



Once again you hold an edition of teen Librarian Monthly in your hands – or you are reading it on the screen which I have found troublesome with having to scroll up and down but that is just me.

This month we look at The Children's Reading Fund which is aimed at disadvantaged children between the ages of 4 and 11.

Then I go in to a quick introduction to the Teen Librarian Calendar – something I have wanted to do for ages. Following on from that are three events happening this week that can be tied in to libraries – World Goth Day, Towel day and Geek Pride Day. Four events if you also add in the Glorious 25th of May which celebrates the Ankh-Morpork revolution detailed in Terry Pratchett's Discworld book *Night Watch*, it is also known as Wear the Lilac Day and used to heighten awareness of Alzheimer's Disease and support research into finding a cure.

I also offer a link to the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) Teen Library Space Guidelines for those of you wishing to improve your teen spaces. There is also news on children's reading habits and a link to 50 great (free) educational tools for use in the classroom and library.

The Eight Questions With... interview this month is with Ian Johnstone, author of the soon to be published *The Bell Between Worlds*.

The Children's Reading Fund

This year the Booktrust launched the Children's Reading Fund, which is all about improving the life chances for disadvantaged children in the UK. Specifically targeting children aged between 4 and 11, the new fund will use books and e-books, CDs, games and performance to inspire children to engage more with reading and writing and thus to change their own story.

In 2013, with your help, the power of stories and reading can be used to unlock the potential of the UK's most disadvantaged children.

Studies have proved that:

A child in care is more likely to go to prison than university

The average deaf teenager leaves school with a reading age of nine

Almost half of disadvantaged children gain nothing above a D grade at GCSE

Support the Children's Reading Fund because everyone has the right to read – and the best way to get teenagers reading is to instil a love of books, libraries and reading at the earliest age possible!

Find out more here: <http://bit.ly/118Ytud>

Teen Librarian Calendar

I have created the Teen Librarian calendar to highlight various dates throughout the year that may appeal to teens and young adults. It is a mix of serious and fun events that should hopefully appeal to a variety of library users and readers.

It is a work in progress and new dates will be added on an on-going basis. Please feel free to suggest future dates

<http://bit.ly/16RuI3a>

World Goth Day 22nd May

Goth Day is exactly what you might expect - a day where the goth scene gets to celebrate its own being, and an opportunity to make its presence known to the rest of the world. It all started off as 'Goth Day' just in the UK back in 2009, but the following year it was decided to push the idea across the globe.

People in the goth scene are usually well read, some may even have been seduced by the dark side through reading authors such as Anne Rice, Poppy Z. Brite, Bram Stoker and others.

<http://www.worldgothday.com/>

Towel Day 25th May

A towel is about the most massively useful thing an interstellar hitchhiker can have. Partly it has great practical value. You can wrap it around you for warmth as you bound across the cold moons of Jaglan Beta; you can lie on it on the brilliant marble-sanded beaches of Santraginus V, inhaling the heady sea vapours; you can sleep under it beneath the stars which shine so redly on the desert world of Kakrafoon; use it to sail a miniraft down the slow heavy River Moth; wet it for use in hand-to-hand-combat; wrap it round your head to ward off noxious fumes or avoid the gaze of the Ravenous Bugblatter Beast of Traal (such a mind-bogglingly stupid animal, it assumes that if you can't see it, it can't see you); you can wave your towel in emergencies as a distress signal, and of course dry yourself off with it if it still seems to be clean enough.

If you celebrate Towel Day you can put out a display of Douglas Adams' works including the *Hitchhikers Guide* series, the *Meanings of Liff* books or *Dirk Gently* duology. You need not stick to his science fiction/satire or detective books you can also focus on endangered species and build a display around *Last Chance to See* the television series and book he co-authored with Mark Carwadine. It is also possible to tie in Eoin Colfer as he wrote *And Another thing...* the sequel to the Hitchhiker books.

Geek Pride Day 25th May

GPD originated in Spain in 2006 as "Día del Orgullo Friki" and spread around the world via the internet. It is an initiative to promote geek culture, celebrated annually on 25 May. The date was chosen as to commemorate the release of the first Star Wars film, A New Hope on 25 May 1977.

