

# The Rochdale Children's Literature Festival 2019

*It takes a whole community to raise a reader.*



## Details

**Venue:** No 1, Riverside, Rochdale

**Date:** Saturday, 13<sup>th</sup> July 2019

**Founder/Coordinator:** Clare McGreevy

**Schools involved:**

- ❖ Lowerplace Primary School
- ❖ Holy Family Primary School
- ❖ St Mary's Primary School
- ❖ St Patrick's RC Primary School
- ❖ Broadfield Primary School



## Context

- I am the Reading Coordinator of Lowerplace, a three-form entry primary school and I also lead the OU/UKLA Teachers as Readers (TaRs) Hub in Rochdale. Our group is dedicated to raising the profile of reading for pleasure in schools and in the wider community.
- As a group we developed a collaborative project, which aimed to create a Children's Literature Festival, an RfP celebration that involved the whole community.
- The project was supported by Rochdale Library and the Director of the Rochdale Festival of Literature and Ideas.

## OU Research inspiration and rationale

Drawing on the *Teachers as Readers* research into reading for pleasure (Cremin et al., 2014) we aimed to develop our own, the children's and the wider community's

- *Knowledge of children's literature and other texts*

We also sought to build, within our own schools and more widely

- *Reading communities that are reciprocal and interactive.*

## Aims

- To enhance teachers' knowledge of children's literature
- To enhance the children's knowledge of particular genres
- To encourage parental engagement at home and in school
- To showcase the RfP work done by our schools and share good practice with the community
- To give children and families the opportunity to attend free author performances and other book-related events
- To raise the profile of RfP throughout Rochdale.

## Outline

### Step 1: Involve your local library

As we wanted the whole community to be involved in this project, I approached Rochdale Library Services to ask if they would be willing to support the Festival. Michelle and Joanne, two senior members of Rochdale's amazing library team, were hugely enthusiastic about the idea.

In Rochdale, the council buildings – Riverside - are joined to Central Library. This would be the ideal place to hold the Festival.

Many of our children and families had never been to the library before, so by using it as a venue, it meant that we could sign up new members to the service on the day.



### Step 2: Involve a high profile author

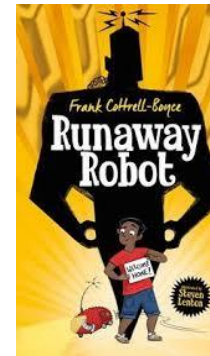
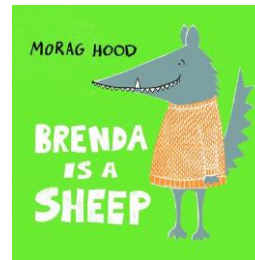


After the group agreed to collaborate on the Festival project, I knew that the key to success would be the involvement of a well-loved high-profile author.

I approached *Michael Rosen's* agent about a performance – as Michael is a staunch advocate of reading for pleasure and has previously supported the OU with its RfP work, I thought that he might be willing to back the event.

Thankfully, he agreed to perform and this meant that the Festival had a buzz of excitement from the beginning. It made it much more likely that we could obtain sponsorship and publicise the event throughout the community.

### Step 3: Involve the local community



As well as the library, I wanted to involve local bookshops and businesses in the project. I approached our wonderful local educational booksellers, Madeleine Lindley, to see if they wanted to be involved. They agreed to be Michael's official booksellers at the Festival. They also got in touch with publishers to help us organise other high profile authors. Through Madeleine Lindley, the Festival secured performances from *Frank Cottrell Boyce* and *Morag Hood*. The Council and Rochdale Online News were hugely supportive too and helped us create a memorable logo for the event.



Littleborough Ladies Circle is a local organisation that does a lot for charity in the community. They were delighted to be involved in the event. They pledged their time to help as volunteers on the day and put me in contact with other organisations like the Rochdale Round Table who agreed to sponsor the cost of Riverside's first floor rooms. The Ladies Circle's Chair, Heidi, is a graphic designer and she created a wonderful flyer and poster to publicise the Festival.

### Step 4: Secure sponsorship and organise fundraising events

- **Financing the venue**

Luckily, the use of the library venue and ground floor council buildings were available for free – this space would be ideal for pop-up book shops, school RfP stalls, workshops and storytelling performances. The Rochdale Round Table financed the cost of the first floor rooms where high-profile authors could perform to large audiences.

- **Financing authors and performers**

Schools organised fundraising events so that we could cover the costs of the performers. Children and parents were aware that the proceeds would be going towards the costs of the Festival. Attendance at the events was huge and many parents contributed books, toys and food to sell. Most tickets were to be distributed for free to local children and their families. However, I put a small amount of tickets on sale on Eventbrite. This meant that money to cover costs was generated through the sales; it also meant that Rochdale had people visiting the town from places as far away as Bristol!



