 2020

Jemma Adlington, Deputy Headteacher, Harpfield, reminds us that reading is at the heart of the primary curriculum:



“A good book not only creates a love of reading, it broadens horizons – taking children to new places, introducing them to other people, immersing them in different cultures and travelling back to other time zones. In primary schools, every pupil has access to a wide range of texts to elevate their reading experiences. The book choices we make are linked to the learning experiences we expect children to have: stories that continuously challenge literacy abilities, link to curricular topics, and enrich the overall educational experience are crucial. Staff are role models, and by promoting a love of reading through clever book choices, we can enable our pupils to select the best books for themselves as they start out on a journey as life-long readers. In a year

when fiction provided an immediate escape for many children in the UK, we've drawn together a selection of 'best books' and asked Creative Education Trust primary literacy leads for their thoughts on what these books are good for.”



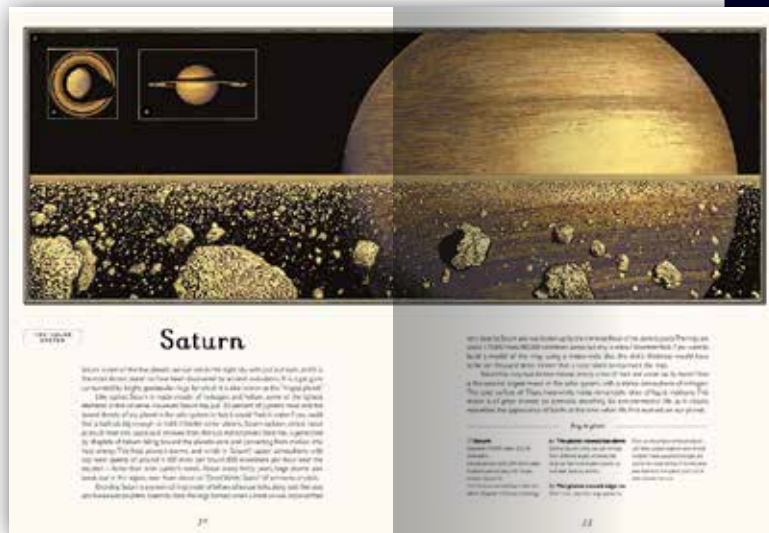
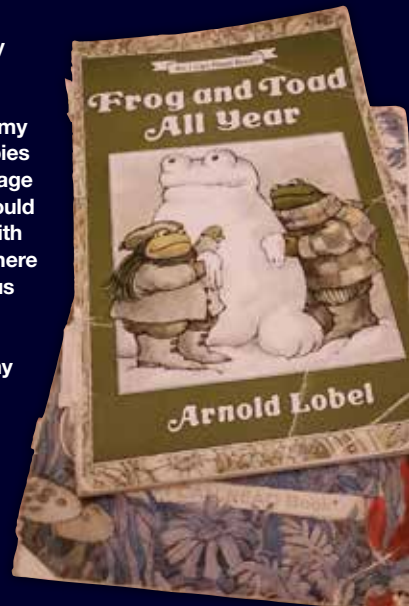
Isaac Howarth, Headteacher, Queen Eleanor

It goes without saying that reading is fundamental to learning. I want to reconnect us with why books are magnificent and share a few of my personal favourites too. Books are windows onto other worlds, they can be works of art in-and-of themselves and they can provide us with some of our longest-lasting memories. As primary school educators, we have the pleasure of introducing our young pupils to our favourite books, building that attachment to certain books that can last a lifetime.

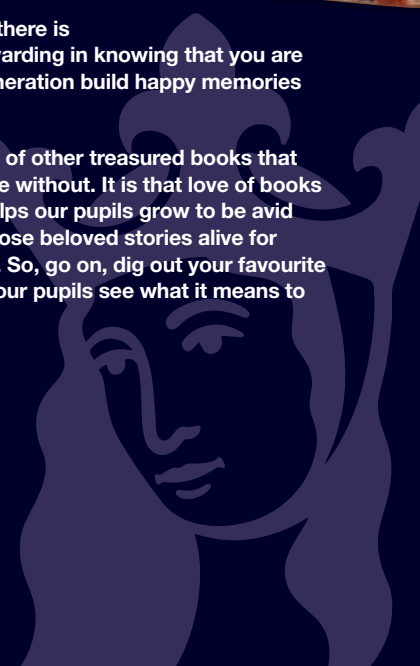
Books serve a lot of purposes: they are necessary for teaching very young children how to read and they expose them to new language and vocabulary that we often don't use in daily speech. Maryanne Wolf's book *Proust and the squid: The story and science of reading* is a great book on the importance of 'story book language,' including stock phrases such as "Once upon a time..." and very uncommon words like "elfin" that feature heavily in fairy tales. However, books can also be storehouses of culture and memory. When it comes to considering why we need certain books in our lives, literary critic Northrop Frye, in his *The Educated Imagination*, asks one simple but profound question of reading a book: "Does it help us to think more clearly, or feel more sensitively, or live a better life than we could without it?" Here are a few books that have made my life better.

The *Welcome to the Museum* series is worth your time; planned as a bound version of a trip through a museum and covering a vast array of topics. My personal favourite is the book, *Planetarium*. The book is so elegant, it almost belongs in an art gallery. The textured artwork captures the majesty of the cosmos, even for those who are still learning to read, the visuals are more than enough to inspire awe and wonder. That makes it the perfect book for sharing with someone else.

