

Autumn Literacy News 2019

KELMSCOTT SCHOOL



Children's laureate Cressida Cowell: 'Books are better than films at teaching children creativity and intelligence'

The new children's laureate and *How to Train Your Dragon* author talks about how to get kids reading and why we need the space to make mistakes

By Alison Flood, The Guardian Newspaper 12th July 2019

In her books, she says, "the story is told in a get-you-through-the-story kind of way. These are clever mass-market books ... So they are visual, because kids are more visual nowadays, but they're not dumbed down, because kids are smart." What becomes clear is that Cowell writes not only for the joy of the stories, but because she is so passionate about getting children reading; she's already an ambassador for the National Literacy Trust and a trustee for World Book Day, and she fizzes with advice and energy. "Listen to your kid read in the morning before breakfast rather than making it a big fight," she advises. And, "it doesn't matter if they're reading picture books beyond the age they 'should' be. That's often the way in."

"There's so much competition for children's time and attention," Cowell says. "Part of the whole way I write has always been to get children reading." But writing for a young audience hasn't held her back. "I don't feel inhibited. What am I missing out on, in writing books for children? I'm writing about heroism, about love, about what kind of leader we deserve."

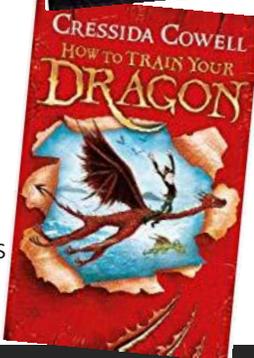
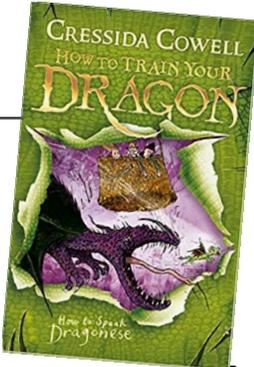
Film rights were acquired for the series in 2004, when she had just published the second book, but she "never thought they were going to make it, because they normally don't". When the first film was released in 2010, it brought an avalanche of new readers. "One of the big advantages of having your books turned into films is that you do reach children who don't necessarily get that books are great, and you pull them in. The books and the films have really helped create new readers, so that's what I hope will happen [with the laureateship], that I'll be able to reach kids who don't realise it's the *How to Train Your Dragon* lady."

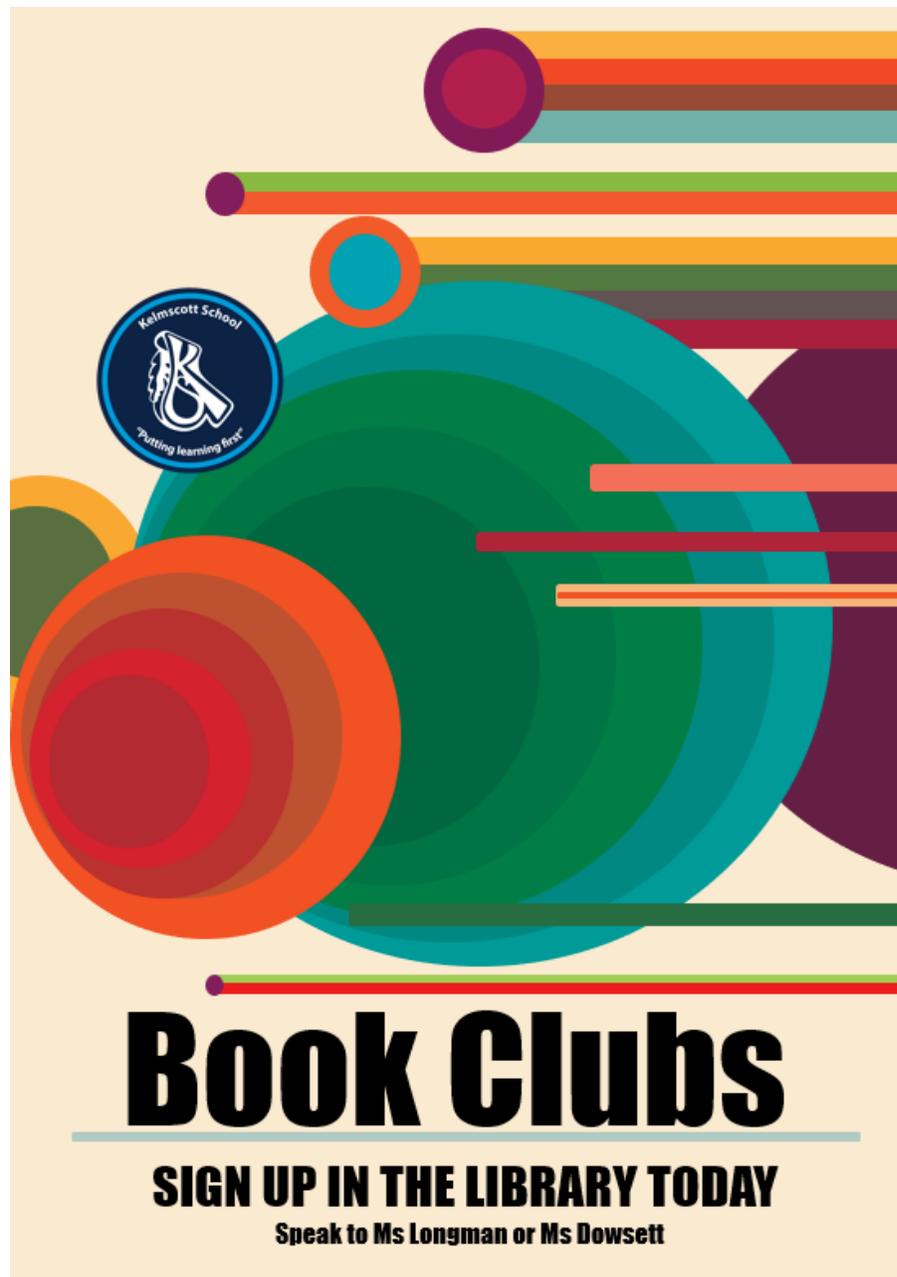
The two areas she will be focusing on as laureate are libraries and creativity. She will be campaigning for libraries to be statutory in every school, and for public libraries to be properly funded, as well as expanding her Freewriting Friday campaign, which she launched with the National Literacy Trust last year. This asks schools to give each child a blank book, and for 15 minutes every Friday they can write what they want and teachers can't mark it.

