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Orange Chatterbooks Newsletter

Number 24

Winter/Spring 2008



Here is the Winter/Spring edition of the Chatterbooks Newsletter – with lots more news from groups, and looking ahead to the National Year of Reading.

The next edition of the Chatterbooks newsletter will be June 2008. Please e mail items for potential inclusion asap and before Friday May 16th. They should go directly to Jerry Hurst at jerry.hurst@readingagency.org.uk. Thank you.

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Coming Up...

Orange Chatterbooks and the National Year of Reading 1. Reaching new audiences & sharing good practice

A REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

For the National Year of Reading we're thinking especially about the target audiences for the year, and how Chatterbooks can be a way of involving children and parents from these audiences, particularly

- Looked after children
- Black & minority ethnic communities
- Disabled children (and parents)
- Working class fathers , and young dads

To help you in your work with these groups we'd like to produce a Chatterbooks bank of information which would be tried and tested, sharing good practice across the network.

Please can you let us know if your library authority has used Chatterbooks to engage any of these target groups. We would like to know about:

- How you got started
- What worked best
- What didn't work
- Partners
- Promotion and recruitment
- Or are you currently making plans to involve any of these groups in your Chatterbooks work?

Please send details to patricia.sharkey@readingagency.org.uk and we'll give you a ring to discuss your project in detail.

Orange Chatterbooks and the National Year of Reading 2. Linking in your sessions with the NYR campaigns & monthly themes

We'll shortly be sending you a special Chatterpack with a calendar of ideas for your sessions throughout the National Year of Reading.

We've linked them in with the monthly themes for the year, looking especially at ways in which sessions could involve some of the NYR target audiences, such as looked after children, and dads.

The year gets under way in April with the first ever national 'join your library' campaign. . The campaign will be one of only two national campaigns supported by NYR so it is a unique opportunity for public libraries to exploit national media attention.

Key elements of the campaign are:

- An agreed national joining procedure
- A media campaign with a joining form in a national newspaper
- A two week radio campaign
- National 'welcome to your library' packs, one for adults and one for children, which highlight library reading offers and will complement services' own membership packs. In addition 250,000 copies of a NYR branded guide to children and young people's reading has been produced in partnership with A & C Black and will be distributed to you to give away free to new members.

Chatterbooks children can be great champions for this campaign. If every Chatterbooks member gets a friend to join the library that would mean over 6,000 more children enjoying the library!

Boys into Books!

Chatterbooks groups contribute to new DCSF booklist

Very many thanks to all the Chatterbooks groups who contributed to the DCSF **Boys Into Books 5-11 List**.

Library services are now ordering books from this list – Boys Into Books 5-11 is one of the government's National Year of Reading book gifting schemes, and will be launched in May/June. Watch this space!

New Chatterbooks online project area on new TRF!

www.theirreadingfutures.org.uk

LAUNCHING IN FEBRUARY

The TRF website for all library staff, with resources and eLearning materials to support libraries' work with young readers is launching in February with a brand new design. The new site takes the proven TRF model and enhances it with significantly improved usability, a completely new look and feel, restructured content that has been extended to include a range of new eLearning materials, greatly improved search, the ability for site visitors to submit their own content for inclusion on the site, discussion forums, and some member-only content and services.

The new TRF also hosts a number of microsites for major reading initiatives including the Summer Reading Challenge - and Chatterbooks!

Go to www.theirreadingfutures.org.uk/chatterbooks and you will find information about Chatterbooks, plus a Resources section, which is available only to library services signed up to Chatterbooks. To set up access to this you simply need to click on 'Register' from the TRF Home Page, follow the instructions to join TRF – remember to tick the box which says that your library service is signed up to Chatterbooks.

The TRF **Chatterbooks Resources** section currently includes recent Chatterpacks, session records and questionnaire templates, and the Chatterbooks Handbook – new version available soon!

We'd like to add lots more resources, case studies and news to this Chatterbooks microsite – and there is a Submit Content facility on the site which you can use to send us content. There will also be a special Chatterbooks Discussion space on the TRF Coffee Break discussion area for staff running groups to check out online with other groups, and share ideas and experiences.

N.B. Almost all the TRF site is open to all users – there are just small sections, like the Chatterbooks and HeadSpace Resources, which are available just to those library services who are signed up to these projects.

Ideas, successes and updates

Orange Chatterbooks, Winter 2008

READING LINKS IN BRISTOL

Marksbury Road Library Orange Chatterbooks have been looking at links between books and TV, movies and theatre. We have looked at a number of picture books, novels, graphics etc. such as:

Harry Potter, The Secret Garden, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, James and the Giant Peach, Tracey Beaker, Robin Hood, The Simpsons, The Sheep Pig (Babe) and Star Wars etc. I'm sure you get the picture.

