

# The Virtual Snug

## Promoting Reading for Pleasure during the 2020 Covid Crisis

Clare McGreevy



### Context

I am the English Lead of Lowerplace, a three-form entry primary school. I also lead the OU/UKLA TaRs Hub/ Teachers Reading Group in Rochdale and organise an annual children's Literature Festival for the town. I am dedicated to raising the profile of children's reading for pleasure by involving the wider community.



### OU Research inspiration and rationale:

In line with the OU research findings (Cremin et al, 2014) I aimed to:

- To develop social reading environments, albeit virtual ones
- To develop reading communities that are reciprocal and interactive within families and our school

### Aims:

To encourage children, families and the school community to read for pleasure during lockdown by:

- Creating a virtual school library online ('The Virtual Snug')
- Creating a half-termly reading newsletter ('Placebook')
- Developing reciprocal reading relationships between staff, children and parents

## Outline

### The Virtual Snug!

The school library, affectionately known as Grandma's Snug, is a community-focused space where parents, children, staff and members of the wider community come to borrow and share a love of books together. After lockdown occurred, I looked at ways that we could still connect with families at home in order to share books and decided to move the Snug online.

- I asked our IT manager to set up a mysterious door on the home page of the school website which invited visitors to step inside and added a school welcome message and mission statement:

We're very excited to bring our Reading For Pleasure programme online! We all know that reading is vital to academic attainment, but studies have shown that the benefits of reading stretch throughout a person's life. As well as the huge bonus of expanding our knowledge and vocabulary, reading results in improved levels of empathy, improved memory and concentration levels and better writing and thinking skills. Spending time engrossed in your favourite books even lowers levels of stress and depression. We want to foster a lifelong love of reading in all our children: together we can make it a part of children's everyday lives and something they'll choose to do forever.

Please click on the images below to see what we have in store!

- I got in touch with Cressida Cowell to ask if she would mind recording a personalised message for the Snug page in order to give it a sense of excitement and gravitas. She very kindly obliged with a wonderfully inspiring clip from her writing shed.



- I asked our IT team to create categories within The Virtual Snug to make it easy to navigate:

- Authors' Corner
- Chapter Books
- Well-loved Tales
- News and Competitions
- Epic Books



- I approached authors to ask if they would contribute readings from their books to 'Authors' Corner'.



- In the section 'Chapter Books', I asked the office team to add links to authors' reading their books.
- For 'Well-loved Tales', our wonderful staff all chose a favourite picture book to read or retold a traditional tale



## Placebook, The Lowerplace Reading Newsletter

In order to reach families who might not have the Internet, I created a half-termly newsletter. This was also a way of promoting the Virtual Snug to families who didn't know it was available on the website. The newsletter included invitations to share reading areas at home, local library details, competitions, the latest book reviews, interviews with staff and invitations for children to share their book reviews.



# Placebook

Lowerplace Primary School's Reading Newsletter  
Summer Term 2020



Welcome to the very first edition of Placebook, Lowerplace's one-stop shop for all the latest in bookish news! Each half term, we will be sharing the best new book releases, recommendations from staff and children, reading-related website links, important dates, events and competitions and lots, lots more! We would love to hear from parents too – what are you reading at the moment? Please let us know your favourites! Happy reading everyone!

**Spotlight on...Ms Martin, Lowerplace's new Headteacher!**

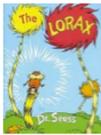


I am so excited to be joining Lowerplace. It's such a shame that I haven't been able to meet many of you yet but when that time does arrive we will have so many books to discuss because lockdown is enabling us all to read so much more.

Like many at Lowerplace I love to read. I make it my mission to read books that you might enjoy so that I can recommend books to you, but I also love to read books children recommend to me.

You can probably work out who one of my favourite authors is – I love the rhyme in Dr Seuss Books but The Lorax is my favourite.

I remember reading it for the first time when I was teaching in America; I read it to my class and couldn't help crying as I read it aloud to them. Books can have that effect on you. Have you ever read a book that has really touched you? Maybe it made you laugh so much you couldn't stop or like me it made you cry? I'm currently reading a book recommended by a Year 6 boy. It's called Rebound by Kwame Alexander and is written as a series of raps and comic strips. I can't wait to talk books with you with all. Which book do you think I should read next?



**Introducing The Snug Online**

During the lockdown, we've been beavering away to create a Virtual Snug!

Why not pop over to [www.lowerplace.net](http://www.lowerplace.net) and have a peek – you'll find a very special welcome message from the Children's Laureate for the UK, Cressida Cowell, recorded in her magical writing shed!

Authors Polly Ho-Yen and Luke Temple share chapters of their brilliant books in Authors' Corner and you'll find teaching staff reading some of their favourite tales!

**Events, Competitions and dates for your diary!**

[booktrust.org.uk](http://booktrust.org.uk) – a chance to win some brilliant prizes, from book bundles to signed copies and many other treats!

[generationlockdown.co.uk](http://generationlockdown.co.uk) – a writing competition asking for your lockdown stories in 700 words – winners will be published in a book! Closing date: 17<sup>th</sup> July.

Young Muslims Writers Awards – open to KS1 and KS2 to submit a short story or poetry. Closing date: 13<sup>th</sup> August.

[caabpublishing.co.uk](http://caabpublishing.co.uk) – enter a 1000 word magical story featuring a taxi cab! Closing date: 30<sup>th</sup> September.

