

Family fortunes

How a Paired Reading programme has raised primary pupils' reading ages and self esteem

"I have enjoyed reading and learning with my son . . . He is enjoying reading more . . . My daughter is reading with more of a flow and with expression," say the parents. "I enjoyed having some time with my mum . . . I like books more . . . I can spend time with the person I'm reading to," say the nine-year-olds.

A family Paired Reading project trialled by Kirklees education authority in West Yorkshire has pushed up Year 5 reading test scores by 10 months over three calendar months which included six weeks of daily reading with parents at home, sometimes for only 5 to 10 minutes.

But the benefits go far beyond scores on a chart, says a report by Kirklees adviser Bill Goler and Kirkheaton primary school teacher Julie Booth, from which the comments above are taken. "It engages reluctant readers and gives children quality time with parents . . . It increases reading fluency and creates more confident readers."

Kirkheaton used a range of Barrington Stoke primary fiction to kick-start the project. Year 5



teacher and special needs co-ordinator Julie Booth, who set up the scheme with colleague Simon Smith, found that the choice of books motivated her entire class, including the more able readers. "We have one boy in Year 5 with a reading age of 14, and he didn't think the books were too young for him." As the Kirklees report says, the Kirkheaton experience shows that children can improve their reading by regularly enjoying books that are well within their ability: just like adults, children do not want all their reading material to be obviously demanding. Julie Booth adds: "The point was to promote positive enjoyment of reading. The Barrington

Home run: Kirkheaton's Year 5s choose their Paired Reading books with teachers Julie Booth and Simon Smith

Stoke books were extremely popular because they are good stories, well written. They worked well with our whole year group. We want to repeat it next year for Year 5 and Year 4. The parents are very enthusiastic."

When Steven and Adrienne Stanley took part with their son James, who is in Year 5 at Kirkheaton, James' younger brother Christian, aged seven, got involved too. "I copied James' reading diary for Christian and he read his own books that he got from the library or school, but he was also interested in James' choices," says Steven. "When we went to the briefing for the project and saw all the books laid out, there were some we wanted to take home that night.

"The boys are active and do lots of sports, and they need reminding to read. It helped that there were books about football, and a very good selection. They were inspired and motivated."

Adrienne added that the boys had enjoyed the variety of books and the Barrington Stoke tinted pages. "We got such a lot out of it. It would be lovely to think that every child could have the chance to experience the benefits."



Author on the road

Catherine MacPhail has spent a lot of time in Dundee this year, visiting the S1 cohorts in the city's 10 secondaries plus an off-site centre. She's got 1,457 ideas for new stories as a result: that's the number of entries from S1 pupils for the Book Blurb Competition organised by Dundee's schools and library service in association with Barrington Stoke.

Catherine has now selected the winning blurb from which she will write a novel to be published by Barrington Stoke next year. It's by Becky Wright of Morgan Academy, and it promises "a ghostly game of hide and seek".

"I was so excited by the response," Catherine said. "I looked for ideas that sparked something in me and where the children had thought about where the story would go. You don't have to be a brilliant reader to do a good blurb: you have to have a good idea and be able to show how it would work." She is now immersed in Becky's story.

Hide and Seek by Catherine MacPhail will be published by Barrington Stoke in June 2009.

EXCLUSIVE FOR TEACHERS

Barrington Stoke is giving away a book from the new Solos range (for 10 to 14-year-olds with a reading age of 6.5) to the first 100 teachers who apply.

Email your name and school's details to:

schools@barringtonstoke.co.uk

The closing date is November 30 2008.

Tell us, Mr Bradman

Meet the meanest Viking in history and the author who has set him loose once more

“If I want to write about what it feels like being chased by a horde of Vikings, I just remember how it felt to be chased by skinheads in south London when I was 15.”

Tony Bradman is in the library at Quilley Engineering College in Eastleigh, Hampshire, telling Year 7 about the process of writing his first Viking story.

He has been fascinated by the Vikings since childhood, particularly Harald Hardrada, who fought the English King Harold at Stamford Bridge in 1066 and is believed to have brought about the exhausted English force’s defeat at their next fixture: the Battle of Hastings. *Harald Hardnut*, a new Reality Check title, is a retelling of key events in the *King Harald Saga*, itself a short, punchy book of 80 pages.

