

For immediate release

21 July 2023

BookTrust brings 50,000 children into over 2000 libraries with its Storytime programme and announces the shortlist for the 2024 BookTrust Storytime Prize.

BookTrust the UK's largest children's reading charity has published findings from the second year (2022-23) of their BookTrust Storytime programme. The evaluation shows that the programmes brings new families into libraries and that it encourages further visits.

- 71% of libraries said BookTrust Storytime helped support their work engaging with children under five
- 70% of participating families returned to their local library after their initial visit
- 60% said that new families signed up as a result of attending Storytime sessions or using Storytime resources
- 83% of libraries liked or loved working on BookTrust Storytime

BookTrust Storytime is designed to support library staff across England and Northern Ireland to inspire and engage families with children under five to share stories together and encourage them to make visiting their local public library a regular part of family life. The programme has a particular focus on low-income families who are new to or less likely to use their local library.

2,378 libraries across England and Northern Ireland took part in the 2022-23 BookTrust Storytime programme. BookTrust estimates that 50,000 children under five used or engaged with BookTrust Storytime.

All libraries received copies of the books from the BookTrust Storytime Prize shortlist along with a suite of specifically created materials, resources and support designed to engage families and build their confidence and enjoyment of sharing books with their children. 79% of the libraries which responded to the survey said the online resources supported them in their work with families and 68% rated the resources at least four out of five in terms of suitability for the families using them.

The 2024 BookTrust Storytime Prize shortlist is a brilliant collection of books that cover foundational aspects of early years learning and development, selected by a panel of expert librarians from across the country:

- *Zeki Rise And Shine* by Anna McQuinn & Ruth Hearson (Alanna Max)
- *Are You A Monster* by Guilherme Karsten (Happy Yak)
- *The Perfect Present* by Petr Horáček (Otter-Barry Books)
- *Just Breathe, Bear* by Christianne C. Jones & Oriol Vidal (Raintree Publishers)
- *I Am Happy* by Michael Rosen & Robert Starling (Walker Books)

For children facing disadvantage, reading and sharing stories in their early years is shown to give them the best start in life and has also been proven to provide wide-ranging benefits that positively affect their health, mental wellbeing, education and creativity.¹

As libraries and community organisations play such a vital role in their communities, BookTrust Storytime sessions encourage staff to be creative, using their expertise to attract new families and create fun and welcoming story sharing experiences.

BookTrust Storytime will return from September 2023 in 2,700 libraries in England, and Northern Ireland again providing multiple opportunities for memorable library experiences that attracts new families to these valuable community spaces and keeps them coming back.

Louise, a librarian from North Somerset said:

“A library event has to be a little bit more special to get families in... Having a selection of books for BookTrust Storytime, each with a nice theme, gives library staff a really good way to approach story and rhyme sessions. It’s lovely because it means we can use each book to create themed events.

“It was really good to give all of the libraries the chance to experiment with running the BookTrust Storytime programme. Every library got a chance to deliver it slightly differently - for example, one of our libraries, The Campus, is technically self-service. We made some Storytime Prize self-service resources for this library. We used the BookTrust owl book ends to mark where the BookTrust Storytime books were in the library. We had a little treasure hunt sheet children could use to find the owls. It meant children could come into the library, do the treasure hunt to find the owl books, and tell us which of them they want to borrow – and they got a sticker at the end of that.”

“One of the best methods we have to get kids into the library is being able to offer them stickers that they can collect over time - we’ve found that really effective in terms of getting children into the library and introducing them to the library environment.”

Diana Gerald, Chief Executive of BookTrust said:

“BookTrust Storytime is an important part of our wider approach providing families with multiple and targeted opportunities to share books and stories together as early as possible, from families who regularly visit their local library, to those who are discovering theirs for the first time.

Maintaining our reading support for children especially those from low-incomes families in their early years is a key for us as we know how impactful a regular reading habit can be, providing the foundation for children to enjoy the life-changing benefits of reading.

“Thanks to the feedback, expertise and support of our library partners, we’re able to keep learning and refining ways of supporting families through BookTrust Storytime and with five brilliant new books to share this year we will continue supporting libraries inspiring the next generation of readers with fun and engaging story sharing experiences.”

ENDS

Press contact

Please contact our press office for images, further information and interview requests:
press@booktrust.org.uk

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. Benefits of reading: [benefits-of-reading---booktrust-2023.pdf](#)

Research methodology

The findings in this press release are based on BookTrust's online survey of Storytime practitioners, conducted between April and June 2023. 160 library staff across England and Northern Ireland responded.

You can read more about the findings in the [BookTrust Storytime summary report 2022/23](#) and we will be sharing updates to this later in the year.

About BookTrust

We get millions of children reading, especially those from low-income families or vulnerable backgrounds.

Children who choose to read and who read regularly are happier and healthier. They form stronger bonds and relationships. They do better at school and are more creative. They enjoy more success in life. This is why we work with families, supporting them to start sharing stories and books together from the earliest possible age.

Our carefully selected books and well-researched programmes are delivered by thousands of local partners, bringing the magic of reading to children in every community in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Booktrust.org.uk

About BookTrust Storytime

BookTrust Storytime, now in its second year is a library experience developed to learn how the UK's largest children's reading charity can best support families, especially those with lower incomes, engage with their local public library and develop an ongoing reading habit. The pilot activities were designed in collaboration with librarians, local authorities and families across the UK to test new ways of inspiring families with children aged 0-5 to engage in shared story experiences through their local library and to celebrate the best books to make sharing stories a regular part of family life.

About the BookTrust Storytime Prize

The BookTrust Storytime Prize celebrates the best books for sharing with babies and children under five. For the third year the Prize has been incorporated into the wider BookTrust Storytime programme.

The five books form the basis of BookTrust Storytime 2023/24 and will be sent to libraries in England and Northern Ireland. Families and library staff will also have the opportunity to share their views on how much they enjoyed the books. The creator(s) of the winning title will receive a £5,000 prize.

More information about the 2024 shortlisted books is [available here](#) and the full list of the 2023 shortlisted books and winning title [can be found here](#).