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# BATTLE OF THE BOOKS

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**More people, reading more books, more of the time.**

Amy Lloyd, Library Manager

@baconscollege

For consideration within the Egmont RfP Award - Whole School Category



Photo credit: Marcel Ebanks

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World Book Day celebrations 2018

Photo Credit: Marcel Ebanks

## Context

Bacon's College is a secondary school in South London, with around 1000 students. At the time of writing 496 of these students are in receipt of Pupil Premium funding, 493 receive free school meals, and 264 have English as another language. 21.6% of our students failed to meet the expected standard in reading on entry in year 7.

The school is situated within sight of Canary Wharf, with students largely living in Rotherhithe and Bermondsey.

Bacon's College is part of the United Learning Group.



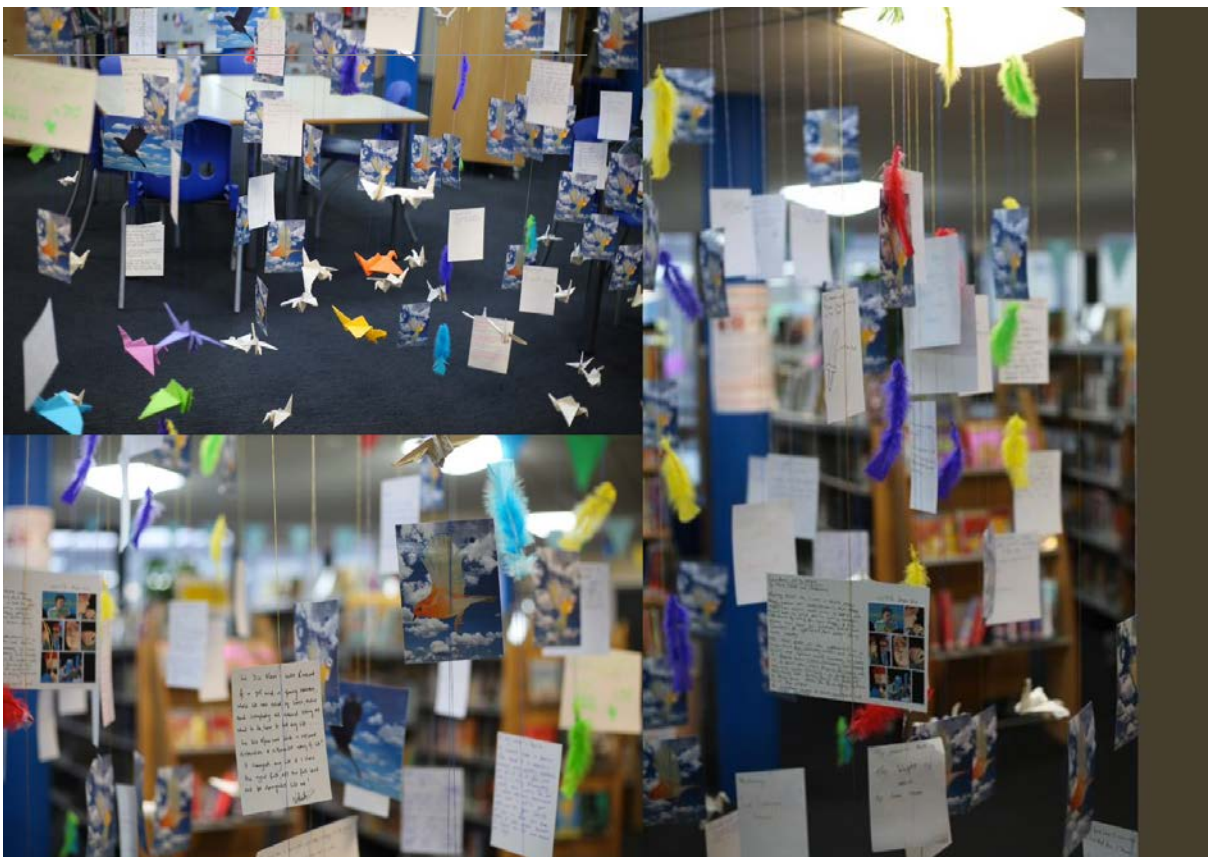
Student poster design, illustrating the school library's mission statement 'More people, reading more books, more of the time'.



## OU Research Inspiration and Rationale

The Battle of the Books formed the keystone of a festival for World Book Day. The festival developed a whole school reading community that shared the Teachers as Readers (TaRs) research conviction that reading for pleasure “*urgently requires a higher profile to raise attainment and increase children’s engagement as self-motivated and socially interactive readers*”.