“I found Harald a fascinating character,” Tony says. “He was ruthless, cruel, violent but charismatic and a pragmatic fatalist. If something went against him, he would accept it and move on.”

Having worked on retelling stories from Shakespeare for young readers, he is used to simplifying tales but “retaining the essence of the story”

He gave Harald two sidekicks: Ulf, who never stops moaning, and Haldur, who never stops eating. Together they wheel and deal in their native Norway, as mercenaries in Constantinople and in England.

Tony Bradman has been a Barrington Stoke author for the publisher’s entire 10-year history. Barrington Stoke published his first science fiction story, *Alien*, a Gr8 Read (“a tale about warfare and young people being forced by the older generation to do the fighting, it has echoes of the First World War”) and his first story about Roman Britain. This was *Assassin*, in the



Killer questions: Tony Bradman with Quilley’s Year 7 podcast team

FYI series, about a Celtic boy who in AD122 plots to kill the Emperor Hadrian, “then the ruler of the world”, to save his family and keep the peace between the Celts and Romans.

But his first Barrington Stoke book, *The Two Jacks*, is an everyday story of contemporary school life about pupils’ reputation: Jack Baker is labelled as bad and Jack Barker is labelled as good until a new teacher mixes up the labels and their lives start to change.

To keep track of his multiple projects, Tony has a complex notebook system which he displays in the Quilley library. First there’s the pocket-sized notebook that he uses for collecting ideas (“the idea that became *The Mummy Family* stayed in my notebook for 10 years”) and the A4 notebook where he does his planning. “Some authors don’t plan, but I always do. My plans are often four times as long as the finished book.”

Then there’s another notebook, bigger still, for making the plans come to life. “Don’t worry,” he tells the audience, “if you have very, very bad handwriting, one day you’ll be rich and famous like me.”

After a tour of what follows the notebooks in

the stages to publication (manuscripts, proofs and finished copies), it’s question time.

A signed proof of *Harald Hardnut* goes to Haylie who asks the best question: “Would you like your children to do what you do?” Answer: possibly (Tony and his son Tim are working together on a comic strip about ancient Greek heroes). After the session, there are more questions from Nicole, Rowena, Ryan and Matthew, who are making a podcast. Tony’s answers include “*The Hobbit*”, “Rosemary Sutcliff”, “*Rubber Soul and Revolver*”, “white chocolate buttons” and “my guitar”. For the questions, visit www.barringtonstoke.co.uk and download the Quilley podcast.

SPECIAL OFFER

Barrington Stoke’s **Stories from History Pack** (ISBN 9781842995846) includes *Harald Hardnut* and *Assassin* by Tony Bradman and a selection of our most popular stories with a historical theme: 10 titles in all, suitable for ages 9 to 14. Cost is £42.49 (saving £12.41 on the cover prices of the books). See www.barringtonstoke.co.uk for details.



The word from St Columba’s High School, Inverclyde

We have run a Paired Reading scheme for more than 17 years. We partner between 15 and 20 S1 pupils who we have identified as needing help with reading with pupils in S5. I see it as an opportunity for

younger and older pupils to bond, fitting in with our ethos which emphasises sharing talents with others. The pairs read together for 10 minutes during registration time every day. The results in terms of motivation and relationships go far beyond learning support. **Mary McAuley, principal teacher, support for learning**

We use predominantly Barrington Stoke books for Paired Reading. The books work well for this because they are

short with a lot happening, and the pupils can see that they will finish a book soon. I use Barrington Stoke in general for any children up to S4 who don’t know what they want to read. I can say “try this” and children whiz through the books.

Carmela Vezza, librarian

Paired Reading was a great opportunity to make some friends in fifth year as well as reading great books like *War Games* by Terry Deary. **Jonathan Reilly, S1 student**

The scheme allowed the younger pupils to feel more relaxed and willing to read. The slightly informal arrangement made it easier to settle into a reading pattern. A title I particularly liked is *The Shadow on the Stairs* by Ann Halam as it had an eerie theme to it which created suspense, making the reader really want to continue the story.

