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Press Release

Campaign launched to get the nation reading, as new research reveals that only one in three children are read a story every day by their dads

London, Wednesday 14th June 2023

- **Michael Morpurgo, Nick Butterworth, Joe Wicks, Alexander Armstrong, Emmanuel Asuquo and David Walliams** back new campaign - **Dads Make Stories Magic** - by BookTrust, Farshore and HarperCollins Children's Books
 - The campaign calls on dads to pledge to read with their children more regularly to reach a million minutes of storytime shared across the UK
 - Only 29% of children are read a story every day or nearly every day by their dads* and dads are twice as likely as mums to lack confidence in their reading ability and choosing books their children would like to read***
 - Only 36% of dads were read to often when they were children and only 46% of dads grew up thinking that reading was an enjoyable activity**

www.dadsmakestoriesmagic.co.uk | #DadsMakeStoriesMagic
Videos, images and case studies available

New research reveals only 29% of children are read to every day or nearly every day by their dads*, despite this being one of the most effective ways of encouraging children's enjoyment of reading, which is proven to positively impact on life chances. Only one in four children and teens read for pleasure every day or nearly every day*, so there is a huge opportunity for dads to have a positive impact by reading aloud with them more frequently. The research shows that when dads read with their children, the majority find it rewarding (76%) and an enjoyable experience for both them and their children (74%).***

The research also revealed the barriers many dads face in reading aloud with their children. Dads' own childhood experiences may be a cause, as the research also found that only 36% of dads were read to when they were children themselves and fewer than half of dads grew up with positive ideas about reading.** Dads were also twice as likely as mums to say they lack confidence in their personal reading ability and in choosing books their children would like to read.*** Many dads are also simply unaware of the benefits of reading aloud to their children, with only 36% of dads saying they are well aware that reading aloud to their children encourages them to read more.**

In response, and ahead of Father's Day this year, the UK's largest children's reading charity BookTrust and children's publishers Farshore and HarperCollins Children's Books have joined forces and are on a mission to encourage the nation's dads to pledge to read with their children more regularly for four weeks to reach the goal of a million minutes of storytime shared across the UK.

Farshore conducted a study in collaboration with parenting community dadsnet to test this approach. The study, involving 33 dads and their 49 children, demonstrated a significant

increase in dads' and children's enjoyment of reading, sense of togetherness, wellbeing and a positive effect on the child's learning and behaviour.****

With the backing of children's book authors and public figures including **Michael Morpurgo, Nick Butterworth, Joe Wicks, Alexander Armstrong, Emmanuel Asuquo** and **David Walliams**, the Dads Make Stories Magic campaign aims to raise awareness of the importance of reading aloud to children. BookTrust, Farshore and HarperCollins Children's Books will offer top tips and practical ideas of how to engage even the most reluctant of readers with books and stories. They will also share details of the campaign's supporters' magical storytime experiences with their own children and grandchildren to inspire others to get involved.

Sir Michael Morpurgo OBE, President of BookTrust, author of *War Horse* and the former Children's Laureate said:

"My journey to becoming a story-maker began with my mother and grandmother reading to me and my brother in bed. For us, these nightly readings were acts of love. They lived all of it as they read, we lived all of it as we listened – we made the stories together. In sharing their own passion for stories with us, I learned early on how reading can be immersive, transporting, and sheer joy. I'm so pleased to support this campaign, to inspire and motivate anyone with a child in their lives to enjoy the powerful benefits of storytelling. We must all work together to enrich children's lives through encouraging a love of words and stories."

