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**New analysis and findings by BookTrust shine a spotlight on representation in children’s books and its impact on children’s motivations to read**

* New research reveals **11.7% of children’s book creators in 2021 were people of colour, compared to 4% in 2007. *Representation of people of colour among children’s book creators[[1]](#footnote-2) in the UK***by Dr Melanie Ramdarshan Bold, in partnership with BookTrust, shows a positive increase in representation, yet there is more to do before the body of UK children’s literature is truly representative.
* Analysis of BookTrust’s school visit programme, which has introduced emerging creators of colour to **48,800 children**, reveals the impact this has on children’s motivations to read.
* BookTrust is committed to improving representation in the books children read and last year,of the books it distributed to children through its programmes across England, Wales and Northern Ireland, **28% (891,133)** were from a creator of colour.

New research and analysis by BookTrust, drawing on insight and findings from two newly published reports, shines a spotlight on the role of representation in children’s books and the critical impact this has on children’s motivations and desire to read.

Reading is proven to positively impact children’s life chances, wellbeing, learning and creativity. Sharing stories and books, throughout childhood, is an effective way to support the potential of children from low-income and vulnerable family backgrounds and give them the best possible start in life.​ This is even more urgent with the cost-of-living crisis and the pandemic disproportionally affecting children from low-income backgrounds.

BookTrust’s expertise and research shows the importance of all children being able to see themselves in the books they read and how this shapes how they view themselves and the world around them. Books can be an important tool in helping all children feel accepted, understand others and develop empathy. Representation and diversity in books is important for all children, not just those from an ethnic minority background, and is an important factor in children’s motivations to read.

Children’s publishing in the UK hasn’t always been representative of UK society. While there has been steady and positive progress over recent years, as evidenced by the latest findings from ***Representation of people of colour among children’s book creators in the UK*** by Dr Melanie Ramdarshan Bold, there is the need for more long-term and sustainable efforts to be made, if the body of UK children’s literature is to become truly representative.

The landscape in which creators of colour are working has evolved significantly over recent years. Some creators interviewed for the report talked about stronger relationships they had with publishers, there are more allies and advocates across children’s literature who - together with creators - are pushing for change and some publishers making long-term investments in the careers of creators of colour.

However, serious issues remain, including concerns that issues of inclusion and underrepresentation risk being addressed as ‘tick box exercises’ which can impact on creators’ finances, mental wellbeing and their ongoing ability to continue to contribute to children’s literature. This is despite sustainable and meaningful change requiring long-term commitment, engagement and investment for creators of colour.

A further report also published today, ***BookTrust Represents Schools Support: Evaluation Report, 2022***, showcases the experiences of primary school teachers and pupils who welcomed creators of colour into the classroom and had the opportunity to introduce children to new authors, stories and books.

It found that representation in children’s books and their creators has a critical impact on children’s wider learning experiences and development in the classroom and beyond. In particular, the report found that the author visits and use of diverse and inclusive books in the classroom had a positive impact on children’s engagement with books and stories and their own motivation to read and write their own stories as well as developing their aspirations for the future.

Schools recognise the importance of representation in books used across the curriculum and want their pupils to read a diverse range of books with characters, themes and from creators who reflect the diversity of the UK. But they face challenges including budgetary constraints, a lack of time to discover new books and not having the knowledge and skills to effectively engage children in conversations about diversity. Creators who participated in the school visits programme value the experience, which they say supports their career and can build their confidence.

The findings make a compelling case for the ongoing and continued need for improved representation in children’s books, from their creators and the characters, stories and experiences that are reflected in the books that all children have access to, and the opportunity to read.

BookTrust, the UK’s largest children’s reading charity has committed to strengthening its work with schools, publishers and creators to promote and profile diverse and inclusive books and stories so children can benefit from the lifechanging benefits that reading can bring. Last year **28% (891,133)** of the books BookTrust distributed to children through its programmes across England, Wales and Northern Ireland were from a creator of colour.

**Diana Gerald, Chief Executive of BookTrust said:**

*“At BookTrust, we want every child to be reading regularly and by choice so they can enjoy the lifechanging benefits that reading can have on their opportunities, wellbeing, learning and creativity. All children should be able to see themselves and wider society represented in the books and stories they read, and our research shows that this has a direct impact on their motivations to pick up their next book. There are now more opportunities for creators of colour to publish children’s books in the UK today, meaning more children can read their brilliant stories. Yet creators of colour still experience barriers.*

*“Overall, when you take into consideration the volume of books previously published and that still inspire children and live on bookshelves today, the UK’s body of children’s literature remains far from representative. Improving representation in the books children read remains at the forefront of our work and we are committed to working in partnership with children, families, creators, publishers, schools, libraries and more until we get there.” ENDS*

**Dr Melanie Ramdarshan Bold** from the [University of Glasgow](https://www.gla.ac.uk/schools/education/staff/melanieramdarshanbold/) and author of *Representation of people of colour among children’s book creators in the UK added:*

*“It’s great that there’s a tentative growth in the number of children’s creators of colour published in the UK. This statistical data is an important part of establishing a baseline and uncovering discrepancies, gaps, and trends. However, numbers only tell one part of the story and, beyond the numbers, it’s clear that there’s still a lot of work to make children’s publishing more equitable. The creators of colour, interviewed for this report, gave very honest accounts – both positive and negative – of their experiences in children’s publishing, outlining some key barriers and enablers they faced. This ranged from everyday micro-aggressions to active allies in publishing to the joyful impact of school visits. I hope that book industry professionals, and those adjacent to children’s books, really reflect on these experiences, and the report in general, to ensure that diversity, equality, and inclusion are sustainable and embedded parts of the children’s book world.”*