Emma Stewart, S5 student

Sats revision without toil or trouble

Interactive whiteboard resources that motivate children and support teachers

What do you need to motivate children to engage more deeply with reading, apart from the right book? How about interactive resources that are fun for pupils while teaching what teachers need to teach before the Year 6 Sats?

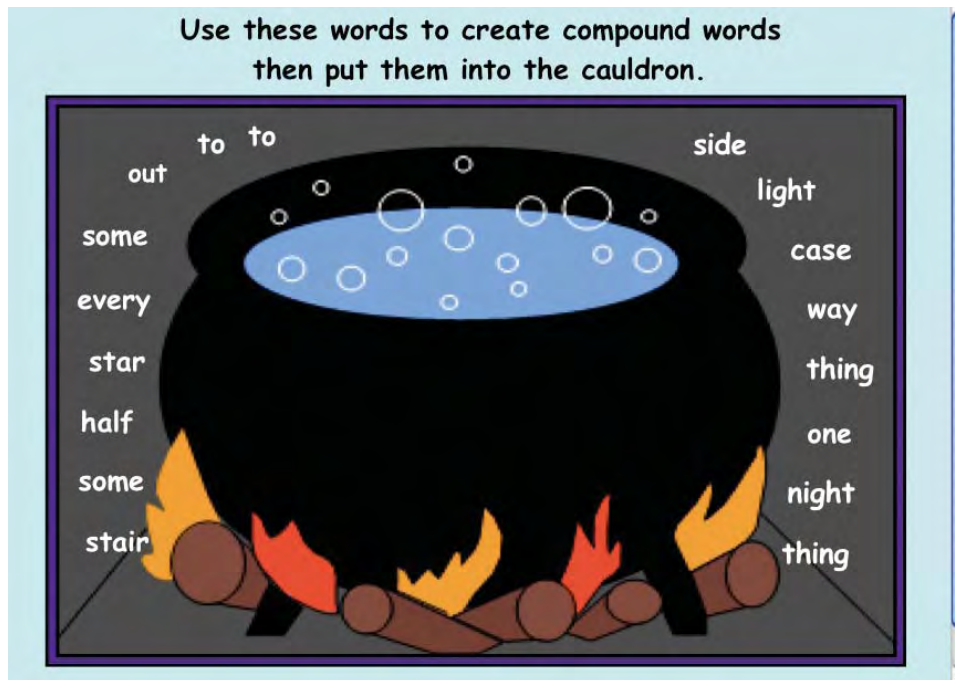
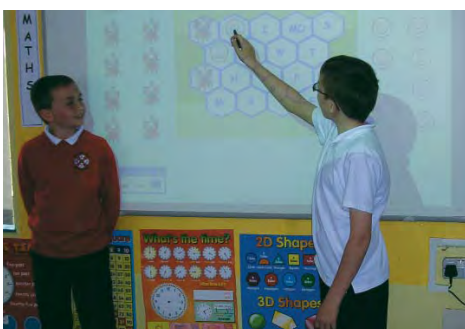
Durham's Schools Information and Technical Support Service has delivered the goods: chapter-by-chapter whiteboard resources to extend work on Barrington Stoke books, which Durham primary teachers can download free from the county's learning platform.

The first two books to get the treatment are *Stat Man Goes Greek* by Alan Durant and *Dragon!* by Hilary McKay. As well as helping Year 6 teachers prepare for Sats, they support themes in Durham's Creative Curriculum (Ancient Greeks in Year 5 and Myths and Legends in Year 4).

The formula is simple: a set of interactive whiteboard exercises for one 45-minute lesson per chapter, each focusing on one area of Sats revision work such as recounts, letter writing and connectives. The exercises have been devised by Pauline Stewart and Susan Goodwin of the ITSS ELearning team. They were piloted before their launch in July at Shotton Hall Junior School in Peterlee and Vane Road Primary School in Newton Aycliffe.

Shotton Hall teaching assistant Ann Hanley read *Stat Man Goes Greek* over six days with a group of Year 6 reluctant readers (a chapter a day, each followed by an interactive activity).