She shows me her own notebook from when she was eight; she's spelled her name Crissida, but there are pages and pages of writing and drawings of elves. "My lovely teacher allowed me to just do this and that's where I discovered the joys of writing, having some space where my spelling and my handwriting didn't matter," she says. "What I'm doing here may just feel like mucking about, but it ended up being something concrete that has turned into books being published, films being made."

As for libraries, they have for Cowell always been key. "If your parents can't afford books and your primary school doesn't have a library because they've been shutting over the last 10 years and you don't go to the public library, how do you become a reader? How is that supposed to happen? Nobody has been able to answer that question effectively for me. At the very least primary schools have to have libraries."

But most of all, she wants her laureateship "to be about joy". "I'm going to make my laureateship all about magic, about the magic of reading, of writing. As soon as it becomes something you've got to finish, it's a task," she says. "It's got to be joyful."

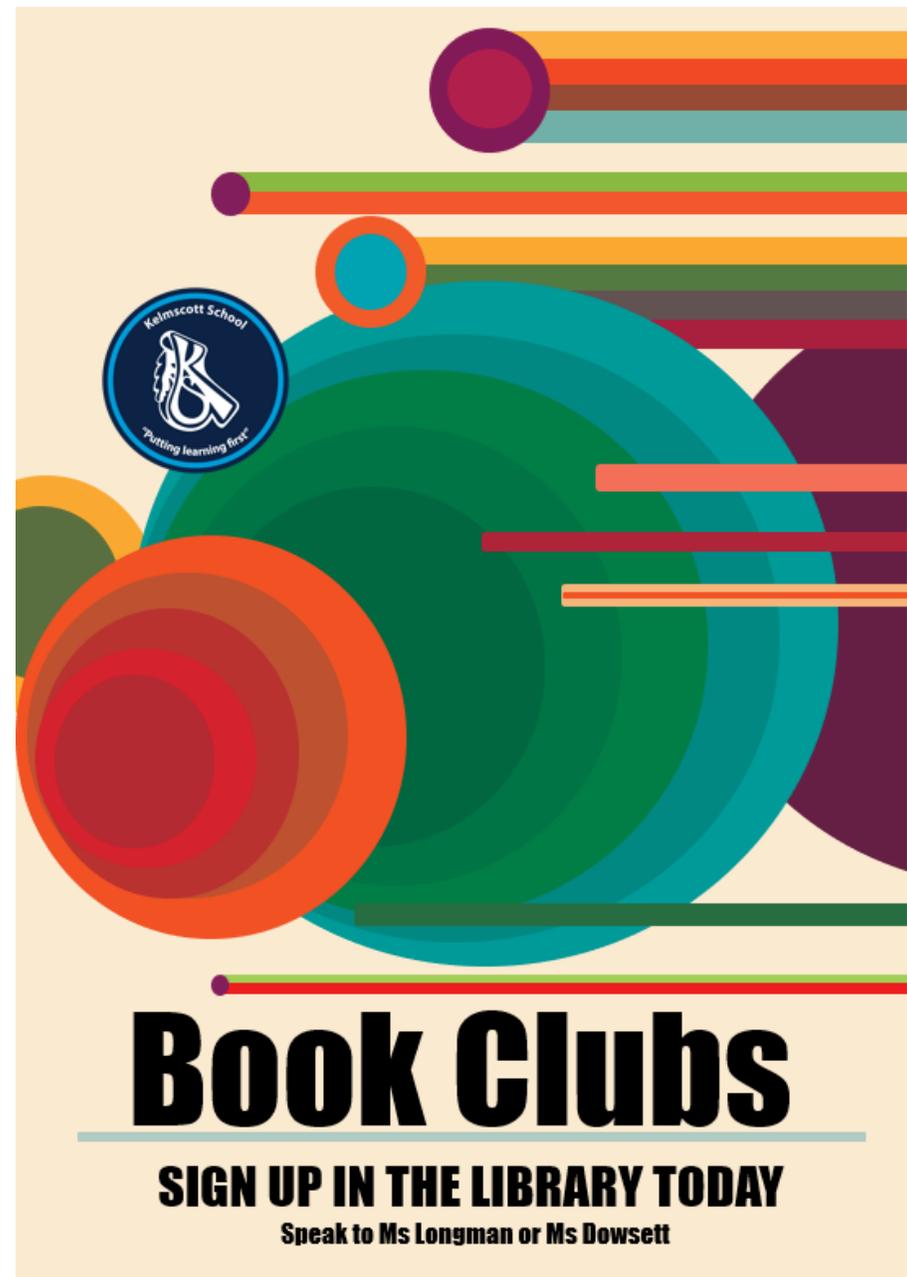




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Speak to Ms Longman or Ms Dowsett



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Educator publisher Pearson to phase out print textbooks

Source: BBC News 16th July 2019

The world's largest education publisher has taken the first step towards phasing out print books by making all its learning resources "digital first". Pearson said students would only be able to rent physical textbooks from now on, and they would be updated much less frequently.

The British firm hopes the move will make more students buy its e-textbooks which are updated continually.