We wanted to ‘market’ the findings of the Open University’s TaRs internally to the staff, so that we could live that ‘higher profile’ within our own school community. Through modelling the idea of reading teachers in a loud and public way we labeled all reading as valid and profiled *all* staff (not just teachers) as readers to the whole school community. Several of our staff were also inspired by Daniel Pennac’s book ‘*The Rights of the Reader*’, which challenged the school’s previous assumptions about reading - a culture of reading as ‘chore’ that we wanted to change.



Images from a display of children's 'My favourite book' postcards for World Book Day 2018

## Aims

In an informal focus group during the development phase of the project, a student had told us *'Adults don't read, teachers don't read, why should we read? Can we go and ask the teachers if they read - I bet they say no!'*.

This students' conviction that 'adults don't read' inspired the following aims, which were circulated to SLT and staff prior to the project:

- To publicly and explicitly state that we care about reading by celebrating books visibly across the whole school.
- To model good reading practice for our students. All teachers should be reading teachers!
- To build momentum behind a 'whole school reading community'.



A sample of Battle of the Books posters, with numbers of votes (displayed in the week following the announcement of the winner).

## Outline

For World Book Day 2018 we had created a film, in which we had asked staff and students to talk about their earliest reading memories. This had effectively communicated to staff that their own reading experiences were important and valid parts of the reading culture of the school, but in 2019 we wanted something more 'marketable'.

We asked staff to record 30 second 'elevator pitches' for their favourite books. We also took photographs of them holding up blackboards with the name of their chosen book. The videos were then shown on a rolling loop in the library as well as in tutor groups. We LAO held a whole school assembly to launch the project. Throughout the project the school was plastered with posters. It was important that we collected as wide a range of responses as possible and the final videos included SLT members, teaching staff, canteen staff, premises staff and admin staff. The project permeated every area of the school.

All tutor groups were then asked to bring their votes to the library. We employed a 'no-rules' voting system, which meant that students could photocopy and cut out votes as many times as they wanted (meaning that some particularly enthusiastic members of staff were able to use delightfully underhand tactics to inspire 1000s of votes). A raffle prize was also offered as an additional incentive to vote.





Images of staff members 'pitching' their chosen books to students.

As part of a weeklong 'Festival of Reading' for World Book Day we held a 'soap box' event at which staff made live and impassioned pitches for their books. Votes cast at this event were eligible for a raffle draw (and there was also plenty of pizza). As an additional incentive to staff, the person whose book attracted the most books also won a prize.

Other events in the Reading Festival included workshops with graphic artists and journalists, a performance poetry event and prize givings for the students who had raised the most in the Readathon (which had been run with years 7 and 8 in the lead up to March).



**Thursday 7th March 2019**

- Your favourite teachers need you to decide which book should be crowned the winner.
- Students will vote for their favourite book during a teacher book battle. All voters will be entered into a raffle with the chance to win an iPad.

- All ages welcome, but **tickets are limited.**
- Pizza and popcorn will be available throughout the evening.

Slide from promotional powerpoint sent to all tutor groups.



Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup>  
March (4pm)

# The Telegraph

**Want to learn how to create a newspaper article from scratch?**

- Want to hear from the woman at the centre of one of the biggest news stories of this century?
- Want to know what life is like at the Telegraph – an internationally renowned newspaper?
- Come and take part in the journalism workshop!
- All students from years nine, ten and eleven are welcome.
- **Availability is limited, so get your ticket quickly.**








Meet Isabelle Fraser!



Promotional materials for and image from journalism workshop with Isabelle Fraser.



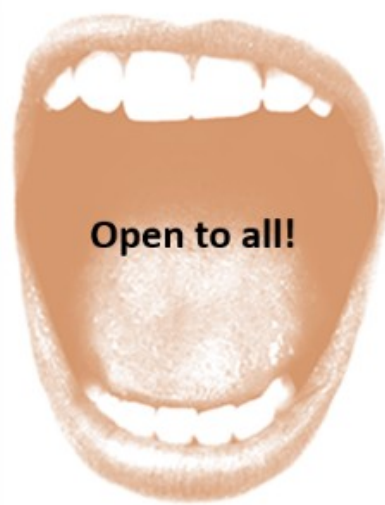
<p>Monday 4th March 2019 (3.30pm)</p>	 <p>Rian Hughes</p>		<p>Meet the man responsible for illustrating Dan Dare and more</p>	<p>And designing iconic comic book logos from Batman to TMNT!</p>	
		<p>Learn how to create graphic novels from one of the UK's most prolific illustrators</p>			<p>Take part in a workshop where you create your own comic</p>
<p><b>Only open to Y7 &amp; Y8 students! Limited number of tickets!</b></p>					



Promotional material for and image from graphic novel workshop with Rian Hughes

**Wednesday 6th March 2019**

**Wanda Canton**



Promotional material for and image from performance poetry workshop with Wanda Canton

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Rosie and I have been hard at work on a programme of events for the first week of March to coincide with World Book Day, but we need your help!

