



***** For Immediate Release *****

READING TOGETHER DAY: AMBASSADORS AND SCHEDULE HIGHLIGHTS ANNOUNCED FOR 16 JULY 2020

- **Ade Adepitan, Bobby Seagull, Cressida Cowell, Jacqueline Wilson, Joseph Coelho, Konnie Huq, Professor Teresa Cremin, Tom Palmer announced as ambassadors for the celebration of reading**
- **Coordinated by The Reading Agency, the shared schedule of events will feature activity from 18 collaborators across the books, publishing and education sectors, including readings, virtual panel events and book recommendations**

The **Reading Together Day** (16 July) ambassadors and the shared schedule of events, delivered by 18 organisations across the publishing, books and education sectors, has been announced today. The day will deliver a programme of activity to highlight the importance of reading together and encourage the nation to keep reading. The campaign aims to reach as many families and young people as possible.

Coordinated by The Reading Agency, the day will showcase events featuring collaborators including Authors Aloud UK, Arts Council England, ASCEL, BookTrust, British Library, CILIP, Coram Beanstalk, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Department for Education, Dollywood Foundation, Libraries Connected, National Literacy Trust, Open University, Pearson, Publishers Association, School Library Association and World Book Day.

Scheduled events will include readings from authors and contributors, virtual panel events, book recommendations and much more. Ambassadors for the day will include Paralympic medallist and presenter **Ade Adepitan**, mathematician **Bobby Seagull**, Waterstones Children's Laureate **Cressida Cowell**, author **Jacqueline Wilson**, poet **Joseph Coelho**, author and presenter **Konnie Huq**, Professor **Teresa Cremin** and author **Tom Palmer**.

People of all ages will be invited to take part in sharing the joy of reading for pleasure and will be encouraged to post their favourite things to read and plans to keep reading together this summer online using the hashtag **#ReadingTogether**.

Ade Adepitan commented: *"Reading is fundamental and is such a lovely experience to do with family and friends. Whenever I read a passage out from my books, The Cyborg Cat series, and I do the voices and the sound effects, you can see the excitement and engagement of the kids grow. It is so important that we encourage children to read for fun and one of the best ways to do this is to do it all together — with or without the funny sound effects. This is why the Reading Together Day is so important and I'm thrilled to be able to be one of the ambassadors for this. So get ready to grab a book, grab a loved one and have an amazing literary adventure!"*



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Bobby Seagull commented: *“As a child, reading books from my local East Ham Library opened my eyes to the world and changed my life. While a younger Bobby would have found it a challenge to pick just one favourite book, older me today would pick Jonathan Livingston Seagull by Richard Bach. This is the book my father named me after from birth! Without reading over the years, I may never have accumulated enough knowledge to be a captain on University Challenge or win Celebrity Mastermind! So it's a privilege to be an ambassador for Reading Together Day to celebrate the life-affirming joy of reading books.”*

Cressida Cowell commented: *“It's fantastic that so many organisations are coming together to celebrate the transformative magic of reading. Ensuring that children are given the opportunity to benefit from reading together has never been more important, given the huge disruption that children have faced over the pandemic. My Waterstones Children's Laureate Charter declares that every child has the right to be read aloud to, and I always encourage parents and carers to read with children far beyond the age they can read for themselves. Books read to you in an adult's voice live with you all your life: I remember every book read out loud to me by a parent or a teacher.*

Reading offers comfort, distraction, a way to travel when life seems dark and is closing in on us, a way to laugh when not much seems funny. It connects us both with strangers and, if we read aloud and enjoy them together, with the ones we love the most.”

Jacqueline Wilson commented: *“I've long campaigned for a Reading Together day! I've always thought that reading together was a vital part of family life. Maybe one of the few delights of lockdown was the fact that parents and carers have had more time to read with their children. It's such fun to act out a picture book with a toddler or share a special favourite with children. Grandparents have especially loved telling stories on FaceTime, schoolteachers have read aloud as part of online lessons. Let's all celebrate on Thursday 16th July and get reading!”*

Joseph Coehlo commented: *“In a world dominated by online content designed to be a constant draw on our attention, there is a need to remember the simple pleasure to be found in reading together. When we read together, we open up a space for reflection, discussion, and connection all of which can be lost in our bubbles of insular consumption.”*

Konnie Huq commented: *“I am thrilled to be an ambassador for Reading Together Day! As a busy mum I know that finding time to read with your kids can be hard- but it's so important to make the time to share books with each other. Until you've found the right book to turn you into a reader books are just rectangles on shelves! Sharing books with friends, family and loved ones is a great way to discover brilliant new titles and you never know, the right recommendation at the right time could turn a kid into a reader for life!”*

Professor Teresa Cremin commented: *“I'm delighted to be an ambassador for the Reading Together Day. The Open University research reveals that reading builds bridges - across families, classrooms and communities. Reading for pleasure is the thread that connects.*

Reading changes lives and has many benefits which I'm looking forward to discussing on a panel as part of the day's activities.”