## Step 5: Book local authors, performers and workshops



We booked local storytellers, poets, puppet theatre companies, a rapping workshop, and two art workshops which offered the chance to make a book or create story stones. Many of the artists reduced their rates or performed for free when they understood what the schools were trying to achieve in the community.

## Step 6: Organise other areas of book-related fun



Schools each took charge of a book-themed stall in order to maximise the family fun. Some of the stalls were:

- Willy Wonka's Sweet Shop (run by parents)
- Hook-a-Book (just like Hook-a-Duck – very popular!)
- Book Tombola
- Origami stall (making origami books)
- Name the Bear Hunt Teddy (to win a signed copy of We're Going on a Bear Hunt)
- Books for Biscuits (run by our school cook and librarian – a treasure hunt for book titles with book-themed biscuits as the prize!)



One school made a Twitter board so that visitors could tweet pictures of themselves; they also provided photo booth props.

## Step 7: Generate enthusiasm in school and connect it to RfP practice



Now that we knew who would be performing at the Festival, we began a campaign to generate interest so that children and families continued to feel involved and had a sense of anticipation. This took the form of:

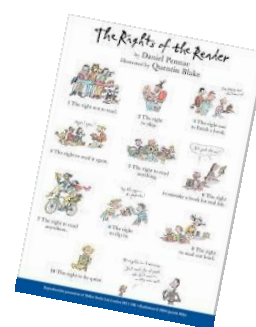
- Creating Festival Ambassador Teams (including children from both KS1 and KS2) who would be in charge of school RfP information stalls. A greater proportion of (previously) reluctant readers as well as children from book poor backgrounds were included on the teams.
- Creating a Parent Festival Team who would keep parents up-to-date through social media
- Focused assemblies on the authors attending
- Reading the authors' books together in class
- Posters displayed around school
- Book exchanges during and after school
- Competitions to design a book cover with the winner being announced at the Festival

## Step 8: Plan your school RfP Stall

Each school's group of Festival Ambassadors met with members of staff and decided what RfP information would be available on each stall.

Festival Ambassadors fed back to classes and then each year group created materials of interest for the stall. The children knew that the RfP activities they had been doing over the year would be showcased to the public – this consolidated their knowledge and gave them a sense of purpose and ownership over the Festival.

Children created bookmarks, lists of their favourite books of the year, posters of Daniel Pennac's Rights of the Readers, tips on how to get children reading at home, ideas for schools, posters about the OU/UKLA website and so much more!





## Step 9: Start a social media campaign



Social media was vital in ensuring that the community felt excited about the Festival, that everyone knew the details of the day and that the Festival reached a wide audience. We set up a designated Twitter page and made sure updates were posted on our school websites. One of our school staff members went above and beyond to tweet updates, tweet authors and respond to queries.

## Step 10: Time table the day and enlist volunteers

One of the most important time-consuming aspects was time tabling the day. With advice from the library, I made sure I left enough time between acts (half an hour at least) in order for events to flow.

School staff members were incredibly generous with their time and gave up their Saturday in order to volunteer on the day. I timetabled everyone to a designated station and also made sure they had time to enjoy the Festival too.

**Rochdale Children's Festival Time Table**

Time	Entrance Hall	Children's Library	G10	G11	Ogden Room (Capacity 50)	Hollingsworth A.B.C Rooms (Capacity 180) *Half hour turn around*	Rochdale (Green Room) (Capacity 12)
9 - 9:30	Set-up		STAR TREE STUDIO ART W/S				
10:00 - 10:30	Mayor opens Festival			Craft	Story Rapping Workshop	Frank Cottrell Boyce Performance 10:00 - 11:00	
10:30 - 11:00	MR signing		Yan Tan Tethera 10-10:45	Craft			
11:00 - 11:30	FCB signing		Yan Tan Tethera 11-11:45	Craft	Story Rapping Workshop		
11:30 - 12:00	Busy Lizzy					Michael Rosen Performance 11:30 - 12:30	
12:00 - 12:30			That Poetry Bloke		Story Rapping Workshop		
12:30 - 13:00	Busy Lizzy		Richard O'Neill 12:30-13:15				
13:00 - 13:30			That Poetry Bloke		Story Rapping Workshop	1pm Lempen set-up	
13:30 - 14:00			Richard O'Neill 13:30-14:15				
14:00 - 14:30	Busy Lizzy		Kathy Oakley-Calvert and Ned the Dog 14:30-15:15			2:30 - 3:15pm Lempen Puppet Theatre: That Amazing Thing!	
14:30 - 15:00			Kathy Oakley-Calvert and Ned the Dog 14:30-15:15		Morag Hood Draw-along		
15:00 - 15:30						Lempen dismantle	
15:30 - 16:00							

Willy Wonka Sweet Shop Lowerplace
Book Festival Photo Booth Holy Family
Hook a Book St Mary's
Book Exchange St Patrick's
Name the Bear Hunt Teddy Broadfield

## Step 10: Maximise publicity and invite special guests



The local press were wonderful and made sure that the event stayed in the public eye. I invited the Mayor and Mayoress of Rochdale to open the event. They also enthusiastically agreed to read to children in the designated storytelling booth. This really brought the community together in a magical way.

