



## Reading is Magic Festival reveals all-star line-up of authors and illustrators



**Reading is Magic Festival: Sunday 27 September – Friday 2 October 2020**

[readingismagicfestival.com](http://readingismagicfestival.com)

#ReadingIsMagicFest

*How to Train Your Dragon* and *The Wizards of Once* creator and current Waterstones' Children's Laureate

**Cressida Cowell** is heading the line-up of best-selling authors and illustrators at children's digital book festival Reading is Magic Festival, hosted by TV presenter, broadcaster and *Strictly Come Dancing* finalist, **Karim Zeroual**

### **27 August 2020:**

Bath Children's Literature Festival has forged partnerships with other book festivals to create this unique festival. It has now revealed the full line-up for this autumn's Reading is Magic Festival for young people to create and deliver a free, inclusive and engaging digital schools and family programme.

Reading is Magic Festival is a national and international platform to celebrate and promote the value of reading and books. The partner festivals are: Bath Children's Literature Festival, Borders Book Festival, Boswell Book Festival, Bradford Literature Festival, Brooklyn Book Festival, Henley Literary Festival, North Cornwall Book Festival, Wigtown Book Festival, and Toronto International Festival of Authors.

Thousands of young people all over the world have already been signed up to take part as schools and families are invited to register free at [readingismagicfestival.com](http://readingismagicfestival.com) to bring some of our favourite writers and illustrators virtually into their classrooms and homes. There will even be the chance to take part in live Q&As. Events will last between 10 and 30 minutes and will be broadcast on a schools-friendly platform. All visual events will have captions, a British Sign Language interpreter and the festival have worked with The Egg Theatre's young audio describers to advise the authors and illustrators on audio describing so that more children can enjoy them. Reading is Magic Festival has partnered with Calibre Audio to ensure that children who struggle to access print can enjoy the books that will be featured in the programme.

The festival has been inspired by Cressida Cowell's key message as the current Waterstones Children's Laureate: *"reading is magic, and magic is for everyone"*. The award-winning children's author and creator of the *How to Train Your Dragon* and *The Wizards of Once* book series said, *"Books have a transformative magic in their unique ability to develop three key magical powers: intelligence, creativity and empathy."*

The programme's content is themed around five of the ten points on Cressida Cowell's [Waterstones Children's Laureate Charter](#), which declares that 'Every child has the right to... be creative for at least 15 minutes a week, have a planet to read on, see themselves reflected in a book, have advice from a trained librarian or bookseller, and read for the joy of it.'

Among the writers and illustrators leading sessions and inspiring young people are New York based mural artist **Katie Yamasaki**, Costa Book Award-winner 2019, Bath-based **Jasbinder Bilan**, and teenage influencer **Dara McAnulty**, author of *Diary of a Young Naturalist*. Recent Waterstone's Children's Book Prize-winners **Dapo Adeola & Nathan Bryon** will share their new book *Clean Up!* on our "have a planet to read on" themed day and Scottish model, actor and writer **Eunice Olumide OBE** will lead a discussion on the black curriculum on our "see themselves reflected in a book" day. Some of the audiences' favourites from previous Bath Children's Literature Festivals will also be leading sessions, including murder-mystery writer **Robin Stevens**, *Supertato* and *No-bot* creators **Sue Hendra** and **Paul Linnet**, *Sunday Times* bestseller **Kiran Millwood Hargrave** and the *Observer* political cartoonist and children's illustrator **Chris Riddell**. And on the final day UK Waterstones Children's Laureate **Cressida Cowell** will be joined by USA National Ambassador for Young People's Literature **Jason Reynolds** to celebrate the joy of reading!

On **Sunday 27 September**, the festival opens with Borders Book Festival's event with **Kristina Stephenson**, creator of the *Sir Charlie Stinky Socks* picture books. The event heralds the bringing together of book festivals and their audiences all around the world. An overview of the Monday-to-Friday programme that follows can be found below with full details, including age guidance at [readingismagicfestival.com](http://readingismagicfestival.com).

The Reading is Magic Festival will promote creativity and connection through stories and shared experiences, creating content for children and young people ages 4 to 13 and beyond. Schools can view events live in UK time or on demand afterwards. Online materials and resources will support each event and book buying opportunities will be sign posted. Schools and families can sign up now at [readingismagicfestival.com](http://readingismagicfestival.com).

