**EMBARGO Wednesday 21th November 2019**

**Want your child to be a maths whizz? Scientist extraordinaire? Creative genius?… All you need is a picture book!**



**Thursday 21th November 2019** - Parents keen to help their children with maths should ditch the Baby Einstein videos and read with their children instead, according to Educational Neuroscientist and Channel 4’s ‘The Secret Lives of Five Year Olds’ expert Paul Howard-Jones.

Speaking at the [BookTrust](https://www.booktrust.org.uk/) Annual Lecture, Paul will today share his knowledge on early childhood brain development and the role books have played in the growth of children’s intellect across the ages. He will deliver unique insights on the vital role of reading as a catalyst for civilisation, and how it continues to rewire young minds from the earliest years, providing a platform for adult wellbeing and success.

The audience of publishers, authors, illustrators and key industry figures will hear Paul draw together facts to explain how evolutionary science tells the fascinating story of learning’s central role in the rise of the human species to top predator. He will reveal how, many thousands of years ago, our ability and inclination to share attention provided an essential platform for the development of powerful cultural tools such as reading.

**Paul Howard-Jones said**: *“Reading allows access to a symbolic system of communication through which we can imagine and experience multiple worlds created by others. Reading with young children is not just about literacy, it readies the brain to interpret new concepts and new ways of thinking, including mathematics.”*

*“Children can begin to understand the value and concept of books by seeing adults experiencing books and having their attention drawn to books. This can start in the first 2-3 years of their lives - well before they themselves know how to read – but when their brains are at their most plastic and malleable. That’s a great start – and it can develop into a resilient enthusiasm for books in their school and adult lives.*

*“Simply put, reading is perhaps the most important cultural tool we transmit to our children. It’s the gateway to the greatest part of accumulated human experience and understanding. One of the best things we can do as parents is help them discover that gateway, by reading and experiencing the joy of a book with them. It’s really never too early to share a book!”*

**Diana Gerald, CEO, BookTrust said:** *“We’re thrilled to have Paul, someone so enthusiastic and passionate about children’s reading, come to speak with industry leaders about its importance from a new, evolutionary perspective. Each year we aim to bring, exciting and culturally relevant speakers to the lecture who not only provide insights to the people attending, but can also share their knowledge and experitise to provide useful tips and information for parents and carers at home.”*

**– Ends –**

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**Notes to Editors**

**About BookTrust**

BookTrust is dedicated to getting children reading because we know that children who read are happier, healthier, more empathetic and more creative. Their early language development is supported and they also do better at school.

We are the UK’s largest children’s reading charity; each year we reach 3.9 million children across the UK with books, resources and support to help develop a love of reading, because we know that reading can transform lives.

We work with a variety of partners to get children excited about books, rhymes and stories, because if reading is fun, children will want to do it. Our books are delivered via health, library, schools and early years practitioners, and are supported with guidance, advice and resources to encourage the reading habit. booktrust.org.uk

**About Paul Howard-Jones**

Neuroscience and education, game-based learning and creativity. Paul's particular area of interest is applying our understanding of cognition and neuroscience to enhance child and adult learning. His research explores the benefits offered to education by emerging technologies, aided by a critical consideration of underlying cognitive processes.