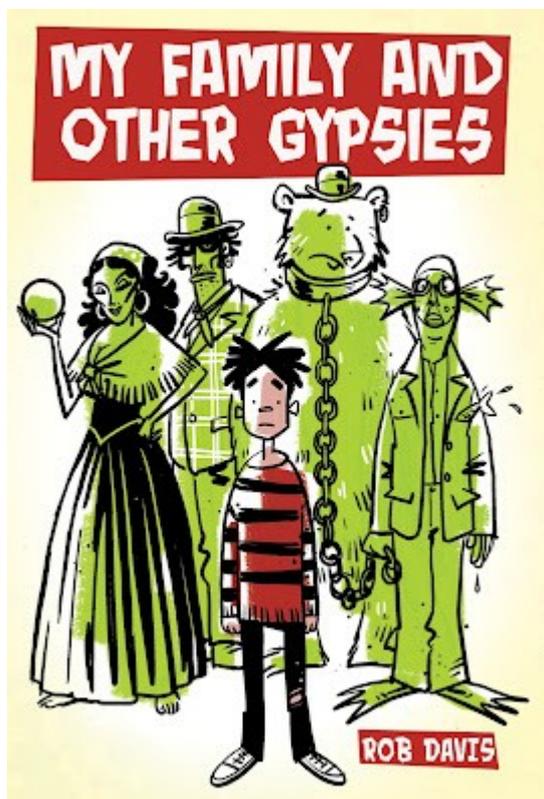




Welcome to the February edition of Teen Librarian Monthly! This month we kick off with a look at a short comic on Russian Gypsies and the many myths that have grown up around them, although this was written for the Russian market it could be useful as an educational tool in the UK as there are still people who view Gypsies with fear and suspicion.

TLM also host's a guest article by super-talented School Librarian Nicky Adkins on her Nerdfighters group (including what Nerdfighters are, where they come from and what they do). Following on from that we take a quick look at a new open source ebook creation program called Booktype. Finally notification for those of you who may not already be aware of the Speak up for Libraries rally on the 13th March.

Finally this month's Eight Questions With... interview is with Jane Prowse, author of the *Hattori Hachi* series



My Family and Other Gypsies is the end result of Rob Davis' trip to Russia last

October. He was invited by the Respect project to talk about comics, listen to, and take part in, discussions on human rights and the problems in Russia, then make a comic for Russian kids that might help.

Attitudes to gypsies in Russia are pretty horrible, and share some similarities with attitudes here. As part of the project he met with a local gypsy community leader, Yan, they got on remarkably well. This story is a mix of his experiences, stories he picked up and observations of prejudice in Russia.

<http://bit.ly/yftwyC>

Nerdfighters!

There's a handful of them in every year group. The ones who are called boffins, nerds. The geeks and the shy, who just plain don't find their place. But put them all together, give them somewhere to be who they are, and something amazing happens. They become, NERDFIGHTERS! In the same way that Freedom Fighters fight for freedom, Nerdfighters fight for nerds. Nerdfighters are just like normal people, but instead of blood and cells, they're made up entirely of awesome.

The idea of Nerdfighters came to be in 2007, when YA author John Green and his brother, environmentalist Hank, launched Brotherhood 2.0, a vlogging project where they swore to communicate without the written word for a year, saying goodbye to their usual quick fire emails and texts. The name came from an arcade game, but quickly became something more important to their viewers around the world. A salute and a bundle of in jokes later, and there is a world-wide joining of the nerds, the geeks, the quiet geniuses and those who would, without it, be drifting. What this group provides is a focus, and a community which encourages intelligence and action. The quest is to reduce world suck levels and increase the levels of awesome across the globe. Creative projects, charity work

including the annual Project for Awesome and an open, interested response to the world and its problems pull together an eclectic, and in our case, very noisy group of people!

It was during Carnegie Shadowing in 2010 that I realised that the group of students who were here every week, picking up books, winning Maths challenges, learning the uncool instruments in the orchestra and designing new, theoretical energy sources to solve the world's energy problems, were already Nerdfighters. So when the winner had been chosen (wooo Neil Gaiman!) and the group was getting ready to disband and return to their corners, I suggested establishing a Nerdfighter community in the school. The idea was met with much enthusiasm and the stamping of feet, and behold, the RPS Nerdfighters were born, meeting every Wednesday lunchtime and planning, working, carrying out random acts of kindness across the campus. I must admit though, all I did was give them the name that they united under. These are the students who had taken up residence like barnacles in the library anyway.