"The children thought the hands-on whiteboard activities were fab. They were reading text from the board without noticing they were reading. When we had finished the book they were saying, 'Can we do it again?'" In Alan Durant's book, a facts-and-football-crazy boy is inspired by a class visit from a funky archaeologist to find out about the world of the Ancient Greeks. Ann found it appealed to her



Compound cookery: Interactive cauldron exercise for Hilary McKay's *Dragon!* Below: Stat Man Blockbuster for Shotton Hall Year 6

group, who all needed encouragement to read: "There's a lot of humour and a lot of blood and gore, like in some of the games where they can do everything but poke your eyes out."

Adam in Year 6 at Shotton Hall, who moved schools in Year 5 and missed "doing the Greeks", agreed with his friend Jack on the top whiteboard activity: "Blockbusters!" (Susan Goodwin's cut-throat Greek games quiz on the TV show model).

Dragon!, Hilary McKay's story of Max (home alone at Witch Towers with only an ominous-looking egg for company) and his timid-but-brave friend Timmy, has also yielded a rich crop of whiteboard activities including a chance to brew up compound words in a witch's cauldron, rhyming on broomsticks and a discussion of the morals within traditional tales such as "The Boy Who Cried Wolf".

Children at Vane Road primary in Newton Aycliffe enjoyed exploring the morals exercise when teaching assistant Linda Palmer used the *Dragon!* materials with a small group of four Year 6 boys. They had been targeted as needing extra help with literacy in the Sats year. She built each of 10 weekly lessons around one chapter of the story. "The boys loved coming up to the whiteboard to do something practical and interactive, like dragging the compound words into the cauldron.

"They weren't keen at first: they knew they were going to have to practice things they weren't good at, like apostrophes, commas and pronouns. But the technology motivated them, they liked being asked for their views and the humour in the book was at their level."

The Durham project also has professional development benefits for teachers. The exercises add up to a taster course on teaching with interactive whiteboards, and teachers can try out more skills by adding their own material. "I wasn't sure that I could complete a whole 45-minute lesson using a whiteboard," says Linda Palmer. "But I tried out something new every

Sample lesson on spelling (*Dragon!* Chapter 8)

Aim: Pupils to recognise and generate compound words and use this knowledge to support their spelling.

- Use a paragraph from Chapter 8 to discuss what a compound word is. Read the paragraph together and find compound words in it.
- Children use Aunt Emma's interactive cauldron (above) to create compound words from two smaller words.
- Children read all of Chapter 8, list the compound words in it and add another five words of their own.
- Children choose 10 compound words for their spelling list.

week, using the activities, and now I feel confident."

As Susan Goodwin says: "The aim is to show a range of ways to teach with the whiteboard around the book, with the intention that teachers will adapt and amend."

ITSS have also produced online revision materials based on the two books for the Understanding Texts element of the literacy Sats. "This is a winning formula which starts with lots of support and gradually reduces it, moving the child on to the next stage," says ITSS curriculum support manager Phil Blackburn. "Because Barrington Stoke authors match topics of interest to an age group with writing for a younger reading age, we can introduce 10-year-olds who are not reading at age 10 to the sorts of material they are going to have to answer Sats questions on."

SOFTWARE OFFERS

For schools Buy 6 copies of both *Dragon!* and *Stat Man Goes Greek* and get the Durham team's software free. Contact katherine.naish@barringtonstoke.co.uk

For local authorities Contact Katherine Naish as above if you are an adviser who would like to use the software with schools

Read Susan Goodwin's report on teaching with *Dragon!* on the teachers' page at www.barringtonstoke.co.uk

Last word Gill Arbuthnott



As an author and teacher, I get to see pupils from two points of view, and hear from them about some of the things that make them reluctant to read.

My standard opening question on author visits is “Who likes reading?”. The response varies hugely, but what interests me is that lots of children who don’t think they like reading actually do. It’s just that they think what they read doesn’t count, because it’s not a “proper book”. Lots of them read comics, graphic novels, magazines like *Match* or *Bliss* ... When you dig, it turns out that there aren’t many children who don’t like reading anything, but they think “reading” only applies to a full length novel or a school textbook.

This idea must be coming from adults around them, and it’s hugely counterproductive. We should celebrate the fact that children want to read; especially the ones put off by the idea of a real book. Reading anything is a start and it really doesn’t matter what us oldies think of the content. The crucial thing is to let children make reading a habit. Establish this and lots of them will gradually move on to more demanding reads and find that they can cope with and enjoy these too. Some of them will discover the passion for reading that those of us in the business long to share with everyone.