Tom Palmer commented: *“I am thrilled to be an ambassador for the first Reading Together Day – because family reading means everything to me. I am a children's author because my mum read*



football stories and newspaper match reports to me, engaging me with reading through the game I love. As a dad, I read with my daughter from baby to teenage years and, looking back, those times were some of the best. Intimate. Interesting. Inspiring. This Reading Together Day, I want to inspire more families to discover the joy of reading together as I first did – through the beautiful game – so I've teamed up with the National Literacy Trust, the Premier League and Rebellion to provide families with free football-themed books, activities and videos to explore."

As families and individuals grapple with the challenges of school changes, loss of support networks and the implementation of social distancing, the aim of the Reading Together Day is to bring families, friends, schools and wider communities together – encouraging everyone to start conversations, share stories, make connections, celebrate reading and have fun.

Reading Together Day (16 July 2020) Schedule – Activity Highlights

[Please note the schedule is subject to change.]

8.30am – Summer Reading Challenge: The Reading Song (@readingagency)

The Reading Song: We hope you all enjoy the official Summer Reading Challenge theme song! Written and performed by [Harry Baker](#) and [Chris Read](#). Silly Squad Character Illustrations © [Laura Ellen Anderson](#) 2020. All other illustrations and animations © [Daisy Mojave Holland](#)

9am – An Audience with Author, Actor and Comedian Ben Miller (@AuthorsAloudUK, @ASCELUK)

*Join Authors Aloud UK and publisher Simon & Schuster for a live chat and readings, with author, actor and comedian Ben Miller. Ben will be talking about his new children's book **The Boy Who Made the World Disappear**, which is a hilarious out-of-this world adventure about time travel, twists of fate and troublesome black holes (for ages 7 – 12). It will be hosted on [Zoom](#).*

9.30am – Reading Together with CILIP: National Shelf Service and Carnegie Greenaway Awards (@CILIPinfo, @CILIPCKG)

*Look out for the #NationalShelfService broadcasts from @CILIPinfo on Twitter or subscribe [online](#) for a day of book recommendations, including a draw along with Jackie Morris, who conjures an otter from her Kate Greenaway winning book, *The Lost Words* at 1pm; a tea time story, *Luna Loves Library Day*, read aloud by Joseph Coelho at 3pm; and story time with Jessica Love at 5pm reading aloud from her award-winning book *Julian is a Mermaid*.*

For older readers, join the CILIP Carnegie Greenaway Awards on @CILIPCKG for readings by the 2020 Carnegie authors from their outstanding shortlisted books from 10.30am to 5.30pm.

10am – Story time for 0-5s with Ken, Ed and Chitra! (@BookTrust)

*Join BookTrust for a live, fun and cozy story time session for 0-5 year-olds to celebrate Reading Together Day, featuring author/illustrators **Ken Wilson-Max**, **Ed Vere** and author **Chitra Soundar** reading their own stories.*



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Catch it on: [Facebook](#) or [YouTube](#). And stay tuned to [@booktrust](#) on Twitter for lots of fun Reading Together Day ideas.

11am – **Author of the Week with Tom Palmer** (@Literacy_Trust)

The National Literacy Trust has teamed up with the Premier League and award-winning children's author Tom Palmer to bring children and families exciting football-themed reading activities, videos and free ebooks to [enjoy together at home](#).

Zone In

Check out the National Literacy Trust's [Zone In](#), a space for young people aged 13+ to access reading challenges, author exclusives and free audiobooks.

12pm – **School Library Association** (@SLA)

*We're starting with Smriti Halls talking about her favourite books as part of the recent 'Representation for all: diverse books for children' webinar for library staff, teachers and parents, followed by videos from SLA staff, supporters and volunteers reading from *Anna Gain* and the *Same Sixty Seconds* by Guy Bass and *Toad Attack* by Patrice Lawrence. There'll also be booklists, reading tips and free webinar on 17 July to hear about the Summer Reading Challenge.*

1.40pm – **The Doves of Damascus** by Ftoun Abou Kerech, read by Sir Nicholas Serota (@ace_national)

*Sir Nicholas Serota from Arts Council England will read *The Doves of Damascus* by Ftoun Abou Kerech, from *England: Poems from a School* edited by Kate Clanchy.*

2pm – **Take part in the Launch of Cathy Cassidy's new book *Forever Phoenix*** (@AuthorsAloudUK, @ASCELUK)

Have you always wanted to ask your favourite writer best-selling author Cathy Cassidy a question? Then this is your chance to join Authors Aloud UK and Penguin Random House publisher and be part of the live launch for her book ***Forever Phoenix***. Cathy is the author of the popular *Chocolate Box Girls* and the *Lost and Found* series. She will be talking about her book, reading extracts from it, sharing her tips for writing stories and answering your questions (for ages 8 – 14). It will be hosted on [Zoom](#).