Books can also give us a sense of homely comfort. For me, Arnold Lobel's *Frog and Toad* books are my go-to books. My copies certainly show their age and although they could easily be replaced with quick order online, there is something precious about handing down an object that over time has had so many memories attached to it. Sitting down to read *Frog and Toad*, hearing my three year-old begin to sound out those first few words from the same pages I read decades ago; there is something very rewarding in knowing that you are helping another generation build happy memories of books.



There are hundreds of other treasured books that we can't imagine life without. It is that love of books we all share that helps our pupils grow to be avid readers, keeping those beloved stories alive for another generation. So, go on, dig out your favourite old books and let your pupils see what it means to enjoy reading.





Uzma Ahmed, senior teacher and literacy lead, Harpfield

The American wit, Mason Cooley, said, "reading gives us some place to go when we have to stay where we are." It feels apt to open with his quote in 2020. At Harpfield, we promote a love of books by putting reading at the heart of the opportunities we offer. As our Ofsted inspection report identified, "the school's wider curriculum provides pupils with a range of experiences and opportunities that are rooted within a strong literacy focus." We begin from Nursery, where books and nursery rhymes intertwine to provide rich language experiences; then, throughout each key stage we continue to use quality texts that link curricular topics with children's book choices. For example, at Key

Stage 2 *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* by Brian Selznick helps the children to explore their art skills as they learn about earth and space.

My read of the year, Onjali Rauf's book, *The Boy at the Back of the Class*, is very personal to Harpfield. We have pupils from varied backgrounds, ethnicities, religions and cultures, but the collective feel of 'family' is undeniable despite the many differences. The book tells the story of an empty chair at the back of the class which is filled by a new child. It follows the journey of a refugee boy called Ahmet and intricately reveals his experiences. Without spoiling the story for anyone who hasn't yet had the pleasure of reading it, the book highlights children's enormous capacity to love without prejudice. Ahmet's treatment by friendly classmates feels so very Harpfield to me.

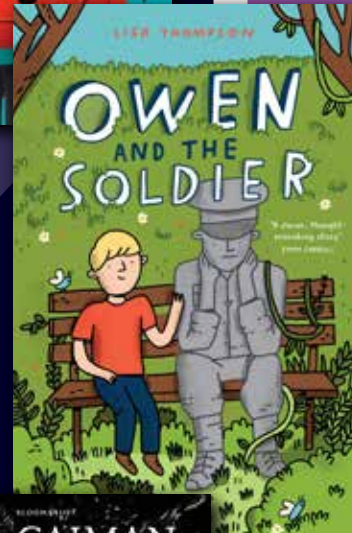
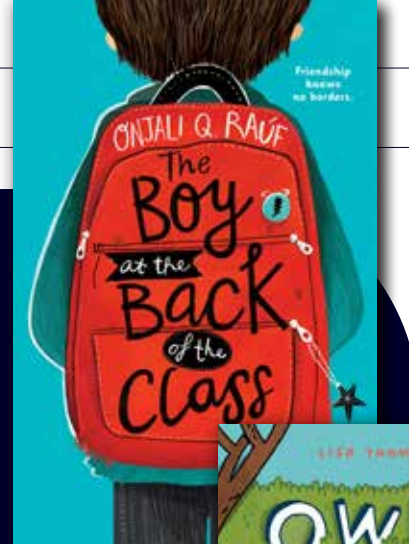
"the book highlights children's enormous capacity to love without prejudice."

When we model a love of reading, we are demonstrating to children the magic of wonder. Books are more than paper and words; they are a sense of adventure and even belonging. The familiarity we feel with settings and characters is a sign of a well written book we've enjoyed. We must expose our pupils to books with care: asking ourselves questions about representation and updating our texts regularly to keep them relevant. To be inspired and to aspire, children need to see names of authors which sound like their names. They need to hear about characters who share their experiences. They need to read names and see pictures of children who look like them. They need and deserve to feel part of the literature we want them to love and enjoy. It starts with us.

Richard Denny, English Lead, Wroughton

At Wroughton we've adopted Literacy Counts's *Read to Write* scheme by. Each term or half term we focus on a book as a vehicle for different types of writing. We will be using *Hansel and Gretel*, written by Neil Gaiman and illustrated by Lorenzo Mattotti, as a stimulus to write dual narratives and persuasive letters in the summer term. It's a familiar tale: two children abandoned in a forest by their reluctant father. As they try to escape, they stumble across a strange and wonderful house that holds a dark secret....

There are so many reasons to love this book. First of all, Neil Gaiman's stories are deliciously dark and have a mysterious air to them. This appeals to the teenager in me who loved supernatural stories growing up. It is beautifully written containing many effective techniques, such as phrases woven into the text that make you sit up and want to read on. The illustrations are stunning – Lorenzo Mattotti uses



Alex Barton, Year 3 teacher and Reading Lead, Three Peaks

I have chosen *Owen and the Soldier* by Lisa Thompson, which is published by Barrington Stoke – an excellent dyslexic-friendly publisher with a selection of great reads for all ages. I used this book with my year 3 class during Remembrance month because of its subtle connections to the war. Not only did it promote themes of empathy and bravery, but I also found children could really identify with the character and appreciate his resilience and courage throughout the story.