1. Here's the exciting bit.....your chance to win a bottle of **Prosecco** and the adoration of the whole school! From 25 Feb up to half-term Amy and Marcel will be out and about with a camera, to capture 30 second pitches from staff about your favourite book. In the week of 4 March, the whole school community will be voting on their favourite – we'll send out more details about how you and your students can vote and get involved nearer the time, but for the moment, start thinking about what book you want to nominate and why, because when we appear with that camera, you'd better be ready!
2. **Readathon** – we will be launching this with years 7 and 8 in their library lessons from 31 January. They will have until 25 Feb collect as much sponsorship as they can for reading as many books as they can. Please keep asking them throughout the whole period how they are doing, and support them with their reading! You can read more about the Readathon and where the money raised will go here: <https://readforgood.org/>
3. **Week Long Reading Festival** – we will be sending out a poster soon for all the events happening during the first week of March – this will include a chance to work with anime artist and a journalist. Please promote these events to your forms or come along yourself!

#### Why are we doing this?

***'Adults don't read, teachers don't read, why should we read? Can we go and ask the teachers if they read - I bet they say no!'***

Year 9 Student, Bacon's College

***"Reading for pleasure was also found to be strongly influenced by relationships: between teachers; between teachers and children; between children and families; between children, teachers, families and communities."***

Research evidence on reading for pleasure – DfE, 2012

World Book Day is an opportunity to promote reading for pleasure in Bacon's College. The celebrations we are planning are the first step in building a reading community, where all staff and students are routinely reading, discussing and getting excited about books. The benefits of reading for pleasure are multiple, from increased academic attainment, to mental wellbeing and even an extended lifespan.

One of the most valuable things we can do as a school is be visible in our reading. In the library, the greatest interest and excitement comes when students ask to borrow books that have been recommended by their teachers. Theresa Cremin's research in her book 'Building Communities of Engaged Readers' and work with the UK Literacy Association suggests one of the most valuable things you can do to encourage reading in schools, is to read more yourself and to be visibly and explicitly excited about books. Your 30 second video about your favourite book, could be the key to a student really getting into reading for the first time – we hope that our festival will be fun, but we also think all of this work is hugely important – so thank you in advance for your help and support.

Kind regards,

Amy Lloyd & Rosie Westwood

**Images of briefing note sent to all staff**

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## Impact

Over 35,000 votes were cast in Battle of the Books, and 45% students said that the events across the week would 'encourage them to read more'. The Battle of the Books was a high profile event that also attracted the attention of our academy trust, United Learning - as a result we are hoping to run the event across two additional schools this year.

Our objective to raise the profile of reading for pleasure also led to a write up of our Readathon in the local newspaper <https://www.southwarknews.co.uk/news/bacons-college-sponsored-read-charity/> as well as press coverage for our successful Foyle Foundation grant (for which we used our Battle of the Books project as a case study) <https://www.southwarknews.co.uk/news/pupils-at-rotherhithes-bacons-college-get-reading-boost-with-library-grant/>.

The most important outcome was with staff, amongst whom there is a growing understanding of both the importance of and the fragility of reading for pleasure. Books that received a high number of votes continue to be 'high traffic' books in the library and we now have a 'local canon' of books, that have significance within our school community.

## Reflections on Impact of the TaRs Research

Teresa Cremin's work has been useful validating tool for my work since it was published. I attended a conference of Greenwich teachers around five years ago, which she opened by reading the audience a story. It was a sentiment that I have tried to retain - a resistance to the 'institutionalisation' of the process of reading and particularly reading for pleasure. We are currently developing a 'Culture of Narrative Engagement' - a programme that builds on the OU research and on the learning we continue to do through Battle of the Books. One of our current projects is focused on genre fiction (particularly horror), developing both our book knowledge and our understanding of its appeal to young readers. We are paying attention to our readers and responding to what they tell us.