"We are now over the digital tipping point," boss John Fallon told the BBC.

"Over half our annual revenues come from digital sales, so we've decided a little bit like in other industries like newspapers or music or in broadcast that it is time to flick the switch in how we primarily make and create our products."

How digital publishers are shaking up the book industry

The firm currently makes 20% of its revenues from US courseware, but has been struggling as students increasingly opt to rent second-hand print textbooks to save money. To counter this Mr Fallon said Pearson would stop revising print books every three years, a model that has dominated the industry for 40 years.

It means that next year the firm will only update 100 of its 1,500 titles in print - down from 500 in 2019. "There will still be [print] textbooks in use for many years to come but I think they will become a progressively smaller part of the learning experience," Mr Fallon said. "We learn by engaging and sharing with others, and a digital environment enables you to do that in a much more effective way."

Digital textbooks can be updated responsively and also incorporate videos and assessments that provide students with feedback.

However, many of Pearson's digital products are sold on a subscription basis, raising fears that authors will lose out in the way musicians have to music streaming services.

Mr Fallon denied this, saying the firm's plans would provide authors with "a more sustainable income over time". He added: "For the Netflix and Spotify generation, they expect to rent not own."

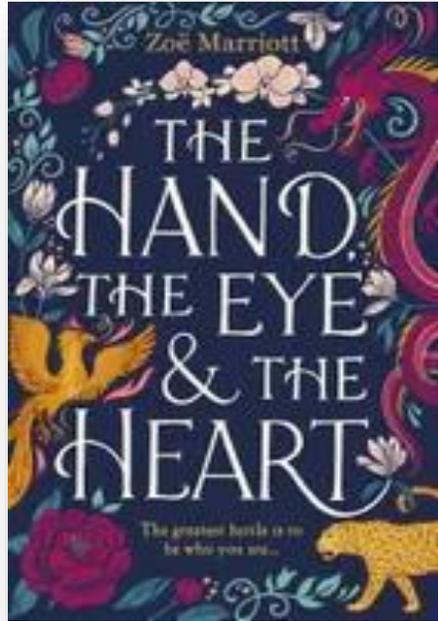
Pearson has been going through a painful turnaround after years of falling sales and profits, but appeared to have turned a corner in 2018.