**Cressida Cowell, Waterstones Children's Laureate 2019 - 2022:** *"I was delighted when Bath Festivals suggested the Reading is Magic Festival in partnership with a network of other festivals, based on*

*some of the themes in my Waterstones Children's Laureate Charter – the giant 'to do list' I announced on my appointment as Children's Laureate. Research shows that reading for the joy of it has powerful, measurable real-life benefits that can transform lives. This 'magic' ought to be available to everyone which is why the work literature festivals do with their local school communities to inspire a love of reading is so important. I am excited that the wonderful virtual programme of events in the Reading is Magic Festival will be available, for free, to schools up and down the country and internationally, so that young people, whether at home or in their classroom bubbles can experience the magic of books and reading."*

Reading is Magic Festival is supported by Baillie Gifford, Bath Spa University, Bath Recreation, Bath Business Improvement District, Kingswood School, Bath, Novia, Royal High School, Bath and Arts Council England.

Fun Kids Radio is a festival media partner and will be airing interviews with participating authors and illustrators and running competitions in the run-up to the festival.

### **Reading is Magic Festival Programme**

*Events curated by Bath Children's Literature Festival unless otherwise stated.*

#### **Monday 28 September: "Every child has the right to .... Be creative for at least 15 minutes a week"**

- 9.15am: A video event with comic artist **Adam Murphy** inspiring us to create our own comics, brought to you by Boswell Book Festival.
- 9.45am: A podcast about creativity and performance from one of the UK's best-known spoken word artists, **Steve Camden**.
- 11am: An action-packed storytelling event from the brilliant brains behind the super-selling Supertato series, **Sue Hendra** and **Paul Linnet**.
- 1.30pm: A celebration of comics and why children engage with them, brought to you by Brooklyn Book Festival and Bath Children's Literature Festival, with comic-enthusiast **Ardo Omer**, New York based mural artist **Katie Yamasaki** and comic-focused computer art student **Caitlyn Buchanan**.
- 2pm: **Cressida Cowell** will treat the audience to a spellbinding talk about the final book in her number one-selling *The Wizards of Once* series, *Never and Forever*, curated by Henley Literary Festival and Bath Children's Literature Festival. A live Q&A will follow this event.

#### **Tuesday 29 September: "Every child has the right to ... Have a planet to read on"**

- 9.15am: Poet **Rakaya Fetuga** and **Kay Michael** from the Letters to the Earth team invites children to write their own *Letters to the Earth*, brought to you by Bradford Literature Festival.
- 9.45am: A podcast with **Cressida Cowell** who will walk listeners through the wild woodland setting of her *The Wizards of Once* series.
- 11am: A storytime event from children's nature writer **Anna Wilson** talking from the North Cornwall Book Festival about nature, magic and vampires.

- 1.30pm: A pair of outstanding young naturalists talk about the protection of our planet. **Dara McAnulty**, acclaimed author of *Diary of a Young Naturalist* has already won the respect and friendship of broadcaster and campaigner Chris Packham. He is joined by ornithologist and equal rights campaigner **Mya-Rose 'Birdgirl' Craig** who founded Black2Nature.
- 2pm: Waterstones Children's Book Prize-winners **Dapo Adeola** and **Nathan Bryon** will inspire children to *Clean Up!* just like their young adventuring protagonist Rocket does when she visits her Grammy and Grampy's tropical island home. A live Q&A will follow this event.