People ask me what they do, and I have to shrug. They do everything. Project Rollercoaster led to some amazing research projects, looking at the detailed physics of roller coasters, the psychology of those who love them, the physical aspects of a ride, as well as their design and social appeal. Students in Years 7 to 9 worked from A level text books, drawing out information relevant to their projects before producing breathtaking final pieces that were presented to staff and parents one afternoon. We're off to Alton Towers next term to see their research in action. Project 2 involves the writing and filming of their own Dr Who episodes (I can't wait to see them!) There's a song and a music video. Their current project, Project Brains, focuses on the (inevitable) zombie apocalypse. What would they do? How do you rebuild a society? What do you really need? They're producing reports, films, stories. There's also a strong backbone of creative fundraising: knitting and crafting to raise money to get their favourite author to pay them a visit. But ask them to sum up Nerdfighters in one word and they'll pause for a moment

then reply in unison. Cake. So far they have managed to create an excuse for cake at least once a fortnight for anything; celebrating Christmas, birthdays, the second to last week of term (no, really) and the publication of books they've been excited about.

The Nerdfighter community is varied, inclusive and has forged ties between students in different year groups who would never have otherwise met and discovered that they all love the same things. They've come to celebrate their geekiness and be proud of it, finding the strength in numbers to nod proudly if scorned for knowing the equation for photosynthesis. Where else in the school can students sit and shout at each other about quantum physics? And where do students like this want to be? Yep. The library.

DFTBA.

(Don't Forget To Be Awesome)



*Some of the RPS Nerdfighters demonstrate the salute and celebrate the release of John Green's new novel, *The Fault in Our Stars*. With cake.*

Booktype

Booktype is a free, open source platform that produces books formatted for print, Amazon, iBooks and almost any ereader within minutes. You can create books on your own or with others via an easy-to-use web interface. Build a community around your content with social tools and use the reach of mobile, tablet and ebook technology to engage new audiences.

<http://www.sourcefabric.org/en/booktype>



Public library services and staff are under threat from cuts and closures on a massive scale. Campaigners are asked to join in and to Speak Up For Libraries – both now and in the future.

We need action now to safeguard the future of the public library service as a whole.

During the lobby of Parliament, local library users, campaigners and staff will be needed to help highlight the importance of libraries in providing access to learning, information and knowledge and as a vital lifeline for many communities.

- Come and attend the rally and hear high profile speakers, entertainment and films all telling the same story – libraries are a valued and vital resource.
- Visit the 'pop up' library and see for yourself the many faces of a modern library.
- Arrange to meet with your MP and tell them now is the time to act to protect libraries.

The rally will take place from 11.30am at Central Hall Westminster, Storey's Gate, Westminster, London SW1H 9NH on the 13th March.

<http://www.speakupforlibraries.org>



Join Book Aid International on **March 1st** and celebrate World Book Day by fund-raising in your local library.

There are lots of ways you can get involved – why not hold a bake for books day and sell your cakes for a donation to Book Aid International!

You can download our delicious cake recipes here: [Banana bread](#), [brownies](#), [chocolate biscuits](#), [fairy cakes](#), [gingerbread book characters](#), [lemon cake](#) and [rice crispy cakes](#).

We also have lots of tips on how to organise your own [book sale](#) – it's simple and fun and a great way to help raise money!

You could even hold a fines amnesty where all library fines collected on the day are donated to Book Aid International.

Download their library [World Book Day poster](#) to display in the entrance hall or front desk.

Edited by: Matthew Imrie
Nerdfighters article written by Nicky Adkins

Special thanks go to Jane Prowse for answering the Eight Questions With... interview

All submissions of articles, reviews & ideas are welcome and can be sent to teenlibraryservice@gmail.com

Subscribing to Teen Librarian Monthly is free just send an e-mail to: teenlibraryservice@gmail.com

Eight Questions With... Jane Prowse

Q1 What influenced your decision to write for Teenagers?

Directing a lot of TV children's drama - The Greatest Store in the World, Living It, The Fugitives. I always love youthful energy and at heart, I'm still a teenager myself! Teens are so much more open to big ideas, to action and adventure and when I got the idea for the Hattori Hachi series, it felt right to put a 15 year old girl in the lead.

Q2 How do you get into the heads of your characters?

I look at the story from their point of view - especially the villains, but even the minor roles. What do they want from life and the situation I'm writing about? What drives them, what are their weaknesses? You have to be able to find the truth in every character and to hear their voice. When I started out, I think I was cautious about writing truly bad characters, for fear it will reflect badly on me - that I could have those thoughts and create such monsters. But I got over that pretty quickly and now I love writing characters who don't think like me! It's a real liberation to be able to say and do anything at all - however mean, nasty or downright stupid it might be.