Its underlying sales rose 2% in the first quarter of 2019, although the firm admitted revenue in its US business could fall by as much as 5% this year.

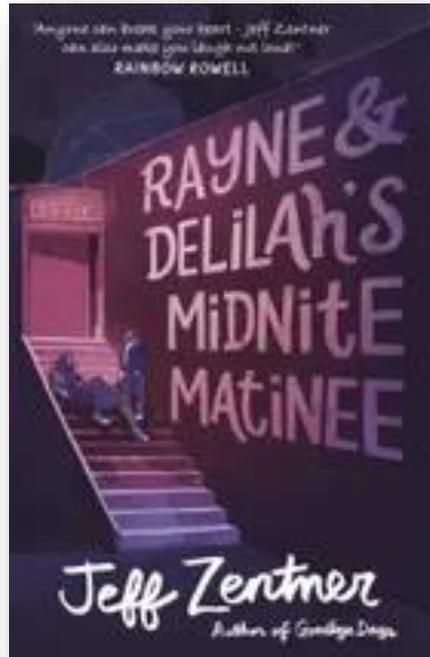
Mr Fallon said its plans for textbooks would begin in the US, but in time be extended to other markets including the UK.



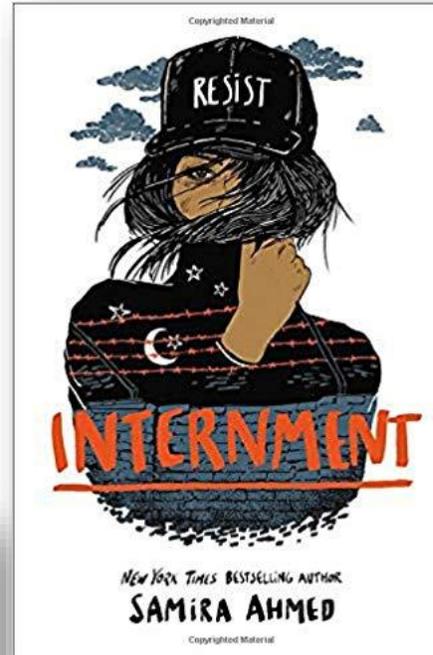
Reading Books of the Term



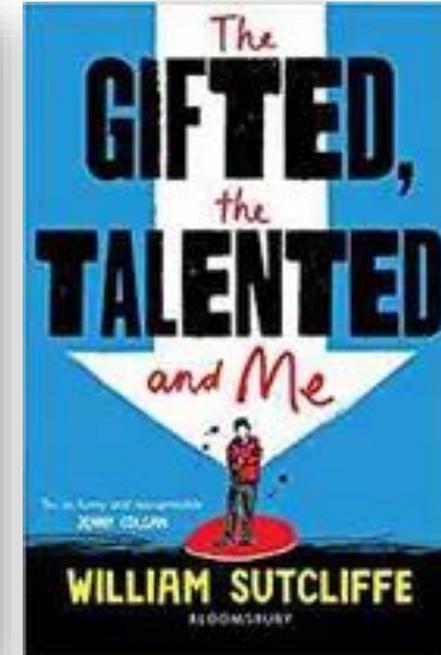
The Hand, The Eye and The Heart by Zoe Marriott. Zhilan was brought up as female, the daughter of a renowned general badly injured in his last battle. When he is called to war again, Zhilan uses magical qi and martial arts training to take his place, posing as his son, Zhi. Being Zhi, rather than Zhilan, soon feels more like reality than a disguise; but Zhi must navigate attraction to a fellow soldier, battlefield brutality, murderous intrigue and the attentions of a powerful general to survive. Inspired by the story of Mulan, Marriott explores ideas of gender and belonging in this fast-paced novel set in a fairytale China.