Joe Wicks MBE, the 'Nation's PE Teacher', author of *The Burpee Bears*, and dad of three said, *"This powerful new research from HarperCollins and BookTrust shows the magic that happens when we read to children – it really sets them up for life. I discovered the joy of books and stories later in life and love sharing it with my own kids. That's why I'm joining the Dads Make Stories Magic campaign to get us reading more often to our kids, and to reach the goal of a million minutes of storytime shared across the nation!"*

Nick Butterworth, award-winning author and illustrator of children's books, including the beloved *Percy the Park Keeper* series said:

"This illuminating new research highlights that it's more important than ever to motivate and inspire the nation to read. I didn't get the hang of reading until I was eight, but thanks to my mum and my grandmother, who read constantly to me, I became hooked. Not on reading, but on stories. As a dad, I wanted to repeat the fun I had as a boy with my own children. I didn't realise then that as a by-product, I was making a huge investment in their future. As we were simply enjoying magical adventures together, we were unaware of priceless added extras: the unconscious development of vocabulary, the easy learning of language skills, and the infectious desire to read for themselves.

And here's another; every minute spent sharing in this way reinforces family relationships and a sense of identity and security. All this for free! Well almost: The small price to pay is a little regular time spent daily with people you love."

Sharing books and stories has the potential to transform children's lives, positively affecting their life-chances, emotional wellbeing, creativity and attainment. Yet the number of children reading is in long-term decline, with only 25% of children and teens reading for pleasure daily or nearly every day in 2022, compared to 38% in 2012*. The Dads Make Stories Magic campaign hopes to show dads just how much fun they and their children can have creating magical storytime experiences together.

Children love sharing books and stories with anyone – whether that’s mums, dads, carers, grandparents, siblings or friends. By having more reading role models (from different people reading with them or seeing other people reading around them), the more likely children are to become readers themselves. So, it is not just dads who can join the pledge to reach a million of minutes of storytime, everyone is invited.

Diana Gerald, Chief Executive of BookTrust said: *“Reading is something that can be done anywhere and brings children life-changing benefits that can give them the best start in life. There’s no right or wrong way to read a book. You can look at the pictures, use silly voices or make up your own story. Children will love the closeness and bonding moments that come from sharing a book together so there’s nothing to stop you from giving it a go. Join the Dads Make Stories Magic campaign and you’ll be sharing magical storytime experiences and creating memories together with your children.”*

Alison David, reading for pleasure expert, author of *Help Your Child Love Reading* and Consumer Insight Director at Farshore said: *“Our recent research with dads found they experienced great joy when they read to their children. It gave them the opportunity to cuddle up and create some precious bonding time. Of course the children loved it too. This deep enjoyment is the reason reading aloud to children is so effective: they associate reading with pleasure and, when read to often, they develop the enthusiasm to read themselves. Children who choose to read for pleasure simply do better in life, enjoying a host of benefits including performing better at school and having enhanced wellbeing. Something as simple as reading aloud to children has truly far-reaching and life-long benefits.”*

Cally Poplak, Executive Publisher, HarperCollins Children’s Books and Farshore, said: *“Our mission is to make every child a proud reader. One effective way to do this is to read aloud to children and we’d love more dads to have this wonderfully rewarding experience through our Dads Make Stories Magic campaign.”*

You can find out more about the campaign and pledge a contribution to the Million Minutes goal at www.dadsmakestoriesmagic.co.uk

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Research Methodology

The research quoted in this press release is drawn from three separate studies on dads reading habits and behaviours by BookTrust, Farshore and Nielsen BookData.

* 29% of 0-13s were read to 'every day or nearly every day' (4+ days per week) by their dads in 2022. Only 25% of children and teens aged 0-17 read for pleasure 'every day or nearly every day' (4+ days per week) in 2022, compared to 38% in 2012. **Nielsen BookData's Understanding the Children's Book Consumer' 2022.**

** Only 36% of dads were regularly read to when they were children and only 46% grew up with the idea that reading was a fun and enjoyable activity. Only 36% of dads are well aware that reading aloud to their children encourages them to read more, compared to 48% of mums. **Farshore's proprietary data through a collaboration with Nielsen BookData and their 'Understanding the Children's Book Consumer' survey 2022. They surveyed 1555 parents of 0-13s and 445 14-17s. It was a nationally representative sample. 372 respondents were dads (24%).**