I also asked Richard O'Neill, one of the authors participating at the Festival, to set-up an information bookstall regarding his Diverse Books initiative. This aims to promote and celebrate authors and artists from diverse backgrounds, places and experiences.



## Step 12: Enjoy the Day!





# Impact

## Comments from children in our Visitors' Book:

13th July 2019 puppet  
I really enjoyed the puppet  
show and my saw puppet was  
the <sup>amazing</sup> thing. I liked the authors  
reading the stories and talking about  
them. I think there should  
be more authors to read and  
I would definitely go next year.  
Jude. age 9

13/07/19  
I really loved the festival! There  
was so much things to  
and watch. I found out about  
new author called Frank Cottrell  
boyce and even got one of his  
books signed. I really enjoyed  
the puppet show and going to  
the author talks. It was really  
fun. I would definitely want to  
go up from Bristol go ~~and~~ again.  
Nina age 11

## Festival Comments from Ambassadors:

I thought the Reading Festival was amazing  
and will inspire more children to read  
when technology fails. I think Ms McGrevey  
(the organiser of this event) did an  
amazing job of making this extraordinary  
event possible. I am going to come  
to the festival and I am going to  
help out again by getting blisters  
and giving out leaflets. I even got  
some people out side of burra to  
come (fingers crossed). No other school has  
hosted an event this extraordinary. So  
I am honoured to be apart of  
it. I hope this festival be comes  
something more than just in rochdale  
something more than england. world

My role as a Festival ambassador was to share  
with Rochdale Borough what reading for pleasure is.  
In my class we have book marks which encourage  
us to read more so we can go on to  
the next stage. I made a poster explaining  
this so that when it is the Festival  
we can get alot of children reading a  
variety of books. When we have a finished  
reading a book we explain what happened, how  
it happened, why it happened and who it happened  
to. I think being a Festival ambassador has  
helped alot of the children in school and  
out of school to read books. This shows  
that having a Literacy Festival every year  
will ~~make a~~ help someone in life with reading  
a book.  
I think that this festival was a success this  
year because alot of people gave the festival  
ambassadors compliments. ~~we had~~ We had  
on famous two of four famous authors such  
as Frank Cottrell boyce, Michael Rosen, Richard O'Neill and  
the poetry book. Next year hopefully we will  
have many more so we can get more  
children to come. I hope

As a result of taking part in the organisation and delivery of the Rochdale Children's Literature Festival:

### Children:

- Are library members
- Visit the library more regularly
- Are enthused about reading and discovering new authors
- Read more widely and frequently
- Discuss reading with peers, teaching staff and families
- Enjoy and feel motivated to read
- Think positively about reading
- Have more reader confidence
- Have developed self-esteem from presenting as experts on a genre
- See reading as a positive community pursuit
- Have become part of a reading community that is reciprocal and interactive.



**Staff:**

- Have enhanced their knowledge of children's literature by sharing knowledge of genres with children, parents and other schools
- Have a stronger partnership with the library service
- Have made stronger links with parents and families through books
- Have become part of a reading community that is reciprocal and interactive.

**Parents/carers/families:**

- Have had an opportunity to attend quality author/storyteller performances
- Have stronger and more positive reading links with schools
- Have an in-depth understanding of their important role in their child's reading journey
- Have become part of a reading community that is reciprocal and interactive.

**Rochdale Library:**

- Have had many more children and families making use of their service (they reported unprecedented demand on the day of the Festival – so much so that they had to call in an extra volunteer to handle taking new memberships)
- Have stronger links with schools in the community.

**The Town:**

- Has benefited from the positive publicity and the influx of visitors who came to Festival
- Has started to become a reading community that is reciprocal and interactive.

## **Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice**

The impact of the Festival, informed by the TaRs research on creating reciprocal and highly interactive reading communities, has been very considerable.

We now want to expand on our early success in widening staff, children's and parents' knowledge of authors within and across schools as we work to build a culture of reading in the community. Our next steps are to:

- ❖ Make the Festival an annual event
- ❖ Capitalise on the excitement generated by the Festival with book-related events throughout the year to sustain and support children's RfP
- ❖ Involve more schools in the process in order to develop RfP throughout the community.