



EmpathyLab

Empathy Day Activities

“Empathy Day started as a small-scale experiment in a handful of schools. But the idea has caught fire, and many partners are joining in, convinced that the cultivation of empathy is a beacon of hope in our divided world. This newsletter outlines some of Empathy Day’s flagship activities.

Miranda McKearney OBE, Chair, Empathy Lab



#ReadforEmpathy

Based on the hard, new scientific evidence showing that reading stories builds real-life empathy, we’re urging everyone to share their ideas for books which they have found to be empathy boosting. Please join in the #ReadforEmpathy campaign so that we can create a rich and varied bank of book recommendations.

Read for Empathy Guide

We will publish a new, free *Read for Empathy Guide* on 13 June, featuring 21 “must reads” books for 4-11 year olds.

These are recommended by children, teachers and librarians and endorsed by *The Sunday Times* children’s book reviewer, Nicolette Jones. The Guide will be downloadable from the EmpathyLab website, along with top tips to help parents talk to children about books in ways that build their empathy skills.

Authors

Flagship events around the country will feature authors talking about the power of empathy and sharing with children how they create empathetic characters.

They include media personalities Gemma Cairney and Katie Thisleton, and children’s authors Cathy Cassidy, Jo Cotterill, Elizabeth Laird, Alan MacDonald, Ross Montgomery and Tamsyn Murray.



And look out for:

- Authors’ #ReadforEmpathy recommendations
- Empathy Day blogs from Nikesh Shukla, Sita Brahmachari, Nicola Morgan, and others
- Video messages from Cressida Cowell and Robin Stevens.

See <http://www.empathylab.uk/authors-on-empathy-day> for fuller details.

Libraries

We're simply delighted to be partnering with the Society of Chief Librarians and seven library services to test activities for #EmpathyDay. These include empathy book displays, and green screen selfies with #ReadforEmpathy book recommendations.

Essex Libraries are running an after-school story challenge focusing on the different perspectives of squabbling crayons in Oliver Jeffers' "The day the crayons quit".

The participating authorities are St Helens, Sheffield, Libraries Unlimited (Devon), North Tyneside, Hampshire, Essex, and Sandwell.



"In libraries, we can find out how the world looks to other people. That's crucial for developing our empathy skills. Happy Empathy Day!"
Gillian Cross

"A library is a real-life EmpathyLab – stuffed full of experiences and emotions." **Catherine Johnson**



Schools

"If people who maybe aren't so nice read some of these books, maybe that would change the way that they acted. They would think more and maybe understand more. Perhaps schools should discuss empathy in books every week because it would help people so much." **Romy, Year 5, Moorlands Primary School, Great Yarmouth**

We are proud to have been working with ten pioneer schools to test our ideas since late 2015. See [link](#) for the report on our first year's work. Empathy Day sees the culmination of the schools' powerful and imaginative work to build children's empathy and literacy skills, and their social activism.

Moorlands Primary Academy, Great Yarmouth are mounting a whole school focus on understanding refugees' experiences. Author Elizabeth Laird will talk about her research in Syrian refugee camps whilst writing *Welcome to Nowhere* and children will also work with refugee books *The Journey* (Francesca Sanna) and *My Name is Not Refugee* (Kate Milner). Older children will read to younger ones and later in the week act on their idea for a sleepout doubling as an experience to deepen understanding of the conditions faced by refugees, and a fundraiser for the Mandala Trust in Syria.

St Michael's Primary School, Rochdale is showcasing the children's empathy work during the year. Children are voting on Empathy Awards for book characters who show exceptional empathy. Popular CBBC presenter Katie Thisleton visits to talk about empathy, and asks for pupils' ideas in answering letters from children who write to her about their problems. The letters and Katie's answers will be published in "Dear Katie" in 2018. Local Samaritans visit to deepen children's understanding of good listening - a key empathy skill.

Beck Primary is a large state primary school on the edge of Sheffield. A year's work culminates powerfully on Empathy Day. Young Empathy Leaders, who volunteer to help others in the playground, will play a leading role. Taking the theme of loneliness, children have been searching out empathetic book characters worthy of an Empathy Award. Authors Cathy Cassidy and Alan MacDonald will talk about how they use empathy to create book characters and present the Awards.

At **St Hilda's, Bushey**, since the Easter holidays, children and families have been nominating book characters for Empathy Awards to be presented in a big June 13 assembly. The children's book club has narrowed down the nominations to 16. Year 6 girls will take on the characters' roles and campaign for votes. Children will be Empathy Awards Reporters for the school newspaper.

Netley Marsh Infants School in the New Forest has teams of mad-keen Empathy BookSpotters, who have been working on empathy all year, and gathering nominations for empathetic characters to win Empathy Awards. Parents are very involved. The Awards will be made on Empathy Day.

International Community School, London is welcoming author and TV personality Gemma Cairney for a session chaired by young people. Inspired by Gemma's new book, *OPEN*, they will talk about empathy's centrality to relationships and the importance of putting it into action. Everyone will make empathy pledges to make a difference in the community, linked to the school's emphasis on service, as part of the International Baccalaureate.

At **Wroxham Primary School, Potters Bar**, the school will use Empathy Day to start teaching children about the meaning and importance of empathy, supported by author Tamsyn Murray who is the school's Patron of Reading.

More detail on flagship author visits

Elizabeth Laird is visiting Moorlands Primary Academy, Great Yarmouth, for their Empathy Day focus on refugees. The children were very moved by her book *Welcome to Nowhere*, researched in Syrian refugee camps, and now want to fundraise for her recommended charity, The Mandala Trust.

Gemma Cairney will be at the International Community School, London, for a session chaired by young people. Inspired by Gemma's new book, *OPEN*, they will talk about empathy's centrality to relationships and the importance of putting it into action. Everyone will make empathy pledges to make a difference in the community, and create a shared #ReadforEmpathy book bank.

Cathy Cassidy is at Sheffield's Beck Primary School, sharing with KS2 children why she thinks empathy matters so much right now. She'll talk about the characters in her new book, *Love from Lexie*, and present Empathy Awards to book characters voted for by children as having shown exceptional empathy.

Alan MacDonald, the *Dirty Bertie* author, is at Beck Primary School where he is Patron of Reading. He has worked with teachers all year to help children empathise with book characters and set up a real-life Empathy Leaders initiative in the playground. On Empathy Day he will also present Empathy Awards.

Katie Thisleton, the popular CBBC presenter, visits St Michael's Primary in Rochdale where the children have been learning about empathy all year. She will talk to the children about its importance in life, and ask for their ideas in answering letters from children who write to her about their problems. The letters and Katie's answers will be published in "Dear Katie" in 2018.

Jo Cotterill celebrates Empathy Day by leading an empathy-focused session at Shire Hall, Hereford. This is part of young people's work shadowing the Carnegie Medal. She will talk about Darby, the Downs Syndrome character in her latest book, *Storm of Strawberries*.

Ross Montgomery is working with a Year 6 book group at Dulwich Preparatory School. Their session will focus on empathy-related themes from Ross' book *Perijee and Me*.

Tamsyn Murray is visiting Wroxham Primary School in Hertfordshire in her role as Patron of Reading. The school is using Empathy Day to launch a new focus on empathy, as part of their partnership with EmpathyLab in a group of 14 pioneer primary schools.