The book follows a young boy called Owen. Ever since losing his dad in the war, life with mum at home has been challenging. Mum has lost all motivation and happiness. When a crumbling stone soldier faces expulsion from the local park, only Owen understands how significant it is for the local town. He decides to take action.

At two points in the book, Owen's writing experiences present parallel opportunities for pupils in the classroom too. He addresses a poem to the local councillor, a moment that plays a vital role in saving the stone soldier and giving pupils a stimulating example of poetry-writing. Owen also writes a letter to the local newspaper about the importance of keeping the stone soldier in the park, highlighting to pupils the effect of persuasive writing techniques.

This book is perfect for a lower Key Stage 2, or perhaps even a year 2 class, as it bridges into chapter books without being too overwhelming. As with most Barrington Stoke books, the language is accessible, and the children can apply their comprehension skills confidently.

charcoal to create black silhouettes and dark shadows of the forest. Boys, especially, get hooked into the darker elements of the story.

The level of writing is aimed at the top end of year 6, so it challenges children's understanding of text, while the illustrations are a wonderful stimulus for writing. The book is a chance to lose ourselves in a world very far away from our own. Children are eager to discuss the characters, plot and illustrations. At that moment, my class changes from being an English lesson into a book club discussion. I recommend reading this book as a springboard to other Neil Gaiman stories, which really help develop a stamina for reading.



Laura Brett, Deputy Headteacher and English Lead, Woodlands

Reading is a vehicle through which children can explore different worlds and adventures; it can feed their imagination and transport them to other places. This can be invaluable when things are tough. Reading can also provide discussion points, opportunities to express opinion and exposure to experiences they may not have encountered before.

Wonder by R J Palacio is about a boy with facial disfigurement starting a new

school. It is an amazing text to support the teaching of tolerance; it addresses differences in society and promotes discussion about the behaviours that sometimes result from prejudice. It enables you to discuss the role of empathy in relationships and understand different points of view.

During Anti-Bullying week, it can be used as a route into inclusion as well as discrimination. It also links to genetics, so it can be used to support Evolution and Inheritance in science. We also use it to stimulate learning about different genres of writing, such as diaries, narrative and recounting experience. The story lends itself very directly to supporting children's transition into secondary school.

We develop our pupils' life-long love of reading by immersing them in as many different types of text as possible. Books like *Wonder* can bring classes together through a shared emotional journey, whether it be funny or sad.



Professional Development and Organisational Learning

Gwayne Webb, Director of Learning and Teaching, introduces exciting new initiatives to keep us learning as individuals and as a network of professionals responsible for the education of thousands of young people.

Assessment

Trust leaders have been working closely with subject leaders and the staff responsible for curriculum and assessment. Two crucial elements of our increasingly-aligned secondary curriculum have been the focus of the autumn's training for key stakeholders: Key Stage 2/3 transition, and Key Stage 3.



Cambridge Assessment

Transition: assessing the unassessed

In order to make sure we're well prepared to support our new intake of year 7s and the teachers who teach them, we commissioned a suite of standardised tests from GL Assessment, the leading provider of formative assessments to UK schools. 2020 is the first year since the introduction of Key Stage 2 SATs in the early 1990s that, owing to the pandemic, the year 6 tests were not carried out. This means that our current cohorts of year 7 students have enrolled in secondary school without that important benchmarking data being available to support lesson planning and curriculum design. First, GL Assessment training ensured that our data managers were confident in setting up the tests, and actually running them. Subsequently, assessment leaders and some teachers – those with pastoral support responsibility for year 7 – have been trained in interpreting the test outcomes. This sets them up to accelerate the progress our young people make, and to catch them up with some of the learning they missed before they joined us. With a forensic understanding of the abilities of every year 7 child, we are equipped to support

their transition and their academic and emotional development effectively.

Assessment design

Good assessment design is both a science and an art, and it requires considerable skill and experience to make it effective. Creative Education Trust is ensuring that Key Stage 3 students have access to high-quality and effective assessments by training over sixty of our teachers and curriculum leaders in assessment design and production. Dr Simon Child from Cambridge Assessment Network is leading weekly sessions as part of a longer-term and larger-scale teacher training experience. His organisation, which is closely aligned to the national examination boards, develops and delivers assessments, qualifications and tests for learners of all ages, across the full range of subjects and for use all around the world. Our own interactive professional development sessions have gone really well: the participants now understand the purposes and principles of good assessment; they can write effective assessment and multiple-choice questions and they can evaluate those written by others; they understand mark schemes and how to optimise them. Most excitingly, they are now poised to give their first assessments a go! We will have produced the first set of internally-designed tests by Christmas, and shortly after it, our young people will have sat the first set of our own bespoke examinations. The final part of the training will take place at the end of January 2021.

Alex Laney, Vice Principal at **Thistley Hough** (pictured above), will be working with the Education team to ensure our new KS3 assessment model is fully embedded.

Research

Our teachers – along with many of the other adults who support the safety, welfare and academic development of children from ages of 3 to 19 – are themselves academics who enjoy and value enquiry. Learning never ends. Creative Education Trust is committed not only to making learning a powerful entitlement of all children in our schools, but equally, for our staff. We have been keen to create research



opportunities in relation to the creative thinking, knowledge and skills that will equip the Creative Education Trust child for the challenges of the 21st century. We began the term by inviting expressions of interest from colleagues across the Trust to participate in a pilot research enquiry to be launched, completed and showcased this academic year in one of the following areas: developing and implementing any aspect of the Trust's Strategic Plan; improving our schools; developing our partnerships and generating collaborative working opportunities. Senior colleagues at Wrenn and the Head Teacher of Queen Eleanor have been working with me as Director of Learning and Teaching to develop a starting point.

