

Sharna Jackson inspires the next generation of authors in Bristol



Author Sharna Jackson shares stories with school children in Bristol

11th March 2020 – Yesterday, the brilliant author Sharna Jackson was in Bristol, visiting pupils at Henleaze junior school and Whitehall junior school. Sharna spent time with 150 students, talking about her debut novel *High Rise Mystery*, the inspiration behind the characters and where she gets her ideas for stories from.

BookTrust also gave away free copies of Sharna’s debut novel, *High Rise Mystery* to every pupil. Published by *Knights Of*, an inclusive book publisher based in London, *High Rise Mystery* features a sibling detective duo who everyone’s dying to meet. Set on an estate in South East London – during a heatwave – Nik and Norva have to solve the murder of fellow resident and art teacher Hugo Knightley-Webb, before someone they love gets pulled into the frame. Sharna’s second book, *Mic Drop* follows the detective duo Nik and Norva as they try to solve another murder. *Mic Drop* is published in April.

Talking about the day, Sharna said: “The staff and pupils were absolutely brilliant. They were so welcoming as soon as I walked through the gate — I loved the energy of the children. They were all super engaged and asked lots of insightful and fun questions. All in all, an ideal school visit.”

The visits are part of a broader initiative, BookTrust Represents, led by [BookTrust](#), which aims to increase the numbers of authors and illustrators of colour in the UK and to support current authors and illustrators to reach more readers.

Talking about Sharna’s visit, Betty, aged 11 from Henleaze junior school talked about how important it was to see someone who looks like you. “I like that she’s a black author.

Lots of books that I have are by white authors, which I can't relate to. It means a lot that she looks like me."

Throughout the week, Sharna and a collection of authors and illustrators that included Jasbinder Bilan, Chitra Soundar, Zanib Mian and Sav Akyuz, spent time with over 500 school children from eight Bristol based schools, organised by BookTrust, the UK's largest children's reading charity. BookTrust also involved 16 emerging writers to accompany the established writers on the school visits, to allow them to get first-hand experience of school events.

One of the authors shadowing Sharna, Emma Norry said: "Their little faces lit up. They couldn't get their hands in the air quick enough. From the boy who yelled excitedly, "Is that Sharna Jackson?" from across the playground, to the girl who asked whether Sharna thought the colour of her skin held her back in the publishing industry.

Jill Coleman, Director of Children's Books, BookTrust said: "I'm proud that BookTrust Represents is leading the way in promoting authors and illustrators of colour and inspiring future generations. Sharna was a roaring success with the children at Henleaze and Whitehall primary school. They were full of excitement and were hanging on her every word, I hope there are now some budding authors and illustrators in each class."

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Notes to Editors

BookTrust Represents is a three-year initiative to support and subsidise authors and illustrators of colour to promote their work and support them to reach more readers through events in bookshops, festivals and schools, as well as offering training and mentoring for less experienced authors and illustrators. BookTrust's aim is that by 2022 we will have increased the number of authors and illustrators of colour in the UK from less than 6% to 10%.

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 Sharna Jackson

Sharna Jackson is an author and Artistic Director who specialises in developing and delivering socially-engaged initiatives for children and young people across culture, publishing and entertainment.



Sharna is the Artistic Director at Site Gallery, Sheffield's leading international contemporary art space, specialising in moving image, new media and performance. She has held roles at Tate, Hopster and the Design Museum and has consulted for the Royal Collection Trust, Museum of Childhood, V&A, Science Museum, Penguin amongst others.

Sharna's debut novel *High Rise Mystery* was released in April 2019 and its sequel, *Mic Drop* is due in April 2020. She wrote the Tate Kids activity book series with Tate Publishing. She created *Looking With LeVar* – the audio guide for children and families at The Broad in Los Angeles, and was a development producer on *Tee and Mo*. She is very proud to be Southbank Centre's Imagine A Story author for 2019/20 and created a novel *London/Londoff* with over 1000 school children in London.

Sharna is on the Children's Media Conference advisory board and on the board of Sheffield Doc/Fest. Every year she curates Playground – an exhibition showcasing work that blends digital play with physical objects and Ensemble – a show highlighting BAME talent and achievement in the UK games industry.
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