

THE REBEL READING SOCIETY

Newsletter

Author Spotlight

Ashley Thorpe

When did you decide that you wanted to become an author?

I've written stories since childhood, but I was 19 when I really decided I wanted to see my work published someday. I read Richard Wright's autobiographical book *Black Boy*, and his life story inspired me so much I thought it was possible I could be an author for real rather than just posting web stories and fanfics.



Did you read lots as a child - if you did, where did you mainly read? If you didn't, what was the reason?

I was an avid reader, and read more than I can remember at my local library - taking most of those books home with me. But I was also a comics kid - subscribing to *The Beano* in particular, but also *Sonic the Comic*. At secondary school I was more into Manga, probably because I couldn't find much that I could relate to in those years. I didn't really come back to fiction in a big way until sixth form college, which had a library. I read Malorie Blackman's *Noughts and Crosses*, and *His Dark Materials* Trilogy, which reignited the passion.

What was your favourite book as a child and why?

It's very difficult to pinpoint one! I can point to Malorie Blackman's books because they were the only ones in the 90s where I saw main characters who looked like me. Roald Dahl's stories were really funny to me and had heroes I could root for. I enjoyed being thrilled by the *Goosebumps* books, and *Animorphs* with its high stakes, dark tone and relatable heroes. I also loved the *Usborne Puzzle Adventures* because I liked games and puzzles - so combining that with a narrative was a winner for me.



How does it feel to see your books in shops and being sold?

It feels amazing, and still a bit surreal to realise a long-held dream. I hope it's something I never get used to, but I don't think I will because this isn't an industry where you can ever take things for granted.

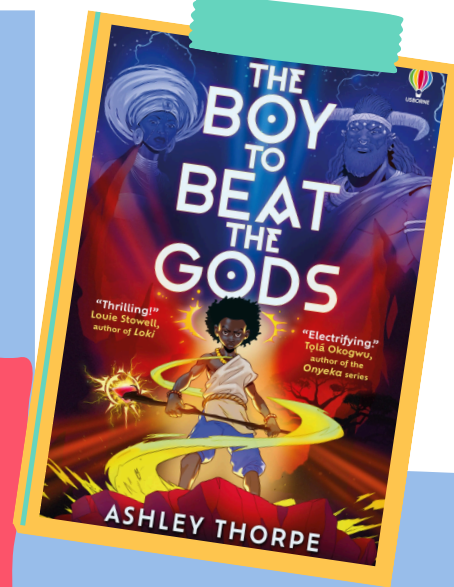
What is the best part about being an author?

The writing of a story – creating something from nothing – but also interacting with the very children the stories are there to serve. The enthusiasm of kids on school visits is infectious, and it makes me so happy to see I've reached them or created something they are really into.



Finally, if you could read for an hour, on your own, anywhere in the world – where would it be?

Great question. I'd pick a beach on an island in the Caribbean any day!



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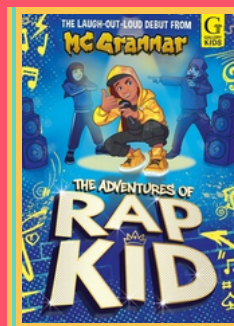
Why do you think it is important for children to read?

I can say from personal experience that your life chances improve significantly with literacy. I really do think reading makes people more empathetic as well, which is sorely needed right now. Also from personal experience, I didn't greatly fit in to the small world I knew in my hometown as a child and then teenager. But even if I couldn't escape that world back then, books showed me that there were other places, other perspectives, and that made me want to eventually discover more for myself.

Have you tried?



Look out for.....



The first in a hilarious series from multi-award-winning teacher and World Book Day Ambassador, MC Grammar! Z stands for ZERO: being the amount of words that Z speaks at school. Why? Because every time he talks, it rhymes. Every. Single. Time. But, things are about to change. The Royal Rap Rumble is coming to town in search of the next rhyming rap legend. With the help of his super-cool English teacher, Mr G, his best friend, SFX, and the ultimate hip-hop makeover, RAP KID is born.

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Issue. 2

Author Spotlight

Helen Rutter

When did you decide that you wanted to become an author?

I had never even considered being an author until I had the idea for my first book THE BOY WHO MADE EVERYONE LAUGH. I was out of work and so I just wrote the story not really having any expectation. I loved writing it so much and then when I managed to find an agent I realised that this might actually be a career!



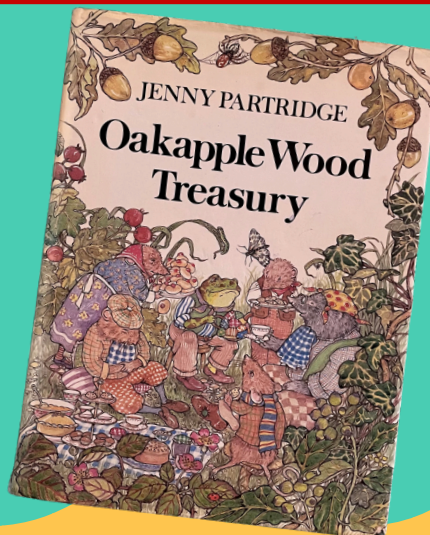
Did you read lots as a child - if you did, where did you mainly read? If you didn't, what was the reason?

Yes I read and re read the same few books we had in the house. A lot of Judy Blume, over and over again! I read The Secret Garden too many times to remember. I still have that copy and the cover is hanging on by a thread.



What was your favourite book as a child and why?

I absolutely adored my Oakapple Wood Treasury. The illustrations are perfect and I never grew out of it. My daughter feels the same way about it now. It's like the comfort food of reading, so safe and cosy.



How does it feel to see your books in shops and being sold?

I am on book seven now so it is starting to feel a bit more normal. Although I saw my book in a charity shop for the first time the other day and I found that very exciting, like it was going on it's own adventures through different owners!

What is the best part about being an author?

I love the variation. That one day I am in my shed writing and the next I am laughing with a hundred Year Six kids at a school visit.

What are the 'not so fun bits' in being an author?

Trying to find motivation when it is dark and cold and the last thing you want to do is write. But that would be the case in any job I guess, I just don't have a boss telling me to get on with it!



Why do you think it is important for children to read?

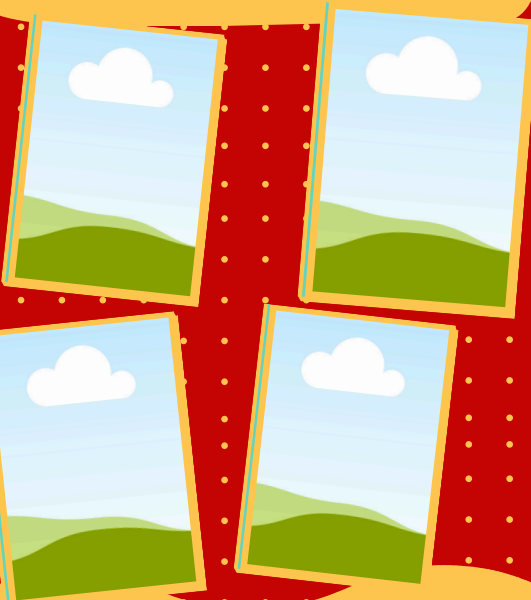
Because it builds empathy, helps them do better across all of their subjects, it feeds their imagination and creativity. I could go on and on but generally it makes them happier and more rounded people!

Finally, if you could read for an hour, on your own, anywhere in the world - where would it be?

In a hammock on a beach in Mexico please!



Have you tried?



Look out for.....