2.30pm – **Reading Tips from the Department for Education** (@educationgovuk)

The Department for Education will provide you with tips for reading together with children.

3pm – **Read with Pearson** (@Pearson_UK)

Join Pearson for a live YouTube event on Reading Together Day and explore how reading can be a truly enjoyable experience for children and young adults. We'll be exploring how reading aloud can help build vocabulary from early years right the way through to adulthood, with curriculum expert, Mary Myatt. We'll be taking a look at all of the ways in which books can be engaging and enjoyable



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for readers with children's writer, Andy Stanton and author, SF Said, who will be taking us through some of the books that he has enjoyed reading the most and how they inspired him to become a writer.

The event will be hosted live at 3pm on the [Pearson UK Learning YouTube Channel](#).

4pm – **Join World Book Day for story-sharing fun for all ages** (@WorldBookDayUK)

Celebrate reading together with lovely video stories for under 5s, fun booky quizzes, free audiobooks, masterclasses from your favourite authors and illustrators and our Power Book recommendations for young adults.

5pm – **The benefits of family reading in and out of lockdown** (@DCMS)

Read a blog post from DCMS and The Reading Agency presenting new research findings on children's reading during lockdown and the importance of family influences.

5.30pm – **Reading Treasure Hunt** (@OpenUni_RfP)

Join the Open University to celebrate reading in all its diversity! Reading for pleasure involves books and so much more. Hunt for Reading Treasures (online and print) with members of your household and wider family, then share your hoard! #ReadingTreasure Instructions for the Treasure Hunt can be found [online](#).

6.15pm – **Reading Tips from Coram Beanstalk** (@beanstalkreads)

Coram Beanstalk is here to provide you with tips to help your family to read together all summer long.

6.30pm - **Say Goodnight with Dolly!** (@dollyslibrary)

Join Dolly Parton as she shares some of her favourite stories for under-fives from the Imagination Library.

Dolly created the Imagination Library as a tribute to her dad. She felt in her heart that his inability to read probably kept him from fulfilling all of his dreams. Which is why inspiring children to love reading became her mission. In the UK we have sent over half a million books every year, and during lockdown we have sent over 160,000 to families across the country. She says, "Reading together is just a wonderful thing to do, and it's so important. That's why I've made Goodnight With Dolly. I think it is pretty clear that now is the time to share a story and to share some love."

Reading with children right from the start has a massive impact on their development. It's never too early to start! On our website you will find helpful reading tips and activities for preschool children and all 10 Goodnight with Dolly videos to enjoy - no matter your age!

7pm – **Reading as a Family: Top tips for Reading Together** (@readingagency, @Parentkind)

This discussion hosted by Parentkind is a chance to hear from an expert panel including author Joseph Coelho and Professor Teresa Cremin, about the importance of families to children's reading and ways to motivate your little ones. It will look at key benefits and practical tips for reading together, showcase fun, family-oriented incentives such as The Reading Agency's Summer Reading



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Challenge and aim to answer any questions you have about why reading together matters and how you can get your children – and whole family – hooked on books. [Registration is open now.](#)

8pm – An evening with CILIP Carnegie Medal winning author Anthony McGowan
(@AuthorsAloudUK, @ASCELUK)

Join Authors Aloud UK and Barrington Stoke publisher live as we celebrate Anthony McGowan's recent Carnegie Medal winning success for his wonderful book Lark.

Anthony will be talking about the ideas behind the book and the others in The Truth of Things series, as well as giving us a reading or two and answering your questions. As Anthony says: "On one level, Lark is a simple adventure story. Lark is also a story about the power of stories and the way they weave through our lives (for ages 13+, teachers and librarians). It will be hosted on [Zoom](#).

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About The Reading Agency

The Reading Agency is a national charity that tackles life's big challenges through the proven power of reading. We work closely with partners to develop and deliver programmes for people of all ages and backgrounds; our vision is for a world where everyone is reading their way to a better life. We help 1.8 million people benefit from reading every year, through our programmes, our tireless campaigning, our excellent networks and our power to influence, challenge and make change happen. www.readingagency.org.uk [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#)

About Arts Council England

Arts Council England is the national development agency for creativity and culture. By 2030 we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish, and where every one of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences. Between 2018 and 2022, we will invest £1.45 billion of public money from government and an estimated £860 million from the National Lottery to help deliver this vision. www.artscouncil.org.uk

Following the Covid-19 crisis, the Arts Council has developed a £160 million emergency response package, with nearly 90% coming from the National Lottery, for organisations and individuals needing support. Find out more at www.artscouncil.org.uk/covid19

If you would like further information about The Reading Agency, or to submit an interview request for a Reading Together Day ambassador, please contact Saffeya Shebli - saffeya.shebli@readingagency.org.uk



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