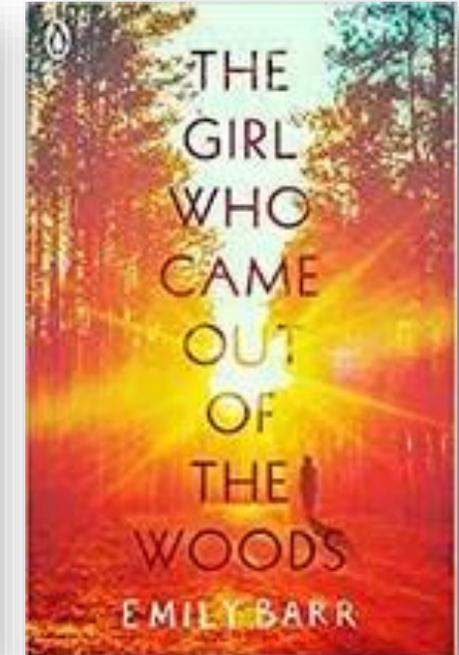
Rayne & Delilah's Midnite Matinee by Jeff Zentner. Every Friday night, Rayne Ravenscroft and Delilah Darkwood – AKA teen best friends Delia and Josie – present their public-access TV show dedicated to schlocky low-budget horror movies. Delia's dad, who left years ago and hasn't been heard from since, loved horror B-movies too, and the hope that he'll see it keeps her loyal to the show. Now Josie has been offered the chance to pursue a dream career – but that means leaving Delia behind again. Outrageously funny, with whip-smart, surreal dialogue, this tender portrait of friendship under the strain of inevitable change is an absolute must-read.



Internment by Samira Ahmed. Even after the census, Layla doesn't expect her family to be interned for being Muslim, shunted into desert camps by soldiers with guns. Her parents want her to keep her head down and focus on survival – but Layla is determined to resist. Though there are moments that stretch reader credulity (the ease with which her boyfriend enters the camp), this is a tremendous novel.



The Gifted the Talented and Me by William Sutcliffe. When Sam's family becomes rich, he and his siblings change schools to the North London Academy for the Gifted and Talented. Freya and Ethan thrive, but Sam is too *normal* to fit in. Will auditioning for the school production of *The Tempest* change anything? Refreshingly hilarious, with an Adrian Mole flavour and a down-to-earth protagonist.



The Girl Who Came Out of the Woods by Emily Barr. Arty has lived all her life in a matriarchal commune in a southern Indian forest, but when illness breaks out she has no choice but to leave. Trying to find her feet in the modern world is alarming – especially when she inadvertently becomes an online celebrity. Do the people on her tail want to imprison her, or help her? This is a pacey, original thriller.

How to become a published author: Five tips from Juno Dawson

Juno Dawson is a bestselling young adult fiction author who has written titles including *Clean*, *The Gender Games* and *This Book is Gay*.

She won The Book People's Queen of Teen award in 2014 for *Hollow Pike* and *Say Her Name*. She divulged her five tips for becoming a published author to **BBC Radio 4**.

BBC Woman's Hour discussion with Juno Dawson

1. Read as much as you can

"It's important to see the publishing industry as just that - an industry. It pays to have a working knowledge of which books are selling well.

"Look at the top 10, read as many as you can, work out what you like and if you don't like it, why other people might be buying it so often. It pays to stay ahead of the business."

2. Try and write something every single day

"I am not a big believer in setting yourself word counts or word targets, but I think there is something in opening the Word document every day and even if it's just having a tweak, or writing a couple of sentences every day, you're working towards that end goal."

3. Reward yourself at every stage

"Getting published shouldn't be the only goal.

"Out of all the writers in the world, not all of us get published so reward yourself if you finish a chapter, reward yourself if you do 100 pages and if you do finish a first draft of a manuscript, that is absolutely worth a nice bottle of wine or a lovely bar of chocolate."

5. Find someone who is really, really critical of your work

"None of us are going to get better at writing if we can't respond to criticism. "Every word we write is not necessarily gold, so my tip would be to find someone who is not a partner, a girlfriend or boyfriend or best friend, because they are not going to be critical. They are going to spare your feelings.

"Find another writer, maybe online, maybe in real life, maybe in a writers' group, because once you do get published, you will constantly face criticism and rejection anyway, so it's probably not a terrible idea to get you used to a bit of criticism right up front."

"Good luck with your writing. So much of being published is about timing and luck. I wouldn't be sitting here today if it hadn't been for some really good timing and a big blob of good luck.

"So just you work on making your manuscript the absolute best it can be and that's all as writers we can do!"

4. Don't be too hard on yourself

"I don't really believe in such a thing as writer's block because I don't think that all writing happens [at the keyboard]. I think a lot of writing happens [in the mind].

"So if the writing's not quite happening [at the keyboard], take yourself to the cinema, watch a TV show, read someone else's book, or my top tip is make a [photo] board with pictures of what your characters would look like. It all counts."

★ Kelmscott Library Autumn theme

Adventure

Come and explore what's going on