We discussed:

- Had anyone read the book or seen it on TV or at the cinema?
- What came first – the book or the TV programme?
- Did we read it first, then watch on TV, or vice versa?
- Which did we think was best and why?
- What did the book do that TV didn't?
- What did TV do that the book didn't?

The discussions have been very animated – and there were some disagreements as to whether the book was better than the film or vice versa (*Charlie & the Chocolate Factory* springs to mind). Some children said they had seen a production at the theatre and one girl said that sometimes books can even be performed on ice!

For the session we prepared three different coloured sheets of sugar paper, titled:

'In the Red Corner – Books', 'In the Blue Corner – TV/Film' and 'In the Purple Corner – Both'.

We prepared a selection of cards (bearing pros and cons) that the children read out - and then decided which corner the card belonged in and stuck it on. Examples are... 'No adverts', 'Full of celebrities', 'Can borrow for free at the library', 'Gives you the chance to compare', 'Quicker to watch'. It got quite exciting towards the end to see which corner would win.

The session finished with each child taking a book that they hadn't read before, but had seen at the cinema or on TV, to report back at the next meeting.

Here are some of the children's comments:

- 'I think the books might just win it.'
- 'Some books are better as a film 'cause its easier to see what's going on.'
- 'I thought *Charlie & the Chocolate Factory* was OK as a film but parts of the book were missed out.'
- 'Books always come first - no book - no film!'
- 'They can turn a book into a play or put it on ice - not just TV and DVD.'
- 'Books are best.'

Hazel Lawrie

ROUND UP OF AN EXCITING YEAR AT HORNSEY ORANGE CHATTERBOOKS, HARINGEY

Summer Reading Challenge 2008

In September we had an exciting session when Jerry Hurst of The Reading Agency came to consult with the children over the illustration style for the 2008 Summer Reading Challenge. Nine of our regulars, ranging from 9 - 13 years old, met and were divided into three groups to discuss three potential design approaches.

They looked at the colours used, the images and the overall designs and then got together to discuss which might be the best approach.

The designs reflected the range of age groups taking up the Summer Reading Challenge and the children thought some aspects were *too* childish, *too* strange, *too* sophisticated. But they liked the humorous references and said that younger and older children would understand them. There was written, verbal, and a lot of non-verbal communication throughout the session and ultimately votes were cast in a secret ballot to ensure that everyone had their say. The children all had an enjoyable time.

Science Session

In November we had a visit from a scientist! Caitlin Watson from the Institute of Physics came and had a lively session on how scientists are portrayed in fiction and how accurate the science is in books. The children read E.L. Young's *Storm: the Infinity Code* and wanted to know about Black Holes.

Caitlin explained 'spaghettification' and how a body would stretch due to the radiation pull inside the Black Hole. You **do** learn something new everyday! Why not check out the website: www.iop.org.

Author Visit

In December Graham Marks came to talk about his new book *Kai-Ro*. The hour session seemed to rush by as we were all transported back to ancient Egyptian mythology and forward to a time where Stretch's father is abducted and forced to labour on Nero Thompson's sites (where a new city is being built).

The children were interested in the sources of information that Graham used – a visit to the City of the Dead inspired him (as not many people are allowed to go there), he took lots of photographs, used the internet and various newspapers as well.

He told us that the battle scenes were quite difficult to write about, but he used his imagination to construct them.

Many Thanks to Jerry Hurst, Caitlin Watson and Graham Marks for taking the time to come and talk to our Orange Chatterbooks reading group.

Some of our favourite reads of 2007...

David Almond. *My Dad's a Birdman*

'Its written and illustrated in a child-like way, but is more adult in content. Overall, I liked it although it was a bit disconcerting at times'. Alex (10)

Terrance Blacker. *Parentswap*

'I liked the way the ruthless behaviour of the producer was portrayed and how dysfunctional his family were'. Kate (10)

Betty G. Birnie. *Friendship according to Humphrey*

'When the class were taking tests and Humphrey copied them by writing in his journal'. Funmi (10)

Stephen Davies. *Yellowcake Conspiracy*

'Although I found the plot a little hard to follow, it had some great ideas. The characters were funny but not unrealistically'. Alex (12)

Anthony McGowan. *Hellbent*

'Really funny'. Chris (10)

Anthony McGowan. *Henry Tumour*

'This is the most amazingly funny second novel that I have ever read... much better than any sequels on TV'. Chris (10)

Cliff McNish. *Angel*

'I found this a bit boring in places for someone who doesn't go to school' Lou (13), home educated.

Rodman Philbrick. *Freak the Mighty*

'I'd recommend this to anyone who likes sad stories with funny endings'. Thomas (11).