*** 31% of dads lack confidence choosing books their children would like to read compared with 17% of mums. 11% of dads lack confidence in their personal reading ability compared with 5% of mums. 76% of dads tell us they find reading with their children rewarding and 74% tell us it's an enjoyable experience for them both. **BookTrust surveyed 2,148 parents and carers from low-income backgrounds in 2022. 626 respondents (30%) were fathers/stepfathers.**

**** Farshore's 'Dad's Reading' study, in collaboration with Dadsnet, worked with 33 dads of 49 children aged between 2 and 12 in October/November 2022. Dads were asked to read to their child every day for six weeks and keep a diary of the experience. Questions about enjoyment, learning, behaviour, wellbeing, nurturing and togetherness were asked at the beginning of the project and repeated at the end. There was positive change in interest in reading for 47 of the 49 children, including asking to read with their dads, choosing books over toys, talking about books when not reading.

BookTrust case studies available

- A selection of video interviews, images and b-roll footage of dads and a librarian from two BookTrust partners are available to support media packages at the following link <https://we.tl/t-uRSdt6XjtW>
- Content cannot be retained and can only be used in the context of Dads Make Stories Magic campaign and/ or stories relating to BookTrust
- BookTrust retains copyright and all content must be credited ©BookTrust
- More content is available on request

Farshore and dadsnet case studies available

- A selection of video interviews and case studies from dads who participated in a study reading aloud to their child(ren) for six weeks are available on request to support media packages

About BookTrust

As the UK's largest children's reading charity, we want every child to read regularly and by choice. We reach millions of children and families every year, inspiring them with books and resources to get them started on their reading journey. We provide a wide range of carefully curated and designed books, resources and support to help families start sharing stories and to continue reading throughout childhood. We offer more targeted support to families from low-income and vulnerable backgrounds because we know these children stand to benefit the most from the benefits of reading. Our support is based on robust evidence, designed to deliver reading behaviour change. It is developed in partnership with families and expert practitioners to create inspiring and enjoyable shared reading experiences for children and families. Thanks to an extraordinary network of partners including local authorities, early years settings, schools, libraries and more across England, Wales and Northern Ireland we're able to reach families where they are, in their local communities.

www.booktrust.org.uk

About Farshore

Farshore's mission is to make every child a proud reader through a broad and diverse portfolio of books that offers multiple ways into the joy of reading. Farshore publishes child-friendly books for all ages and genre, from picture books, fiction and non-fiction by household authors and illustrators, including Michael Morpurgo, Lemony Snicket, Julia Donaldson, Jim Smith, Laura Ellen Anderson, Steven Lenton, Sophy Henn and Michael Grant, to classic properties and the hottest popular culture brands, including Minecraft, Winnie-the-Pooh, Mr. Men Little Miss, Thomas & Friends, Disney Princess, My Little Pony and Tintin. Farshore is recognised for nurturing and building exciting new author and illustrator talent, for leading the children's market in brand publishing, and for applying unique consumer and market insights to ensure every book reaches the widest possible audience. Find out more at www.farshore.co.uk.

About HarperCollins Children's Books

HarperCollins Children's Books, unprecedented three-time winner of Children's Publisher of the Year (2014, 2015, 2016) is one of the leading publishers of children's books, recognised for nurturing new talent as well as boasting a reputable list of established bestselling authors. Respected worldwide for its tradition of publishing quality, award-winning books for young readers, HarperCollins is home to many children's classics, including The Chronicles of Narnia, the Paddington stories, The Cat in the Hat and The Tiger Who Came to Tea, and to some of the biggest names in children's literature past and present, including David Walliams, Judith Kerr, David Baddiel, Lauren Child, Oliver Jeffers and Michael Morpurgo.

www.harpercollinschildrensbooks.co.uk