**Sarah Crown, Director, Literature and Bristol,** [**Arts Council England**](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/) **said:**

*“Reading and storytelling should be an essential part of a child’s life and development. Books are a portal to different worlds and adventures; they inspire us and shape the people we become. It’s vital that children can see themselves and their experiences reflected in the stories they read. BookTrust's excellent work to improve representation in children’s books will have positive real world consequences for stimulating the excitement and aspirations of our children and young people.”*

**Dan Conway, CEO of the** [**Publishers Association**](https://www.publishers.org.uk/) **added:**

*“It is really positive to see an increase in representation among children’s book creators and we anticipate that this is reflective of dedicated publisher efforts in this area. However, there is no room for complacency. We know there is much more to do and that progress needs to be faster. We recognise the vital nature of BookTrust’s work in this area and welcome continued research, targeted initiatives and action.”*

**Anieka Caynes, Team Leader for English at** [**Lanfranc Archbishop Academy**](https://lanfranc.org.uk/) **said:**

*“The BookTrust Represents author visit gives students the opportunity, aspiration and the realisation that they could be an author and contribute to how literature is used in our society. We really want to foster a culture where students are going home and they’re having conversations about the books that have inspired them. Especially when students get to secondary school, reading can be such an isolating activity. Words give our students that confidence to feel they have a voice and ultimately, we are supposed to be developing young people who feel confident in their own opinions and who they are and know how to express that without causing offence.*

*“For our school, reading is a high priority. We’re making sure that regardless of whether our students speak multiple languages or whether they are classified as being “disadvantaged” they have access to literature within the school curriculum, and also, literature that’s going to fuel a love of learning and a love of reading. The more they read, the more ideas they are exposed to, the more tolerance they have for people within their community and are able to bridge that gap within different areas. I really want our students to love reading just as much as they love some of their other passions.”*

**Primary school aged child** who met Benjamin Dean, author *of Me, My Dad and the End of the Rainbow*, illustrated by Sandhya Prabhat and published by Simon & Schuster said: *“I like in this book that it makes me feel happy when I read it. It makes me feel better when I read it and I can see something like me, and I can understand that is not only me like that.”*

BookTrust is funded by Arts Council England and is a National Portfolio Organisation in recognition of the vital role that a regular reading habit plays in boosting creativity.

**ENDS**

**NOTES TO EDITORS**

**Media Contact**

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**About Representation of people of colour among children’s book creators in the UK**

**Published by Dr Melanie Ramdarshan Bold, November 2022**

This study has been tracking the percentage of new books published in UK children’s literature by creators of colour since 2007. Alongside the numbers of creators of colour over time, this report also explores the individual experiences of a sample of 20 creators of colour

Key findings:

* The percentage of children’s creators of colour has steadily increased since our earliest tracking data began:
	+ In 2007, 4% of newly published children’s book creators were people of colour. This increased slightly to 5.58% by 2017.
	+ This latest report finds that in 2021, 11.7% of newly published children’s book creators were people of colour.
	+ 9.1% of unique titles published in 2021 were created by people of colour, compared to 2.3% in 2007.
	+ BookTrust had set a target of 13% of children’s book creators to be people of colour for 2022 and it appears that the sector is on track to meet this target.

**About BookTrust Represents School Support: Evaluation Report,** Learnings from 2021-22

This small-scale evaluation is based on interviews with school staff and pupils from four primary schools who received a visit from a creator of colour through BookTrust Represents.

**About BookTrust’s work on representation**

Since 2021, BookTrust has:

* Distributed 50,705 books from creators of colour to schools through it’s BookTrust Represents programme. Overall, 28% (891,133) of the books BookTrust distributed to children through its programmes across England, Wales and Northern Ireland were from a creator of colour.
* Introduced emerging creators of colour to 48,800 primary and secondary school aged children from 1,689 schools across England, Wales and Northern Ireland
* Supported 406 creators of colour through our mentoring, development and support programme BookTrust Represents

**About BookTrust**

BookTrust is the UK’s largest children’s reading charity.

Reading and sharing stories throughout childhood is a simple and cost-effective way to support the potential of disadvantaged children and give them the best possible start in life.​ Reading is proven to positively impact on children’s wellbeing, learning and creativity. We have the reach, scale and expertise to ensure our books, resources and support get to children and families, especially those who need it most, wherever they are – at home, in nurseries, schools, libraries and more. ​We want **every**child to read regularly and by choice, but we can't do this alone.​ With your support we can rewrite the future for the next generation of children.​ [booktrust.org.uk](http://www.booktrust.org.uk/)

**About Dr Melanie Ramdarshan Bold**

Dr Melanie Ramdarshan Bold is a Senior Lecturer/Associate Professor in Children’s and YA Literature Studies at the University of Glasgow. Her research centers on contemporary authorship, publishing, and readers, with a focus on inclusive youth literature. She is also an Honorary Associate Professor of Publishing at University College London. Melanie is the author of the two previous BookTrust Represent reports:

* [Representation of people of colour among children’s book authors and illustrators (2019)](https://www.booktrust.org.uk/globalassets/resources/represents/booktrust-represents-diversity-childrens-authors-illustrators-report.pdf)
* [Representation of people of colour among children’s book authors and illustrators (2020).](https://cdn.booktrust.org.uk/globalassets/resources/research/booktrust_represents_2020_report.pdf)
1. Creators refers to both authors and illustrators of children’s books. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)