What is not part of Geek Culture these days? Games – tabletop, computer and live action role play (LARP). Computers hold a hackathon and look at alternative operating systems and free, open-source software. Reuse the display material from Star Wars Day you used earlier in the month on May the 4th. If you have a teen group or groups find out what their passions are and create a group-led celebration of geekiness.

YALSA Teen Space Guidelines

These guidelines were created in 2011 -2012 by a task force of the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) with feedback from the library community achieved through

a public comment period in the fall of 2011.

This is a tool for evaluating a public library's overall level of success in providing physical and virtual space dedicated to teens, aged 12-18. Potential users of these national guidelines include library administrators, library trustees, teen services librarians, community members and job-seekers hoping to assess a library's commitment to teen services. Not every element of the guidelines may apply to every public library situation, but the guidelines can serve as a place to begin the conversation about what constitutes excellent public library space for teens.

<http://bit.ly/LSoUqq>

Children's on-screen reading overtakes reading in print

For the first time children are reading more on computers and other electronic devices than they are reading books, magazines, newspapers and comics. This is potentially detrimental to children's reading levels as those who read daily only on-screen are much less likely to be good readers than those who read in print.

For the full story follow this link:

<http://bit.ly/11Guhlj>

50 Great Educational Tools

From Animoto to Zamzar you can find links to 50 great tools that can be used in education, libraries and also your home life. Some you may have heard of while others are new to you, but all are incredibly useful and easy to use.

<http://bit.ly/10jcVyy>

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Eight Questions with... Ian Johnstone

1. What influenced your decision to write for Teenagers?

I've wanted to write for young people ever since I was a young person, which now, sadly, was a long time ago... I suppose I've read quite a bit throughout my life but it was my reading in those earlier years that most often picked me up, threw me about and left me seeing the world differently. That's not to say that I haven't had many amazing reading experiences since then – I very emphatically have – but many of my top ten 'influential reads' would have been from that time. I think that's partly because there is some brilliant writing for younger people – writing that is daring, challenging and wondrous in the truest sense of that word – but it's also, perhaps, because our minds at that age are as daring, challenging and wondrous as any writer can handle. That's why I find writing for Teenagers exciting and daunting in equal measure.

2. How do you get into the heads of your characters?

At times I think that's one of the most difficult things to do. Characters are very unforgiving – if part of my brain is thinking too much about the next scene or pace or language, my characters have a way of making me pay. It comes when I read the scene back to myself and they refuse to be genuine, or they speak with a muted voice, or they upstage everyone else in the room. So I suppose one way I get into the heads of my characters is to be very attentive to them – I make entirely sure that I'm not being distracted by other things, at least until the focus of the scene has moved on a little. I try very hard to see through their eyes, listen with their ears and speak with their voice. When I find that difficult I often play back through my mind everything I know about the character and particularly any relevant experiences. If there are none, I make some up: even if they don't then appear in the book, those experiences give me pointers as to how the character might perceive or react. And finally, I do plenty of that reading back I mentioned earlier, to make sure that the character sounds true. As I say, if I haven't done my character justice, they have a way of lodging a complaint!

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

I seem to have a couple of answers to this one! Obviously no writer can say that they know how to appeal to Teens as a general group because the Teen readership is so diverse and demanding. In my case I would hope that any appeal I have is the result of my own close memories of reading at that age and also, the very substantial part of me that is still that age! In that sense my writing *is* instinctive, because it comes from my sense of what I first found strident, new and exciting and as I still find that kind of writing wonderful today, I am my own barometer. My second answer is really the same one but looking at it slightly differently. The Teen readership as very sophisticated, with the same appetite as the adult market for great story, character, narrative and thinking. The only thing that adults have over teens is experience of reading and of life, and I suspect that experience gives rise to the main differences between the two kinds of literature. Even then, whether we like it or not, with kids growing up so quickly these days, those differences have diminished. So, my feeling is that I should just write the best book I can write and that's what I concentrate on doing. Only very rarely do I find myself questioning the appeal of what I am writing to that specific agegroup.