**Share your book nook**

We've had so much fun designing our Snug! We thought it would be great to see the book nooks you have made at home to enjoy a good story and a biscuit or two! Perhaps you've made a den in your bedroom or you've got a special chair you like to read in. Simply send a photo of your book nook to your teacher on Google Classroom or to Ms McGreevy through the school email address [office@lowerplace.rochdale.sch.uk](mailto:office@lowerplace.rochdale.sch.uk) and we'll will post these on the Lowerplace website.



**Local Library Access**

Though closed, our wonderful Rochdale libraries are still delivering services online. You can access eBooks, eAudiobooks and eMagazines. For more information go to: [www.rochdale.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.rochdale.gov.uk/libraries)

## What's New? Latest Fiction and Non-Fiction Releases!



### *I Ate Sunshine For Breakfast* by Michael Holland

Did you know that the rubber in your shoes came from a tree? Ever wondered where your breakfast cereal is grown? Have you remembered to thank a bee today for the food you ate for dinner last night? This illustrated compendium celebrates the plants you didn't even know you used, with simple but exciting projects for all the family to try at home!

### *The Worst Class in the World* by Joanna Nadin

A brand new, laugh-out-loud young fiction series from bestselling author Joanna Nadin. Perfect for fans of Horrid Henry. Headteacher Mrs Bottomley-Blunt thinks 4B are the rottenest of eggs – when will they win a prize like 4A? But somehow the chaotic crew always muddle through, even though Mr Nidgett keeps threatening to leave teaching and become a lion-tamer.



### *Don't Call Me Grumpycorn* by Sarah McIntyre

Unicorn gets ready for an intergalactic adventure in this hilarious picture book!

### *Troofriend* by Kirtsy Applebaum

Imagine having the perfect friend who never lets you down? Now you can, with the Troofriend 560, the latest in artificial intelligence! What could possibly go wrong with a robot buddy? A pacey and gripping sci-fi tale!



## What are your favourite reads?

Have you read a book that you'd love to recommend in the newsletter? Send your recommendation to your teacher in Google classroom or to Ms McGreevy c/o [info@lowerplace.rochdale.sch.uk](mailto:info@lowerplace.rochdale.sch.uk) and you could be featured in our Autumn 1 edition! Make sure to include your name and class, the book title, author, and why you are recommending it!

## In the Reading Corner



Hello Ms Carr! Lovely to have you in the Reading Corner! Everyone knows you absolutely love reading but, if you had to pick, what is your all time favourite children's book and why?

My favourite children's book is 'Tom's Midnight Garden' by Philippa Pearce. This is my favourite because my mum used to read it to me when I was younger and it is full of magic and mystery. There is a wonderful twist to the story

at the end too.

### Book or Kindle?

Book. I love the smell and the feel that books have, especially older books that have been read a lot.

### When and where do you most like to read?

I most like to read in the garden when it is a sunny day. When the weather is bad, I prefer to read just before I go to bed as it helps me to sleep.

### What are you currently reading?

I am currently reading *The Many Worlds of Albie Bright* by Christopher Edge. I read *The Infinite Lives of Maisie Day*, which is also written by this author earlier in the year and I fell in love with it. This story seems to be just as good so far! During lockdown, I've also loved reading *Once* by Morris Gleitzman and *The Other Alice* by Michelle Harrison.



## Why not try one of these 2019 Placebook favourites?

Reception: Mini Rabbit: Not Lost – John Bond

Year 1: We Eat Bananas – Katie Abey

Year 2: My Grandma and Me – Mina Javaherbin

Year 3: How to Make Friends with a Ghost – Rebecca Green

Year 4: Hubert Horatio: How to Raise Your Grown-Ups – Lauren Child

Year 5: Little Badman and the Invasion of the Killer Aunties – Humza Ashad

Year 6: The Clockwork Crow – Catherine Fisher

\*For even more recommendations, explore other titles on [www.booktrust.org.uk](http://www.booktrust.org.uk)\*

In order to stay connected with families over the summer, I am also making a **bumper summer edition** that will include reviews from children, parents and staff. It will also include photos of reading areas that children have created at home. I contacted the author Emma Carroll and she agreed to be interviewed for the summer edition. When the year 6 children returned to school, they created the questions that they wanted to ask:

1. Have you always wanted to be an author?
2. What were your favourite books as a child?
3. What age did you start writing stories?
4. Is it hard to come up with original ideas?
5. Where do you get inspiration?
6. How long does it take you to write a book?
7. Where do you write your stories?
8. Do you have to edit your stories a lot before you are happy with them?
9. Do feel pressured when you are writing a book?
10. Out of all the books you have written, which is your favourite?
11. Why did you choose to write a book about Ancient Egypt?
12. What inspired you to write about WW2?
13. What fascinates you about historical themes and how long does it take to research information for your stories?
14. Would you like any of your books to become a movie? If so, which one?
15. Do you choose the front covers for your books?
16. Who is your favourite author?
17. Are you currently writing a new book?
18. What tips would you give someone who wants to become an author?

## Impact

Given the nature of the current crisis, understanding the impact of the Virtual Snug and the Newsletter is still patchy. We have promoted both on our virtual classrooms and pushed a lot of reading for pleasure activities, as the reading rivers completed by most of the children