And here’s my plea as a science teacher to the people who produce textbooks. If these are the only “real books” a child is regularly going to pick up, couldn’t you find room for a few amazing facts or amusing anecdotes – even if they’re not on the syllabus? It might make pupils more willing to read the text instead of just looking at the “full colour pictures” now seen as essential to every book.

The revision books most popular – and most effective – with my own pupils are from a series that contains lots of cheesy jokes. The hope of finding another one to groan over encourages them to plough through a few more facts. Let’s try to make reading tempting, not toxic.

Gill Arbuthnott is the author of two Reality Check titles, *Mad Scientists* and *Crazy Creatures*. She teaches science at Edinburgh Academy.

Come and see us

The Barrington Stoke team looks forward to meeting you on our stand at the following conferences/events:

Youth Libraries Group

September 12-14 – Lancaster

Dyslexia Scotland

September 27 – One Day Education Conference, Heriot Watt University, Edinburgh, 9am-5pm

National Conference on Accelerating Learning

October 9-10 – Radisson SAS Hotel, Stansted Airport

The NASEN and TES Special Needs Exhibition

October 17-20 – London Business Design Centre.

Reader to writer Keith Gray



I started out as a reluctant reader. I was academically able, but I thought there were more interesting things to do. Through primary school, I read Asterix and Tintin comics. The first time I got excited about a novel was in secondary school, where a boy in the year above wanted to me to read *The Machine Gunners* by Robert Westall. I thought he was cool and I wanted to be accepted by his group, so I read it.

That was the first time I realised that books were meant to be fun rather than something you had to read for tests or homework. Peer recommendation is so valuable: when I visit schools, the kids who like my books

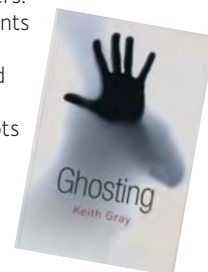
tend to have heard about them from their friends.

I went on to read everything I could find by Robert Westall and also *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole*, which I actually read when I was 13 and three-quarters.

Then I became a fan of Stephen King, because I suspected my parents would disapprove of the violence and bad language.

When I started writing at 17, I was copying Robert Westall and Stephen King. The first story I had published was a horror story. Writing for Barrington Stoke has allowed me to go back to my roots with a lot of emphasis on melodrama and over-the-top plots. My first book for Barrington Stoke was a vampire story (*Before Night Falls* in 2003), and *Ghosting* has a supernatural element.

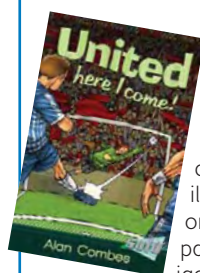
Ghosting by Keith Gray is a Barrington Stoke teen title.



Solo, so good

New for seriously struggling readers

Football, plumbing disasters, dogsled racing adventure and doggy comedy: there’s something to entertain every seriously struggling reader in Barrington Stoke’s first four Solo titles.

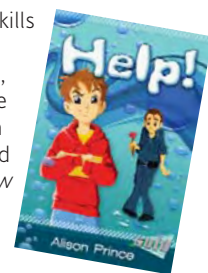


With an interest age of 10-14 and a reading age of 6.5, the Solo series rewards readers with satisfying plots, appealing characters, illustrations on every page and jackets

appropriate for their age group.

Check out the first Solos: *United Here I Come* by Alan Combes (Joey and Jimmy don’t

let their lack of ball skills stop their march to footballing stardom), *Help!* by Alison Prince (hot water when Ben helps his plumber dad to fix a shower), *Snow Dogs* by Jane A C West (courage, danger and friendship below zero) and *Thin*



Ice by Chris Powling (it all starts when a dog gets stuck on a frozen pond – can Pete rescue him without walking on thin ice?).

See page 1 for details of our Solos giveaway. Order online at www.barringtonstoke.co.uk, or through our distributor Macmillan, Tel: 01256 302 692 or fax: 01256 812 558.

Barrington Stoke publishes award-winning stories that everyone can enjoy, from ages 8 to 18.



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