**Wednesday 30 September: "Every child has the right to ... See themselves reflected in a book"**

- 9.15am: #OwnVoices writer **Elle McNicoll**, whose research revealed that only 0.05 per cent of protagonists in children's books are neurodivergent, will inspire and enlighten in equal measures as she invites us to create our own characters. For more information on the term 'neurodivergent' from Elle McNicoll herself visit <https://www.booktrust.org.uk/news-and-features/features/2020/july/elle-mcnicoll-on-being-a-neurodivergent-author/>
- 9.45am: Award-winning authors of Young Adult fiction, **Anthony McGowan** and **Phil Earle** will talk about the importance of celebrating the drama, emotion and pathos in apparently mundane and everyday lives, focusing particularly on Anthony's recent Carnegie Medal-winning *Lark*.
- 11am: An exuberant storytime from **Jessica Love**, whose standout picture book *Julian is a Mermaid* won the 2019 Stonewall Book award – an event which celebrates the beauty of being seen for who we truly are by someone who loves us.
- 1.30pm: An event exploring the enduring popularity of the whodunnit mystery. Bestselling and award-winning authors **Robin Stevens**, **Sharna Jackson**, **Serena Patel** and **Katherine Woodfine** share top tips on making their own mysteries inspired by their *own* lives and experiences.
- 2pm: An important event curated by the Boswell Book Festival and Bath Children's Literature Festival that will consider the black curriculum. Leading the discussion will be **Eunice Olumide** OBE, Scottish model, actor and writer who has appeared on the *Jeremy Vine Show* and *Question Time* talking about the issue. A live Q&A will follow this event.

**Thursday 1 October: "Every child has the right to ... Have advice from a trained librarian or bookseller"**

- 9.15am: A joyful event from the Wigtown Book Festival - **The Bookshop Band** will perform two magical book-themed songs especially for the Reading is Magic Festival.
- 9.45am: A podcast in celebration of National Poetry Day presented by poet and self-confessed library-lover **Joseph Coelho**. Joseph will teach children how to perform *Poems Aloud* and tell them about his personal challenge to join 209 UK libraries.
- 11am: Multi-award-winning novelist **Alex Wheatle** MBE brings a vital part of British and Jamaican history vividly to life in his latest novel *Cane Warriors*, giving a voice to those who were denied one. Alex credits a prison library with empowering him to use words and actions as a force for change.

- 1.30: *Observer* political cartoonist and acclaimed author-illustrator **Chris Riddell** will draw four characters from his magical visual interpretation of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* while we hear contemporary book recommendations, selected for each character, from some extraordinary librarians and booksellers whose superpower is helping children find their own magical story.
- 2pm: An event from Toronto International Festival of Authors with #OwnVoices author **David A. Robertson** talking about *The Barren Grounds*, inspired by C. S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia* and indigenous Canadian 'stories of the sky'. David will be in conversation with **Eloise Williams**, Children's Laureate Wales. A live Q&A will follow this event.

**Friday 2 October: "Every child has the right to ... Read for the joy of it"**

- 9.15am: A follow-on event from Bradford Literature Festival as they encourage children to send and share their *Letters to the Earth*.
- 9.45am: Costa Book Award-winner **Jasbinder Bilan** and Waterstones Children's Book Prize-winner **Kiran Milwood Hargrave** will chat about why reading and storytelling is magical, how they weave this magic into their own books, and the magic they found in the stories they read as children.
- 11am: A fun-filled storytime event from Wigtown Book Festival in Scotland with comic author **Pamela Butchart**.
- 1.30pm: Writer **Steven Butler** steps in to referee the head-to-head draw off between Brighton-based illustrators **Steven Lenton** and **Sophy Henn** as they battle it out illustrating.
- 2pm: **Cressida Cowell** and **Jason Reynolds** chat to *Sunday Times* children's book critic **Nicolette Jones** about their roles as UK Waterstones Children's Laureate and US National Ambassador for Young People's Literature respectively. They will celebrate the joys of reading and writing and the good that can come from it. A live Q&A will follow this event.

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**NOTES TO EDITORS**

**Press Contact**

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For all other interview requests and further information please contact Bath Festivals:

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**Images**

Images, assets and logos available for download:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/7vor8e3rorrecme/AADfoWyPFizigG89-601NJOca?dl=0>

## About the Waterstones Children's Laureate



The Waterstones Children's Laureate is managed by BookTrust, the UK's largest children's reading charity, and sponsored by Waterstones. It is awarded once every two years to a writer or illustrator of children's books to celebrate outstanding achievement in their field, and celebrates children's literature as an art form, recognising its contribution to culture and bringing it to the attention of a wider audience.

The role was created by Poet Laureate Ted Hughes and author Michael Morpurgo. The 'League of Laureates' are the foremost representatives of children's literature, showcasing the extraordinary and dynamic art form and its rich contribution to culture in the UK. Each Laureate brings their own passion to the role and focuses on their own particular themes to create a unique legacy.