Mary Anne Rodman. *Yankie Girl*

'I found the way that black people were treated in 1960s Southern America terrible'

Kate. (12)

Paul Stewart. *Barnaby Grimes*

'Its about werewolves!'

Tenn. (11)

Sean Edwards

RICHARD & JUDY'S BEST KIDS' BOOKS TV PROGRAMME AT RICHMOND ORANGE CHATTERBOOKS

In August we were approached by Cactus TV who said they were looking for 'chatty, bright enthusiastic children' to take part in a special *Richard and Judy* programme aimed at getting young people reading.

The leaders of our six Orange Chatterbooks groups put forward names of children who might fit the bill and they met with the Cactus TV producer at Richmond Library in September. Five boys and five girls were selected to make up the *9+ Confident Reading Group*.

The group had just over two weeks to read three books each. The girls all read: *Sundae Girl* by Cathy Cassidy, *Skulduggery Pleasant* by Derek Landy and *Magyk* by Angie Sage. The boys all read: *Tunnels* by Roderick Gordon and Brian Williams, *The Killer Underpants* by Michael Lawrence and *H.I.V.E.: Higher Institute of Villainous Education* by Mark Walden. The *9+ Confident Group* was filmed on location in Twickenham Library, discussing the books they had read and voting on their favourite. Clips of this footage were shown on the final programme.

On Friday, 5 October, the group joined the audience at Cactus TV studios in London to watch other parts of the programme being recorded. After watching clips of the *9+ Confident Group*, Richard and Judy chatted with Mia and Matilda about which book won the girls' overall vote, and to Alex and Ryan about the boys' choice.

Three further children – ardent fans of favourite children's authors Jacqueline Wilson and Anthony Horowitz – were invited to be part of the special studio audience during Richard & Judy's interviews with them. Nine year old Amy from Twickenham asked Jacqueline Wilson what she would have liked to have done if she hadn't become an author; Tom aged 8 from Richmond asked Anthony Horowitz what sorts of books he read as a boy; and ten year old James from Richmond asked Anthony Horowitz what the difference was between writing for children and writing for adults.

Collection Development Librarian Terri McCargar accompanied the group to the studio along with three mum-chaperones. She said of the experience,

'Unlike a school group, our Richmond upon Thames group was made up from kids who use libraries across the borough. Fortunately, they all share a great enthusiasm for reading and for talking about books. The whole experience was a huge adventure, especially the day at Cactus TV. Between filming segments in the studio, the children spent time in the green room, along with dozens of children of different ages from all over the country. There was a children's entertainer on hand to keep them from getting bored, snacks and drinks to keep up their energy and, at one time, Philip Pullman and Jacqueline Wilson sat at opposite ends of the room, each with a long queue of kids waiting to meet them and have their books signed. It was a real treat, something they'll remember for the rest of their lives. And it was a real treat for me as a children's librarian to see children's books getting such star treatment.'



Here is Richard Madeley with Terri and James and Omar from the Richmond Orange Chatterbooks group.

*Richard and Judy's Best Kids Books programme went out on Thursday 25 October and it was very exciting to see our children talking so enthusiastically and ably about the books they had read. That however, was not the end of the experience! We were asked to invite a few of the children to the launch of the *Richard and Judy Children's Book Club* and road show at Penguin Books on Tuesday 23rd October for a photo opportunity with most of the authors of the books on the long list! We invited four of the children who had been less involved in the filming and they had a wonderful time at the Penguin tenth floor offices overlooking London. They had plenty of opportunity to mingle and chat with the authors which they did as if this was something they did every day! They were also able to take home armfuls of books signed by the authors. Another very memorable occasion for us all.*

For further details of Richard & Judy's Children's Books, visit <http://www.richardandjudybookclub.co.uk/childrens>

Liz Windaybank

'I'M A STORYTELLER GET ME OUT OF HERE'... WOLVERHAMPTON ORANGE CHATTERBOOKS

In 2005 we had three Orange Chatterbooks groups in Wolverhampton, with a membership of thirty-two. Now we have nine groups with a membership of ninety-five.

Over the last four years, as well as discussing books and taking part in related activities, we have had visits from authors and workshops run by local writers.

Book Selection

All groups are now involved in book selection for their library. From a selection of approvals from Peters, the group members choose books suitable for a wide age group, from picture books to non-fiction and leisure reading. In 2006 a competition was held to design a Chatterbooks bookplate, to be put inside all books chosen by the children.

I'm a Storyteller get Me Out of Here

In 2007 we wanted to try to bring some of the groups together for a special event. After discussion with local author / dramatist / storyteller John Edgar, the 'I'm a Storyteller Get Me Out of Here' project was born. Four of the groups worked with John during three workshops to produce stories and poetry for a performance.