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

Finishing! No, I'm only joking. Though I must say that one of the most satisfying parts is showing something you feel might be quite good once it is finished. It's so exciting, and such a privilege, to see someone lost in something I have written and to have a conversation about it afterwards. In terms of the writing itself, I find it a real treat to write a sequence that has its own beginning, middle and end – what people sometimes call a "set piece" – particularly when that piece has mounting pace. Those sequences can be very exciting to read and are similarly exciting to write, not least because they have an intensity and coherence that you just can't achieve across an entire novel. Also, to refer back to something I said earlier, I think those pieces can pick you up, throw you about and transport you to somewhere entirely new in a

very short space of time, which can be a powerful experience. When it goes particularly well I can find myself writing those scenes almost in real time, imagining and writing as I go, almost breathlessly. Of course that means they normally need a good edit later! Such sequences are also rewarding because they are often pivotal, resolving or developing established tension in the story. In fact good example of that kind of scene in *The Bell Between Worlds* is the chime sequence, which couldn't be more pivotal to the book, and was great fun to write.

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

The truth is that I don't, not in the past few years. That isn't for lack of enthusiasm – quite the opposite – it's because I am wary of the writing and ideas of the many great authors out there influencing my own. I'm feeling less and less concerned about that as I get further through *The Mirror Chronicles*, so I hope to get back to some good Teen/YA writing soon. That said, I recently read *In Darkness*, an award-winning novel by my very own editor Nick Lake, which is the very powerful story of a young street gangster buried by the quake in Haiti. It's very moving, and insightful – I wouldn't hesitate to recommend it. In terms of other fantasy, I loved the visionary, dystopic *Mortal Engines* by Philip Reeve and, of course, Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*, which truly re-set the bar in terms of modern children's fantasy writing. I might also recommend some of the classics, because I read them first when I was younger and they have stayed just as vivid, fresh and true throughout my life. I was a particular fan of Jack London, and I still consider *White Fang* and *Call of the Wild* good friends. You may also spot in my writing a bit of a tribute to Charles Dickens, whose *Great Expectations*, *Bleak House* and *David Copperfield* changed how I viewed the world when I was a Teen/YA, and remain some of my favourite books today.

6. Are any of your novels based on personal experiences?

Sadly the bell between worlds hasn't rung for me yet and I'm rubbish at magic, but that's not to say that personal experience doesn't come into my writing – I think as far as

possible, it should. I say that because I think the fantastical creations of this genre are only made plausible by touches of reality. You might say that reality is the scaffold for the magic. What do I mean by that? Well, at the simplest level, if the reader can't believe and empathise with the main character then their experiences and therefore the whole story is built on sand. If the dialogue isn't fresh and genuine then something is lost. Equally I think the best fantastical phenomena, scenes and objects are somehow tangible and close, so I try my best to base such things on something accessible – I might for instance use a known piece of music to frame a scene, or an everyday object as the foundation for something weird and new. Thinking about it, I've always been most transported by stories that have their roots in the real world, because then I can truly place myself inside the story, not least because the main character (in my case, Syllas) sees with my eyes, reacts as I might, struggles to comprehend the things that are most surprising and alien to me. I think that is why stories like that, door-to-another-world stories, are often the most resonant and compelling, as is evidenced by the phenomenal success of the *Chronicles of Narnia*, the *Alice* books, *Harry Potter* and others. Even *The Lord of the Rings* starts in the Shire, which Tolkien based on his own rural England. That's why I felt strongly that I wanted to start here, in this world. In *The Bell Between Worlds* the central place is a crooked old terrace called Gablety Row, which is actually based on my upbringing around such places in Oxford and my time in Cambridge, particularly the row of houses I lived in in my first year, St Peter's Terrace.

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

I certainly am... deadlines, deadlines! I'm writing the latter part of book two of the trilogy, which I am enjoying very much and am very excited about. In many ways book two acts as the culmination of the central, challenging idea at the heart of the trilogy, so I have wanted to write it for a long time. Almost as soon as I finish that I will need to get started on book three, so the next eighteen months or so will be very busy. It would also be nice to do some additional writing to support the trilogy, which might be

made available in one digital form or another.
Watch this space.

8. Do you ever visit school or library groups? If yes, what is the best way to get into contact with you or your agent about it?

I would be delighted to do either if I possibly can. It's best to get in touch with my agent, Ben Illis: ben@the-bia.com