The current Waterstones Children's Laureate is Cressida Cowell, the international bestselling author and illustrator of the *How to Train Your Dragon* and *The Wizards of Once* series and author of the *Emily Brown* picture books. The previous ten Laureates are: Quentin Blake (1999-2001), Anne Fine (2001-2003), Michael Morpurgo (2003-2005), Jacqueline Wilson (2005-2007), Michael Rosen (2007-2009), Anthony Browne (2009-2011), Julia Donaldson (2011-2013), Malorie Blackman (2013-2015), Chris Riddell (2015-2017), Lauren Child (2017-2019). [childrenslaureate.org.uk](http://childrenslaureate.org.uk)

## 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 services, libraries, schools and early years practitioners, and are supported with guidance, advice and resources to encourage the reading habit. [booktrust.org.uk](http://booktrust.org.uk)

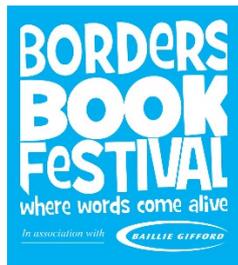
## About Bath Festivals



Bath Festivals is a charity that brings you the Bath Children's Literature Festival, Europe's largest dedicated children's literature festival with a vibrant array of talks and activities for children. They are

also responsible for The Bath Festival in the summer which bring the city alive with a celebration of music and books in the beautiful venues and spaces of the world heritage city. By creating innovative and diverse programmes, their festivals inspire and provide unique experiences for residents and visitors to Bath and surrounding areas. Their year-round creative learning programme of hands-on music and literature projects gives children and young people opportunities to gain real-world experience, building their inner confidence and improving communication skills through the arts. [bathfestivals.org.uk](http://bathfestivals.org.uk)

### **About Baillie Gifford Borders Book Festival**



As a four-day celebration of literature and the arts with more than 34,000 visitors each summer, the Baillie Gifford Borders Book Festival brings some of the best writers, artists and performers to the picturesque town of Melrose in the heart of the Scottish Borders. Over a long weekend in mid-June, audiences can meet their favourite authors and enjoy free outdoor entertainment and live music, and for younger readers, the Family Book Festival brings some of today's finest children's authors and a variety of fun activities. Our partnership with various youth-focused creative organisations supports and nurtures young and local talent in the arts, and the festival also delivers an annual educational programme for nursery, primary and secondary schools across the region. The 2020 festival takes place online during 12 July – 27 September. For more details visit [bordersbookfestival.org](http://bordersbookfestival.org)

### **About Boswell Children's Festival**



The Boswell Children's Festival draws its inspiration from people's lives and as such is the world's only festival dedicated to biography and memoir. An annual weekend of family fun uses fantastic facts to unleash a creative whirl of compelling talks and activities as young minds absorb life stories past and present in the wonderful setting of the Dumfries House estate in East Ayrshire. The Schools' Day brings pupils from all over Ayrshire for a close up encounter with an author, a fun tour of Dumfries House and the James Boswell Creative Writing Workshop, while before the Festival, authors and illustrators work on projects in the local schools. [boswellbookfestival.co.uk](http://boswellbookfestival.co.uk)

## About Bradford Literature Festival



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Hailed as one of the most inspirational and inclusive festivals in the UK, Bradford Literature Festival (BLF) is ten-day celebration of the written and spoken word which takes place annually in the city of Bradford. With more than 500 events across a diverse and wide-ranging programme, the festival now reaches upwards of 70,000 people each year.

BLF is rooted in its social purpose, to deliver tangible social change through cultural experiences. Audiences at Bradford Literature Festival are more culturally, ethnically, and socio-economically diverse than at any other UK literature festival. In 2019, the festival was one of the most diverse events in the UK, with 52% BAME audiences and 42% BAME speakers. The festival's Ethical Pricing Policy, which keeps ticket prices as low as £7, and offers free tickets to those who cannot otherwise afford to attend, helps to ensure that audiences of all backgrounds view the event as one that includes them.

In response to the Coronavirus pandemic, the 2020 Bradford Literature Festival moved online, with a programme of more than 50 digital events which remain available to view on demand via the festival website. Speakers include poet Lemn Sissay, actor Christopher Eccleston, American politician Ilhan Omar, rapper Lowkey and many more.