The opportunity to participate in this first round of action research was open to everyone at every level in the Trust and we had 33 expressions of interest covering a range of topics, from effective pedagogy, blended learning and metacognition, to curriculum enrichment, growth mindset and well-being. The steering group has filtered these declared research interests into three bands:

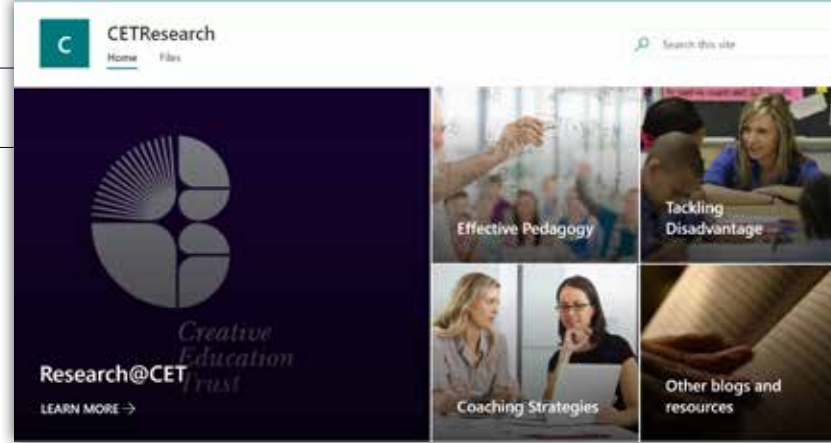
1. Effective pedagogy, led by headteacher of Queen Eleanor Primary, Isaac Howarth

2. Tackling disadvantage under the leadership of Wrenn's Vice Principal, Nimish Lad

3. Coaching strategies, led by Dawn Ashbolt, Assistant Principal at Wrenn

All three research groups will be supported by the leader of Professional Learning and Action Research at Wrenn, David Howell, who is also the Assistant Principal. At the enquiry launch meeting, Nicole McCartney, Director of Education, set out the vision for the first year of work, and Wrenn colleagues shared the positive impact of their research experiences. The enquiry has begun. Connected will follow the participants and showcase the outcomes in the summer term.

We congratulate **Nimish Lad**, Vice Principal of **Wrenn** (pictured above), on his contribution to Tom Sherrington's In Action series to be published next year. Nimish brings his abundant experience with researchED to his appointment as the Curriculum and Research Lead for our Research Inquiry Group.



Facilities: Covid and Beyond

Stuart Sams, Regional Site Manager for Milton Keynes, Wrenn, Ash Green and Three Peaks, explains the context and ambitions of the new training resources for site teams across sixteen estates from North Staffordshire to East Norfolk.



Over the last 12 months the Estates and Facilities team has worked hard to create and roll-out a Management Information platform where all facilities and Health & Safety can be effectively and safely managed to measure compliance and help us manage risks. The system came with essential and helpful training modules which have supported the growth in competence of our whole team. This year has required a step-change in the way that site and estates team members work and as a result of Covid-19, we now have a Trust-wide, consistent approach to the management of our estates. It's time to move up a level.

The teams are working hard to provide a customer-orientated service that supports all the schools in making facilities both safe and uplifting. We believe the best way to retain and grow this team further is to develop their skills and expertise. Recognising that it's critical to engage everyone, we have enrolled all the Facilities Managers as members of the Institute of Workplace and Facilities Management (IWFM), the UK governing body for facilities management.

IWFM's Professional Development Framework will assess our employees' competencies, enabling Creative Education Trust to use their development tools for tailored training and qualifications. In addition, we'll be rolling out a new and comprehensive package of H&S training in 2021 for all site team staff. In becoming a corporate member of IWFM, the Trust will clearly demonstrate our commitment to the support and development of our staff and the delivery of best industry practice. This sends a clear message to our existing and prospective schools that we are at the forefront of facilities management.

All our staff on the scheme will have full access to our range of member benefits including:

- Knowledge and resource documentation.
- Unlimited access to IWFM's library of resources.
- Exclusive insights and networking and development opportunities.
- Improved corporate profile.
- Membership grades from Associate to Fellow of IWFM depending on qualifications and experience.

Where You From?

Social distancing and travel restrictions didn't stop Creative Education Trust's annual Sixth Form prizes. This year's prompt 'Where You From?', surfaced an impressive depth and imaginative engagement across both contests: from the biological determinism of DNA to the material substance of the human body and the immaterial Internet, via identity, race and regional prejudice.

On 26 November, five speakers confidently defied the weird challenge of the videocam to address a dispersed and invisible audience. **Katie Scarrott (Wrenn)**, **Hollie Dalton (Ash Green)**, **Erin Palmer (Abbeyfield)**, **Ifeanyi Felukwu (Bulwell)** and **Alicia Astle (Hart)** applied impressive rhetorical flair, elegantly turned phrasing, humour, expressive gestures and paced delivery to make their arguments. Some discussed 'place' in terms of new experiences generated by the contemporary pandemic, drawing attention to how technology, the Internet and digital developments might be altering people's sense of where they're from. One reminded us that we are located as global citizens with a responsibility to take care of each other and counter the threats to our place in the world. Another interrogated the assumptions and biases contained in the question 'where you from?'