Each group took a different theme - *Ashmore Park* chose fairy stories with a twist, *Bilston* chose ghost stories, *Central Children's Library* chose a new look at Greek myths and *Oxley* chose monsters. The emphasis was on making their stories and poems work as a performance.

All four groups came together at a local secondary school which specialises in the performing arts, so they had a 'real' theatre to perform in. They worked hard from 10.00am until 2.30pm, practising putting expression into their work and John made sure they could all project their voices to the back of the theatre.

The children performed to an audience of forty friends and family members and each child was presented with a recording of their work on CD. Hopefully a recording of 'I'm a Storyteller Get Me Out of Here' will be available shortly on the Wolverhampton Council website.

The parents had all signed consent forms and brought and picked up their children. Each group had their Branch Librarian with them. Any concerns about being in charge of twenty-five children for the day in strange surroundings proved groundless... they were great and we all had a good time!

Evaluation of 'I'm a Storyteller Get Me Out of Here'

21 of the 25 children completed a survey, which reflected the **MLA Generic Learning Outcomes**.

20 said they enjoyed the project. One child held a neutral position!

17 said they felt more able to stand up and read in front of an audience since taking part in the project.

18 said they felt more confident in general after taking part in the project.

17 said they enjoyed being part of a group more since taking part in the project.

18 said they felt more inspired to write their own poetry and stories since taking part in the project.

Here are some of the children's comments:

- 'I enjoyed the experience of reading aloud and I enjoyed working with people such as John. I have also discovered a new passion for reading.'
- 'I thought it was really fun and enjoyable and I feel a lot better at writing poems and stories and I'm not as nervous as I used to be!'
- 'I think that it was a bit daunting that we had to practise so much but after we'd done it we had something to be proud of.'
- 'If I was questioned, I would give my view that the group is brilliant in all ways. I've gained reading and writing confidence.'
- 'It was an exciting experience, I got to do one of my favourite subjects in school. It helped me as well to go up to an audience.'
- 'I thought it was brilliant and it has encouraged me to write stories more.'
- 'I really enjoyed doing this because John was funny, I made good friends and I liked creating and performing my story. I loved how you got a CD to take home. Please can we do it again?'

The vast majority of the children found the project inspirational; their confidence both in general and in performing in front of an audience and their enjoyment in working in a group

increased. John inspired the children to be at their most creative, encouraged them to work together, made them laugh a lot but kept them focused and in order! Thanks to him and all library staff involved - and of course the children for a most enjoyable and successful project.

Marion Cockin

Orange Chatterbooks members run the rule over the illustration style and book stocks stock for *Team Read*, this year's Summer Reading Challenge

Orange Chatterbooks members in Bournemouth, Cambridgeshire, Haringey, Richmond upon Thames and Westminster recently contributed their ideas on the name and illustration style for this year's Summer Reading Challenge promotion.

Orange Chatterbooks members in Hammersmith, Hertfordshire and Hull checked out the selection of books for the promotional dumpbins. The books had been pre-selected by a panel of children's librarians and book consultants, but as always, we felt that it is really important to ensure that children have had the opportunity to comment on, endorse or criticise the selection.... or to veto individual selections!

Many thanks all the children and library staff involved in our advisory teams. *Jerry Hurst*

Agreeing ground rules at our Orange Chatterbooks Groups

Some Orange Chatterbooks groups have been thinking about their approach to the setting of ground rules. We will soon be updating the Chatterbooks Handbook with some guidance on this. If you have a successful and positive approach to share with the Chatterbooks community, please e mail it to: patricia.sharkey@readingagency.org.uk

In the meantime we have put together a short checklist which you can refer to on the TRF website - remember there is now a Chatterbooks microsite in the Best Practice Centre of the TRF site. www.theirreadingfutures.org.uk/chatterbooks

Chatterbooks Training Day

The next Chatterbooks training day, for library staff new to running Chatterbooks, or wanting a refresher, will be on Tuesday 24th June 2008 at a London venue. The cost will be £185 per delegate. To book places, or for more information please contact jenny.warner@readingagency.org.uk.

Coming up...

March 6th World Book Day www.worldbookday.com

April 18th CILIP Carnegie/Kate Greenaway Shortlists announced

April 25th launch of National Year of Reading national Library Membership Campaign

Your Orange Chatterbooks co-ordinators

Your Orange Chatterbooks co-ordinators are:

Patricia Sharkey patricia.sharkey@readingagency.org.uk

and

Tricia Kings tricia.kings@readingagency.org.uk

The next edition of the Orange Chatterbooks newsletter

We'd love to hear from you about your Orange Chatterbooks groups. Please let us have your ideas and successes so that we can share them with others through the Orange Chatterbooks newsletter.

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