

[Under embargo until 00:01 Monday 19th February 2024](#)

\*\*\*Photos available on request\*\*\*

## **Rashmi Sirdeshpande will explore the unique power of non-fiction to get families reading together as BookTrust's new Writer in Residence**

Award-winning author Rashmi Sirdeshpande has today (Monday 19th February) been announced as the new Writer in Residence at BookTrust, the UK's largest children's reading charity and will be taking up the role from 1<sup>st</sup> March 2024. She follows in the footsteps of some of the best loved children's authors and illustrators in the country, including Michael Rosen, Cressida Cowell and Nick Sharratt.

Sirdeshpande will use her residency to champion the benefits of an underrated form of storytelling: children's non-fiction books and factual books. The theme of her time as BookTrust's Writer in Residence will be: "Using factual books to fascinate young readers" and will encourage children and grown-ups to discover mind-enriching facts together.

During her residency, Sirdeshpande will talk about the magic of curiosity and wonder, and how this can be cultivated in children through sharing non-fiction books. She will explore how factual books can open children's eyes, make them laugh, make them think, spark interesting conversations with others, and help turn empathy into action. Her message for families is choosing to read non-fiction together is a powerful way to bond, to find common interests and to have fun.

Rashmi Sirdeshpande is the author of award-winning children's books including *Never Show a T-Rex a Book* (illustrated by Diane Ewen), *Dadaji's Paintbrush* (illustrated by Ruchi Mhasane), and *Good News: Why The World is Not as Bad as You Think* (illustrated by Adam Hayes). A former World Book Day author, Rashmi has won a number of awards, including the Diverse Book Awards and the Society of Authors Queen's Knickers Award, which celebrates "outstanding" picture books. Her factual book *Good News* was shortlisted for the Blue Peter Book Awards, Best Book with Facts. Having been diagnosed with autism and ADHD as an adult, Sirdeshpande is an advocate for representing neurodivergent perspectives in children's literature.

BookTrust's Writer in Residence programme provides a platform for writers and illustrators to explore issues that they are passionate about and use their creativity to inspire more children to discover the joy of reading, so they can enjoy all the benefits this brings.

As a creator of both children's picture books for pre-schoolers, and factual books for primary school age children, Sirdeshpande has experience in capturing the imagination and interest of a broad range of young readers. Her picture books promote creativity and lateral thinking, while her non-fiction titles encourage children to self-reflect, explore their personal interests, and stay curious about the world around them.

This aligns with BookTrust's findings about the holistic benefits of reading for pleasure – and how it can help make children happier, healthier, more creative, more empathetic and more successful at school. This is why the charity's Reading Together campaign is calling for sustained government investment in children's reading in early childhood. Promoting pathways to excite and inspire families to read together is vital for helping more children develop a love of reading, so they can experience the benefits.

### **Rashmi Sirdeshpande says:**

"As BookTrust's new Writer in Residence, I'd love to get children and grown-ups reading more factual books together. I want to see those shared moments of reading spark conversations and awaken inner storytellers. I was diagnosed with autism and ADHD aged 39. Looking back, I see why factual books were always so perfect for me as a child. I could follow my areas of intense interests down the deepest rabbit holes. But I believe factual books are truly for everyone – neurotypical readers, too – because we're all curious about the world. I want people to see that these books can make reading

accessible and irresistible. I love seeing children's eyes light up when they discover a fascinating fact, and you can see they're bursting to share it with someone. Today, in this golden age of children's factual books, there is so much richness and variety. If you find the right book, it brings children (and grown-ups) together in a shared 'wow' moment that can really stay with them. I've seen it. It sets children on an amazing path of loving books and loving learning."

**Diana Gerald, CEO of BookTrust, continues:** "We're so happy Rashmi Sirdeshpande is lending her voice to explore this vital theme as BookTrust's Writer in Residence. At BookTrust, we hear time and time again how much families enjoy the non-fiction books gifted through our charity's programmes to those on low incomes or who are most vulnerable. Parents and carers tell us their children love sharing facts from their new books – whether they're about animals, aeroplanes or history. It shows how powerful books can be for creating conversations between families, which supports children to bond, feel safe and develop socially and emotionally. For older children, a non-fiction book is a deep dive into a topic that captures their imagination. If a factual book sparks a reluctant young reader's interest, it could be the catalyst for their reading journey. We can't wait to see how Sirdeshpande champions this during her residency at BookTrust."

The BookTrust Writer in Residence project has been running since March 2009 and has featured several authors and illustrators including Cressida Cowell, Sita Brahmachari, Patrick Ness, Polly Dunbar, Bali Rai, Matt Haig, Laura Dockrill, Chris Riddell, Nicola Davies, Cerrie Burnell, Sarah McIntyre, Philip Ardagh, Taran Matharu, Nadia Shireen, Candy Gourlay, Phil Earle, Ed Vere, Smriti Halls, Onjali Q Raúf, Dapo Adeola, Michael Rosen, Nick Sharratt, SF Said and Michelle Robinson.

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## NOTES TO EDITORS

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### About Rashmi Sirdeshpande

Author Rashmi Sirdeshpande is a lawyer-turned-award-winning children's author who writes a mix of fun and uplifting picture books and illustrated non-fiction, including *Never Show a T-Rex a Book* (illustrated by Diane Ewen), *Dadaji's Paintbrush* (illustrated by Ruchi Mhasane), and *Good News: Why The World is Not As Bad As You Think* (illustrated by Adam Hayes). A former World Book Day author, Rashmi's books have been published around the world and featured in national and international newspapers. She has won a number of awards, including the Diverse Book Awards and the Society of Authors Queen's Knickers Award, which celebrates "outstanding" picture books. Her factual book *Good News* was shortlisted for the Blue Peter Book Awards, Best Book with Facts. Having been diagnosed with autism and ADHD as an adult, Sirdeshpande is an advocate for representing neurodivergent perspectives in children's literature.

### About BookTrust

We get millions of children reading, especially those from low-income families or vulnerable backgrounds. Children who choose to read and who read regularly are happier and healthier. They form stronger bonds and relationships. They do better at school and are more creative. They enjoy more success in life. This is why we work with families, supporting them to start sharing stories and books together from the earliest possible age. Our carefully selected books and well-researched programmes are delivered by thousands of local partners, bringing the magic of reading to children in every community in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. [booktrust.org.uk](http://booktrust.org.uk)