This year's judges, Sue Freestone, Director of Education at the Kalisher Trust, Kirsty Dias, Director at international design company PriestmanGoode, and Nicole McCartney, Creative Education Trust Director of Education, finally agreed unanimously that **Ifeanyi Felukwu, Bulwell**, deserved first prize. He had explored the prompt question from the perspective of a Nottingham teenager strengthened by family in Nigeria and Christian faith. Ifeanyi spoke with poise, focus and a poetic sensitivity to language that conjured a confident sense of self and belonging.

"...it would be easier to say 'born in the UK, both parents originally from Nigeria', making me Black British. Simple, right? No. Where I'm from isn't as straightforward as the things that appear official, such as a passport, a birth certificate, a national record."

Guest judge Sue Freestone echoed our contestants' own feelings in her reply: what matters is not where you're from or what you've done, but who you are and where you're going. Her own life journey from farmer's daughter to school principal, government advisor and Deputy Lieutenant for Cambridgeshire bore out her advice: finding your individual voice – whether in spite of, or because of where you're from – is how we validate ourselves and effect change. "Be a voice", she urged, "not simply a vehicle".

Below left to right, sixth form speakers; **Alicia Astle (Hart)**, **Ifeanyi Felukwu (Bulwell)** Below right: **Emily Campbell**, **Nicole McCartney** and **Sue Freestone** applaud Ifeanyi for his winning speech.

Overleaf left to right, clockwise, sixth form speakers: **Katie Scarrott (Wrenn)**, **Hollie Dalton (Ash Green)**, **Erin Palmer (Abbeyfield)** Far right: **Fatima Sanneh (Bulwell)**, winner of the Essay Prize.

Fatima Sanneh of **Bulwell** was announced at the same event as the winner of the 2020 Essay Prize. She wove together a personal story of place, family and race with broader geographical histories and contemporary experience. Our judges appreciated the richness, maturity and fluency in writing, along with her mastery of structure.

"The word "slave" to any Black person is a word that arouses anxiety, anger, frustration, and, to an extent, hatred. It is a word that demonstrates how the Black community was sold and mistreated for centuries. However, as a modern woman of a Black heritage I feel now it is time to reclaim that word. The word "slave" to me shows how strong my ancestors were to overcome such prejudice, how inspiring they were to forge a new path and demand equality, and how fortunate I am to come from a line of strong, Black women who know their worth and are determined to change their world for the better."

The Essay Prize invites sixth form students to write persuasively about a topic outside the formal curriculum. Through bespoke workshops, one-to-one tutorials and multiple drafting stages each with individual feedback, students learn to harness tried and tested techniques, acquire new writing habits and practise the discipline of a writer. The premise of the prize is that though the essay might be familiar to students in its mandatory and 'boring' guises, it can also be an unexpected vehicle for individual invention and expression.

The Essay Prize judges could not be better advocates, each having established a rich career as writers (of essays and more) and believers in the power of words. All students entering the competition receive constructive, written feedback on their essay from one of the judges, bringing them close to professional realities of re-drafting, editorial and proofreading. A shortlist of essayists have another chance to perfect their submissions before the panel meets to decide an overall winner. This final stage is crucial in developing an awareness of continuous improvement and attention to detail in research, analysis and argumentation.

How to Write a Winning Essay

Jessica Douthwaite asked each judge what they think defines excellent essay writing.

Anjana Ahuja was educated at a comprehensive school in Essex and has a PhD in space physics from Imperial College London. She is a contributing writer on science for the *Financial Times*, writing a regular opinion column and contributes to other media outlets. She is a trustee of the charity Sense About Science and supports *Speakers For Schools* events. In February this year, Anjana wrote a compelling [book review essay](#) in the *New Statesman* which argued that while "genetics does not recognise race as a biologically meaningful concept, that doesn't stop racists invoking its findings." In June, she reflected on the consequences of rapid Covid-vaccine trials in an [investigative essay](#) for the *Financial Times*.



Anjana's essay writing musts:

Work out what you want to say. If it helps, say it out loud before writing it down. If you don't understand what you are trying to write, nobody else will.

Be clear and concise.

Give examples or analogies and cite evidence (and include your sources).

Make every word, phrase and sentence earn its keep. If you don't absolutely need it, strip it out.