The festival is supported by Key Partners, Arts Council England, Bradford Metropolitan District Council and the University of Bradford, with funding from the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, the Pears Foundation, Bradford Opportunity Area, the NHS, The Linbury Trust and The Emerald Foundation, and support from Legal Partner LCF Law. [bradfordlitfest.co.uk](http://bradfordlitfest.co.uk) @BradfordLitFest

## About Brooklyn Book Festival



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The **Brooklyn Book Festival** is New York City's largest free literary festival and connects readers with local, national and international authors and publishers during the course of a celebratory literary week.

The Festival presents original programming and enthusiastically welcomes New York City's cross cultural book readers as well as national and international attendees. The Festival is known for fostering creative dialogue among the authors, presenting new literary voices as well as established authors, and for serving the literary community by providing a highly visible platform for the work of authors and publishers.

The Brooklyn Book Festival was launched in 2006 as a one-day event to address the need for a free, major literary event that embraced the diverse constituencies of New York City. It has since grown to

include 8 days of city-wide Bookend events, its flagship Festival Day with 300 authors and a Literary Marketplace with 250 independent and major publishers, and the BKBF Children's Day that celebrates childhood reading. The Festival's credo is "hip, smart and diverse". This year's dates are September 28 – October 5. [brooklynbookfestival.org](http://brooklynbookfestival.org)

### **About Henley Literary Festival**



Founded in 2007, Henley Literary Festival is now established as one of the UK's leading book events for adults and children. In 2019 the Festival sold a record 25,000 tickets with 170 events including Theresa May, Michael Rosen, Nadiya Hussain, Kate Atkinson and Alistair Cook, while previous speakers have included Judith Kerr, Roddy Doyle, Jilly Cooper, John Sentamu and Julia Donaldson. This year the Festival is going online with 40 events in September and October including Rob Biddulph, Candice Brathwaite, Graham Norton, Jodi Picoult and Michael Morpurgo. For more information visit [henleyliteraryfestival.co.uk](http://henleyliteraryfestival.co.uk)

### **About North Cornwall Book Festival**



The North Cornwall Book Festival is one of the south west's leading literary events, led by internationally acclaimed Cornwall-based novelist Patrick Gale. It normally takes place in October, bringing together the best of both adult and children's authors over four days in the idyllic setting of St Endellion on the north coast. [ncornbookfest.org](http://ncornbookfest.org)

### **About Toronto International Festival of Authors**



The Toronto International Festival of Authors (TIFA) is Canada's longest-running literary festival, a charitable, non-for-profit cultural organization. Since 1974, the 11-day Festival has presented the finest of Canadian and international writers, artists and thinkers across literary genres, offering audiences access and empowerment to meet, hear and learn from the finest contemporary writers

and thinkers of our time. Alongside the flagship Festival, TIFA delivers a range of literary events and activities all year long.

The 41st edition of the Toronto International Festival of Authors will take place October 22 to November 1, 2020. [festivalofauthors.ca](http://festivalofauthors.ca)

### **About Wigtown Book Festival**



Established in 1999, Wigtown Book Festival takes place each autumn in Scotland's National Book Town. The town, home to more than a dozen second hand and new bookshops, normally welcomes almost 30,000 visitors to the Festival which takes place over 10 days and presents almost 300 events for adults, young people and children. The 2020 Festival takes place online from 25 September - 4 October. More information can be found at [wigtownbookfestival.com](http://wigtownbookfestival.com).

### **About Fun Kids Radio**



Fun Kids is the UK's children's radio station. Listen on DAB digital radio, on the free Fun Kids mobile app, online at [FunKidsLive.com](http://FunKidsLive.com) or via smart speaker, just say "play Fun Kids"

### **About Calibre Audio**



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Calibre Audio provides free audiobooks to those who are unable to read print, whether this is because of sight loss, dyslexia or another disability that makes reading or holding a book hard. We passionately believe that books should be accessible to everyone, in a format that works for them, so everyone can experience the joy of reading. At Calibre, we believe in social inclusion and the wider benefits that reading brings in combating social isolation and increasing confidence and independence. [www.calibreaudio.org.uk](http://www.calibreaudio.org.uk)