Q3 Do you know instinctively what will appeal to Teens or is it more a hit or miss process?

Teens are no different from anyone else. We all want gripping stories, great characters and satisfying resolutions. I write about what fascinates me - how to live, how to deal with the anxieties of everyday life, about love, death and anything else that's bothering me at the time. My experience is that Teens are as fascinated by these big questions as adults - even young children identify with Hattori Hachi having a meltdown because she doesn't think she can do what's expected of her in the quest to save her mum. Don't talk down to your audience is my advice - whatever their age. Write about real feelings, even if the stories are heightened or magical. Write about

what's interesting to you and then hopefully, you'll make it interesting to other people.

Q4 What is the most satisfying part of the writing process for you?

Feedback. When someone says something I've written has meant something or spoken to them. I believe people essentially want to communicate, to share experiences, so when I feel I've succeeded in communication something to a stranger, or even someone I know, then that's about the most fulfilling moment in the process. Although lying on the sofa with a cat purring on my chest while I think up ideas is pretty satisfying too... Oh, and of course, typing *The End*.

Q5 Do you ever read the works of other Teen/YA authors? If yes what can you recommend?

Oh yes, I read everything I can lay my hands on! My all time favourite book which usually gets a groan when I do school visits because it's on the curriculum (don't let that put you off!) is Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird*. It's a brilliant piece of work on all levels - engaging, funny, frightening, sad and profoundly moral. Recently, I've loved Robert Muchamore's *Cherub* books. I'm also a big fan of anything my Alex Shearer as I directed an adaptation of his wonderful Christmas story *The Greatest Store In The World*. I always love the classic Fairy Tales by the Brothers Grimm and one other must-read recommendation is Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*. It's one of the best examples ever of putting the reader into someone else's head and taking them on an incredibly gripping and deeply personal journey.

Q6 Are any of your novels based on personal experiences?

I've only written the Hattori Hachi stories as novels - now on my third. The rest of my writing has been for television drama or theatre. Although I'm always expanding the

list of subject I write about with detailed research, there's always a huge amount of me in any project. So even though Hattori Hachi has to train to be great ninja warrior, to become a master disguise, invisibility, hand to hand combat and fighting with swords, daggers and anything she can lay her hands on (none of which I've managed to master yet!), when I sit down to write Hattori doing it, it's me there, acting out a life of wish fulfilment, discovering the struggles involved, the joy of victory and the crushing misery of failure. I take events that upset me - terrorism for example - and find a way to vent my feelings in an entertaining and hopefully engaging way. In the *Hattori Hachi* books the Katakai are the terrorists, threatening everyone's stability, lives and happiness. But Hattori Hachi has to go through the same kind of mental processes to come to terms with evil and destructive behaviour as I do. The issues I grapple with every day, as I watch the news or travel on the underground, are represented in my books - but in a much more allegorical way.

Q7 Are you working on anything new at the moment or do you have anything planned?

Book 3 of Hattori Hachi: *Curse of the Diamond Daggers!* It's the final part of the first trilogy and I went to Japan for a week to research it. I had a great time and can't wait to share Hattori Hachi's adventures with my readers. That's my first priority, but I have many other ideas in development, both as books and for television. But first I have my own adventure to experience. I'm heading off to the Antarctic later today, so had better go and pack! You can follow my author's log on the Unbound website - www.unbound.co.uk/books/hattori-hachi/posts/95 where I will be reporting on glaciers, midnight sun, whales and hopefully thousands of penguins!

Q8 Do you ever do Library visits to Teen Reading Groups? If yes, what is the best way to get into contact with you or your agent about it?

Yes, I love doing any kind of visit. I've been to schools and libraries all over the country and it's some of the best fun I've had with

the books. I have some ninja outfits and some tools and weapons if anyone ever wants to get dressed up and have a go themselves with a (rubber because it's safer) throwing star. I did try to get some ninja climbing claws and ordered them from the States - but customs seized them and rang me to ask why I was trying to import terrorist weapons! Groups can organise a visit from me by pledging through the Unbound website -

<http://www.unbound.co.uk/books/hattori-hachi>

Or contact Caitlin Harvey at Unbound - caitlin@unbound.co.uk

Or through 'contact me' at the Hattori Hachi website - contactme@hattorihachi.com

Do check out the website - www.hattorihachi.com