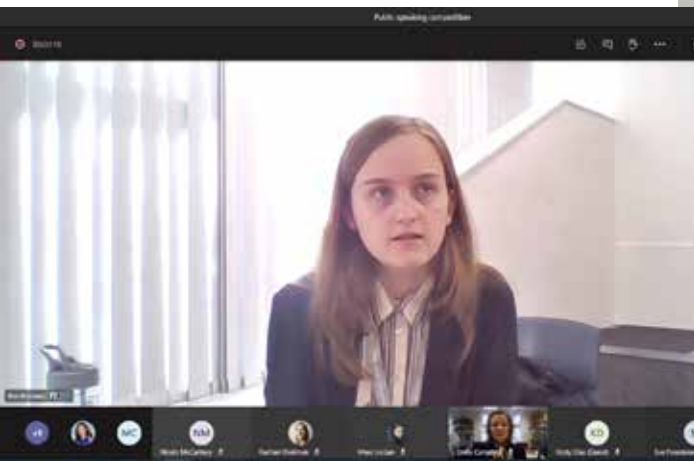
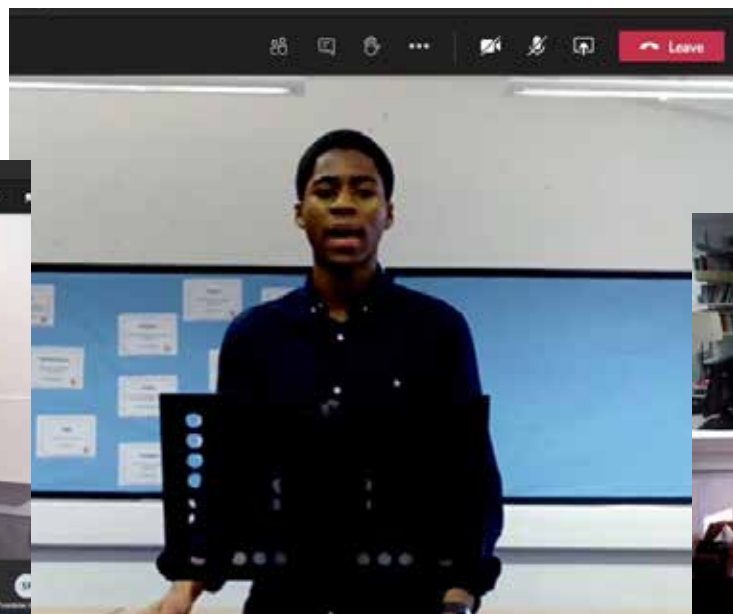
Read widely. Read people you agree with – and people you disagree with.

Work out what you enjoy reading, and critique why – is it the subject, the rhythm, the power of learning something new? On controversial subjects, learn your opponents' arguments so you know how to counter them.

Write like you know it.

Write like you mean it.

Write like it matters.





Kate Bassett is the Literary Associate at Chichester Festival Theatre and has been a professor of Creative Writing at the University of Reading. Her book *In Two Minds: A Biography of Jonathan Miller* was shortlisted for the HW Fisher Best First Biography Prize, the Theatre Book Prize and the Sheridan Morley Prize for Theatre Biography. A veteran theatre critic for *The Times*, the *Independent on Sunday*, the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Times Literary Supplement*, she has served on

judging panels for many literary awards and twice as Chair of the Edinburgh Comedy Awards.

Kate recommends reading Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal*, published in 1729, as an example of outstanding essay writing. She says: "It's a breathtakingly dark and potent satirical masterpiece. The opening paragraphs suggest the writer has come up with a humanely caring, eminently rational scheme by which starving, impoverished children can transform, through nurture, into being a benefit to society. This is followed, however, by a shocking twist through which Swift – ingeniously between the lines – proceeds to condemn hypocritical policy makers and the spin of callous capitalists. *A Modest Proposal* is still, very disturbingly, resonant today."

Kate's advice on writing a prize essay:

A brilliant essay might well have features that are surprising, that confound expectations, so I wouldn't want to be overly prescriptive about prize-winning attributes. That said, the following tend to stand out as strengths:

The demonstration of clear-headed and discerning thought processes;

A structurally progressive argument, not slipping into repetitiveness

Articulation including an assured use of vocabulary, spelling, grammar and punctuation;

End notes, if appropriate, properly referencing reliable sources to support claims made or statistics used in the essay.

Passion and wit can also be great boons.



Jonathan Katz is a Fellow of St Anne's College, teaching Classical and Oriental languages and literature, and is Public Orator at the University of Oxford. He spent many years as a secondary school teacher, and is also a translator and an accomplished musician.

Jonathan recommends looking at the winning essays of other students to reflect on the factors that led to their successes. For example, the previous years' shortlist and winner of the Royal Geographic Society and *Financial Times* School Essay Competition is available to read [online](#). Last year students tackled the question, 'Is it better for the world to be wealthier or to be more equal?'

These are Jonathan's thoughts on writing and planning an excellent essay:

The essay should be written in an English style more 'formal' than colloquial. Sentences should be carefully constructed, each with a main verb and following the standard rules of punctuation and spelling.

At the same time, the writing should be lively, and the words well chosen. Ideally, the subject will genuinely mean something important to the writer.

Keep the title carefully and constantly in mind and beware of unnecessary digressions. Examples and counter-examples to illustrate points are of course not digressions, but never use more of them than are necessary to support the argument. The overall argument should be clear and clearly directional, building up a case as it goes.

Each paragraph should be justifiable as a paragraph, contributing in its own way to the overall argument, and being related to what precedes and what follows.

Succinct but sufficient use of evidence is important in supporting claims that might be questioned in such a way as to undermine the argument. 'I think', 'I believe' etc. do not indicate evidence, but often the opposite!

A plan is almost always an essential preliminary, preferably well considered and worked at well before the first words are written.



Successes and special commendations Students...

To **Key Stage 3** students and the **Art department** at **Ash Green**, invited by the Bedworth Armistice Committee to exhibit artwork in commemoration of Remembrance Sunday at Bedworth Civic Hall in the absence of a parade this year.



To **Elisha Brayford**, year 4 at **Harpfield**, who started a YouTube guitar tutorial channel during the first lockdown of 2020. Elisha and her mum established rules around posting on social media so that she stays safe online and protects her privacy. A lovely idea Elisha, and a great way to share your musical talents with friends and followers, all keen to learn but distanced by Covid-19.



