

English Enrichment 2021 – Bookfest: A Celebration of Reading, Language and Creativity

As part of our English Enrichment programme for 2021, our school was delighted to take part in Bookfest, offering children the opportunity to engage directly with some of the UK's most celebrated children's authors and poets. The sessions with Benjamin Zephaniah, Michael Rosen and Jonny Duddle provided rich cultural capital, promoted reading for pleasure, and supported key curriculum aims across all year groups.

Through these interactive sessions, pupils experienced literature brought vividly to life by the authors themselves, deepening their enthusiasm for storytelling, poetry and creative expression.

Benjamin Zephaniah – Rhythm, Voice and the Power of Poetry

Children greatly enjoyed their lively session with Benjamin Zephaniah, whose dynamic performance style captured pupils' attention from the very start. He demonstrated how poetry can be playful, political, musical and deeply personal, modelling the importance of voice, rhythm and identity in spoken word.

Pupils learned:

- how performance alters the meaning and mood of a poem
- how rhythm, repetition and intonation create powerful effects
- that poetry is for *everyone*, and belongs to all cultures and backgrounds

Children joined in with clapping rhythms, sound effects and call-and-response lines, building their confidence in oracy and performance. Many remarked afterwards how inspired they felt to “have a go” at writing their own poems in Benjamin Zephaniah's energetic style.

Michael Rosen – Language Play, Storytelling and Laugh-Out-Loud Engagement

Our session with Michael Rosen was a highlight for both pupils and staff. His trademark humour, facial expressions and imaginative storytelling transported pupils into the world of playful language.

During the session, children explored:

- how everyday experiences can spark stories
- the role of rhythm, repetition and sound in performance poetry
- language play through nonsense words, silly voices and exaggerated actions

Michael Rosen demonstrated extracts from some of his well-known poems, prompting children to join in with actions, chanting and improvisation. His session strongly supported:

- vocabulary development
- creative writing
- speaking and listening skills
- reading for pleasure

Children left his session energised and eager to read more of his work—and to invent their own funny poems and characters.

Jonny Duddle – Illustration, Character Creation and World-Building

The session with Jonny Duddle, author and illustrator of *The Pirate Cruncher*, *The Pirates Next Door*, and *The Jolley-Rogers* series and the creator of Dobby! He provided a wonderful opportunity for pupils to explore the relationship between words and pictures.

He shared:

- how a character can begin as a simple sketch
- how illustration supports storytelling
- ways to develop settings and atmosphere through visual details

Children joined in as Jonny demonstrated how to draw expressive characters (including Dobby!) step-by-step, encouraging pupils to experiment with:

- facial expressions
- body language
- imaginative creatures and pirate-themed ideas

The session aligned brilliantly with both the English and Art curricula, strengthening narrative understanding while developing drawing confidence. Pupils produced some highly creative characters of their own, many complete with backstories, pirate names and mischievous adventures.

The Impact of Bookfest on Our School Community

Our participation in Bookfest 2021 strengthened pupils' engagement with reading and writing in meaningful and memorable ways.

Across the school, we saw:

- increased motivation to read independently
- greater enthusiasm for poetry, storytelling and illustration
- improved confidence in performing and sharing creative work
- high-quality writing inspired by the authors' sessions
- valuable cultural capital through exposure to renowned literary figures

Children spoke positively about meeting “real authors” and understanding how books are created - from initial spark to finished product. Many were inspired to write more freely, experiment with poetic devices, and pursue their own creative interests.

The day was a wonderful enrichment opportunity, supporting our vision for a curriculum that celebrates literature, encourages creativity, and nurtures lifelong readers.

