

**NOW DON'T GET ME WRONG...**

**Chris Powling Number 23:  
Teachers as Readers**

... I can sympathise with any teacher who complains she has “no time to read”. When I was running a class I was sometimes too busy to pick up a book.

Today, the situation is even worse. Whatever benefits the Literacy Hour has brought, the encouraging of reading for pleasure certainly isn't one. The same can be said of SATs, OFSTED Inspections and League Tables. For me the very injunction to “drive-up standards”, never far from most politicians' lips, calls up an image of cattle being stampeded in the direction of the moral high ground by a team of intense and bone-weary trail hands. Curling up with a book, whether inside or outside the classroom, simply gets you trampled in a cloud of dust.

Or so I've long suspected.

Alas, now there's proof. Earlier this year, the United Kingdom Literacy Association (UKLA) published the first report in its 'Teachers as Readers' research project, which investigated the reading habits of 1200 current classroom practitioners. Among its findings were the following:

most primary teachers could not name more than three authors/illustrators of picture books (a quarter couldn't name any).

most primary teachers could not name more than three poets for children.

most primary teachers, when asked to name three 'good' children's authors, could not go beyond Roald Dahl, J.K. Rowling or some permutation of our Children's Laureates ie the writers even non-teachers are likely to know.

Heartbreaking or what?

The better news is that almost three-quarters of teachers questioned had read books for pleasure at home within the last month and remarked approvingly on their own experience of books when they were pupils. “Our sense,” commented Prof. Teresa Cremin, who directed the research, “is that teachers are readers and their memories of reading are dominated by powerful and emotional texts. They enjoy reading popular books and they also read powerful books. But in the classroom they only read light, fun texts. There is a discrepancy here.”

I'll say.

Not surprisingly, the next phase of the UKLA project is called 'Building a Community of Readers'. This involves the 'raising of teachers' knowledge of literature through reading groups and links with libraries.

Let's wish UKLA the best of luck. And let's hope this initiative doesn't get the usual dusty answer from test-obsessed politicians.



We are grateful to Egmont Books for their help with the front cover of this issue:

*Mirrorscape* by Mike Wilks £6.99 ISBN: 978-1405233491

**CONTENTS**

**Reviews**

- 6 - 7 **Babies & Toddlers** – to entertain and challenge
- 9 **Poetry Please!** – Prizewinners + Autumn titles
- 10 - 11 **Picture Books** – for looking and listening
- 14 - 15 **First Steps** – engaging young minds
- 24 - 25 **Going Solo** – to gain reading confidence
- 28 - 29 **Non-fiction** – information for all the family
- 30 **Non-fiction** – can be fun!
- 32 - 33 **Older** – longer novels to enjoy
- 36 - 37 **Fluent** – rich and compelling stories
- 40 - 41 **Teens** – fiction to grow the mind



**Ways With Words**

- 8 Having Another Go! – Sarah Garland
- 16 The Truth is a Meringue – Andy Stanton
- 20 Not a Child of Science – Lucy Hawking
- 21 Crash! Bang! Wallop! – Eoin Colfer
- 22 - 23 Making Peace with the monkey god  
Laurence Anholt
- 26 - 27 Slavery – 200 Year Anniversary of the  
passing of the Slave Trade Abolition Bill
- 31 Save Kid's TV – Colin Ward
- 34 - 35 Children's Publishing Today – Graham Marks
- 38 - 39 Before *Apache Girl Warrior* –  
Tanya Landman



**Meeting the Readers 2007**

- 17 - 19 The Rise and Rise of Festivals

**Regular Features**

- 3 Contents and Now Don't Get Me Wrong
- 5 Cover Story – Mike Wilks – Imaginer
- 12 - 13 Working from Home – Gary Blythe –  
A Traditional Painter at Heart
- 42 Roundabout



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**Apologies to:**

Mary McQuillan and Piccadilly Press for mistakenly crediting the wrong person as the illustrator of *It's Not Fair!* in issue 36. The review of this title should have read by Anita Harper and Mary McQuillan.  
 Rowan Stanfield-Miller and Childs Play Publisher for referring to another artist instead of Tim Burton in her review of *The Flower*.