To **Abigail Debenham**, year 7 at **Abbeyfield** who entered a 'dream stationery' design competition and won it with her creation, the 'Enigma Pen', which writes in top secret code. Abigail was awarded a set of her own stationery and £100 worth of items to share among her tutor group at school.



To **Bethany Dunn**, year 10 pupil at **Bulwell**, and her mum, who almost tripled their annual fundraising goal of £1000 for *When You Wish Up a Star* – £2,921! Every year Bethany's family organise a community Fun Day for the charity. Unable to hold a live event in 2020, they made and sold unique face masks and handmade goods.



To **Finnley Coles**, year 11 at **Wrenn**, who was invited to join the National England Under-17s Volleyball squad after several years representing the school and county in competitions. Having proved his talents at the national trials Finnley is now training for his first European championships in Norway.



To year 7 **Bulwell** pupil, **Iris Wallace**, who won Nottingham Building Society's **Innovative Young People of 2020** award in her age category. Iris found a voluntary job before starting secondary school and has shown enormous dedication to her involvement at the Bulwell Forest Community garden, generating ideas, such as plant and tabletop sales, to keep the charity going through a difficult time.

To year 13 pupil at **Ash Green**, **Hollie Dalton**, who raised £245 for her 2021 trip to Kenya with Ash Green by completing a skydive.



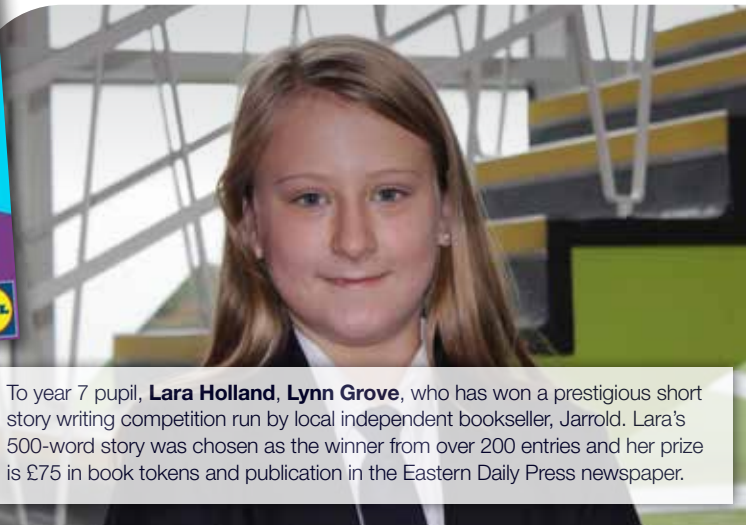
To year 7 **Abbeyfield** pupil, **Aminah Riaz**, who won supermarket chain Lidl's national competition to name and design a mascot for their fun size bananas. Aminah created the 'Banana Llama' and won via an overall majority of votes from the public on social media. Her design will be featured on product packaging in supermarkets across the country.



To **Weavers** pupil, **Charlie Mayhew**, year 12, who won a gameboard competition through Isaac Computer Science, a revision website created by the Raspberry Pi Foundation. Charlie studies computer science A Level and his victory made him one of the top 40 highest achieving students in the country on his first attempt.



To **Harry Elliott** and **Ryan Bradshaw**, year 13 at **Ash Green**, for completing the Mathematics Admissions Test for Oxford University and the Cambridge Test of Mathematics for University Admission, respectively. Both are applying to university to read Computer Science.



To year 7 pupil, **Lara Holland**, **Lynn Grove**, who has won a prestigious short story writing competition run by local independent bookseller, Jarrod. Lara's 500-word story was chosen as the winner from over 200 entries and her prize is £75 in book tokens and publication in the Eastern Daily Press newspaper.



To staff and students at **Bulwell** who made special efforts to mark Remembrance Day in place of the usual school commemorations. Themed activities throughout the day included tutor group assemblies, a visit from cadets, a two-minute silence and handmade wreaths displayed on the school restaurant doors.

To **Alicia Ford**, year 9 at **Weavers** who won a school competition organised by the Drama Department to honour Black History Month with an original and powerful performance of slam poetry. Watch her excellent performance [here!](#)



To staff, students and especially the Creative Arts Department at **Weavers**, who produced a display of handmade fabric poppy pins to display to raise money for the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal 2020. In form time, students and staff in each year group were challenged to create a different poppy. The design solutions ranged from applique and lazercut to pompoms and Suffolk puffs.



To **Olivia Anderton**, a member of the catering team at **Queen Eleanor**, and the nursery class, for making and donating decorations for a Christmas tree at Northampton General Hospital. As a hospital volunteer, Olivia knew that children and staff would be keen to share the festive spirit with patients in spite of Covid-19 restrictions.



To **Debbie Ling**, Success Centre Manager at **Abbeyfield**, for winning a Highly Commended: Shining Star prize in the Northamptonshire Carers' Awards. Debbie's popular support service offers pupils who have additional responsibilities in the family home a place to meet, talk and share their experiences.

...and staff



To staff of **Wroughton**, who contributed to the creation of a fantastic junior school wall display that celebrates the rich history and heritage of the local community. External designers have been consulting staff on the design since September and it was installed to great (and socially distant) ovation in October.



To Head of Science, **Claudia Cowap-Whiskin**, at **Milton Keynes**, who successfully completed the National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership (NPQSL). While working on her qualification she ran a project on student engagement with GCSE Pod, and demonstrated the impact that this online tool had on the performance of key cohorts.

NO- MIGHTY

Chris Collington, Head of Music at Ellis Guilford rounds up the 2020 Music Lectures Series

Like a lot of good ideas this one started out more as a question of 'could we?' rather than 'we will'.

At Ellis Guilford we've enjoyed a long-term working relationship with **Sean Dickson**, a.k.a. 'HiFi Sean', formerly of 80's pop rock band **The Soupdragons** and Kurt Cobain favourite **BMX Bandits**. Four years ago, classroom technology wizard Andy Jones and I were looking for material for the KS4 Music Technology students to remix when we took the unlikely step of messaging Sean via Facebook. Our request was for one track from his new album for the students to work their magic on. He replied the same night.

Sean Dickson is a wonderfully humble man for someone who has seen it all. In amongst his tales of shopping sprees paid for by Michael Hutchence and late-night jam sessions with John Peel, there lies an unwavering desire to create – the more collaboratively the better. Sean's been a regular mentor and collaborator for the Ellis Guilford Music Technology students, making an annual visit to school to work with us ever since. Four years and 100 remixes later and we suddenly find ourselves without one of the highlights of our curriculum owing to Covid-19 restrictions.

Sean offered, as he always does, to do more – "how about a video call?" But here is where the problem arises – we have four KS4 classes and only one Sean. Andy and I hatched a plan. If messaging industry professionals had worked four years ago, why not again? Why not attempt our first online lecture series? The musicians and composers call in, and the students – fresh from some research – pose the questions. Doable, right?

You might think we sent out hundreds of messages, but in all honesty, most of the musicians we contacted returned to us fast and very positively!

The first lecture, with **Robin Richards** of **Dutch Uncles**, was a fascinating discussion into the process of composition and modern musicianship.

HiFi Sean joined Year 11 and covered the 'misinformation' of fame, getting noticed and, most crucially, what really makes a great piece of music. "What I liked most was gaining the confidence to create my own sound" recalls student Ashton Nunn. "To begin with I was creating sounds that I thought other people would like and was worried Sean would be upset if I ruined his track. Now I am creating something truly terrifying and unrecognisable based around his original bass line and lyrics".

Stuart Braithwaite of Scottish giants **Mogwai** was next on the agenda and was caught out a couple of times by the searching qualities of Year 10's questions. A reoccurring theme of advice emerged: if you want to create music then make sure you're always listening to new things, no matter the genre.

The following week, one Year 11 group were treated to another famous face, this time make-up wearing, long haired **Rich Shaw**, macabre guitarist for the long-running heavy metal outfit **Cradle of Filth**. Keen guitarist and rock fan Raj Jahar said afterwards, "There was so much to learn from him. Firstly that there are lots of routes into the music industry and secondly I liked his passion for the guitar. That he's driven to play every day".

The inaugural 2020 lecture series finished with yet another tale of the multiple ways in which music can reach the masses. This time from Chandrasonic (**Steve Chandra Savale**) of **Asian Dub Foundation**, joining us from his home in London.



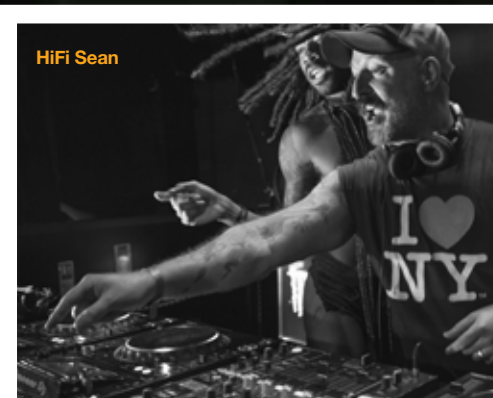
Chandrasonic, Asian Dub Foundation (photo: Montecruz Foto)



Rich Shaw, Cradle of Filth (photo: Coventry City Council)



Stuart Braithwaite, Mogwai (photo: alterna2)



HiFi Sean

"Don't believe the mights!"

His ethos of music for all and his insights into compositional approaches was a remarkably interesting way for year 10 to spend a Friday afternoon. His key message to the students was make sure life is based around doing: "Don't believe the mights". Slogan t-shirts are on the way...

And what a way to finish this reflection. My deepest thanks to Robin, Sean, Stuart, Rich and Steve for giving up their valuable time to provide students with an unforgettable and hugely rich experience. Thank goodness we sent the messages in the first place – we didn't believe the mights!



Robin Richards, Dutch Uncles (photo: Lennon Photography)

Mr Collington's top tips for virtual lectures:

- Don't be afraid to message people. The worst-case scenario is that you'll get a "no".
- Keep your message short, polite, and to the point.
- Brief your students about their guest lecturer well in advance and give them plenty of opportunity to explore the career of the special guest in their own time.
- Guide your students through what makes a good question (career, approach, influences) and topics to avoid (money, fame, Twitter followers, etc). Help them understand that the best questions are the ones with answers that cannot be Googled.
- Think of yourself as the chat show host: get comfortable, be prepared to lead the conversation, and have a few questions up your sleeve in case your students are stumped.
- And of course, test the technology well in advance!

Where You From?

will run as a theme in every issue of *Connected* magazine for the remainder of the year.

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The City of Nottingham, looking southwest from the castle
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