

TeenLibrarian

Monthly Newsletter
www.teenlibrarian.co.uk



A belated Happy New Year to all readers of TLM, I hope that 2010 has started well for everyone and will continue to be a good year!

This month's edition starts with some suggestions of technologies to try if you have not already embraced them – go on you know you want to and so many of us already do, there is strength in numbers!

We then take a peek at the Book Zone 4 Boys – a brilliant blog maintained by Darren Hartwell an Assistant Head Teacher who is passionate about getting boys reading. This month introduces a new section of the newsletter – authors to watch in 2010, this will be a short feature on authors new to the YA market, this month features soon to be published Tamsyn Murray. There is also a link to information on how to use Twilight as a teaching resource.

This month's Eight Questions With... interview is with Alyxandra Harvey, author of the fantastic new Teen Vampire Romance book *My Love Lies Bleeding*

Technology to Try in 2010

Twitter

I am a massive fan of Twitter, not so good for contacting young people but excellent for keeping in touch with authors, publishers and publicists. If you do not use Twitter click on this link: <http://www.twitter.com> and join now! Once you have done that here are some Tweeters that are involved in the Teen/Young Peoples Library world that you can follow:

@mattlibrarian (me!)
@kate_librarian
@RandomPR
@ACBChildrens
@FaberBooks
@UsbornePR
@MichaelRosenYes
@emmalibrarian
@headspaceefford

Blogging

Blogging has been around for quite a while so most, if not all people are aware of it. Why not make 2010 the year you start a groupblog with colleagues or Teen groups? You could use:

<http://www.tumblr.com/>

<http://www.wordpress.com>

<http://www.livejournal.com>

<http://www.blogger.com>

One of my current favourite library blogs is the Headspace Efford Blog which can be viewed here: <http://bit.ly/4nqIT2> Written in a chatty, informal style it contains information on upcoming activities at Headspace Efford as well as containing write-ups on past events.

Book Zone (for Boys)

I am a 38 year old Assistant Headteacher and I love reading books written for children and young adults. A number of my friends think I am a little odd because of this, and I am sure that the staff in my local Waterstones must think I have children with sagging bookshelves as a result of the amount of kids' books that I buy from them. Confession time – nearly all of these books are for me. My reading habits aren't exclusively geared towards kids' books (my long-suffering wife will happily attest to this as she despairs at the number of books we have at home), but for pure escapism there is little in the adult market to beat them. And escapism is the main reason I love reading so much – it helps provide a short break from the everyday problems and concerns I face and the pressures of my job.

I have always loved reading, a trait I inherited from my mother. I grew up on a diet of Enid Blyton's Famous Five and Five Find-Outers, before graduating onto The Three Investigators, The Hardy Boys and eventually Agatha Christie's huge back-catalogue (although never Miss Marple). Fast-forward to the present and my passion for reading has

grown over the years; I read every night before going to sleep, our house has books in nearly every room and my godsons and their brothers get books as presents for birthdays and at Christmas... and they love them!

Unfortunately it is this lifelong passion for reading that is proving to be one of the biggest hurdles in my work at the school where I teach. I line-manage the school's librarian and together we are trying to encourage the students at the school, and especially the boys, to read for enjoyment, but because I personally have enjoyed reading from a young age I still struggle to understand why so many of these boys see reading as a chore, and the library a place to go only when the weather is too cold or wet for a breaktime kick-around. Admittedly, I teach in a school in the leafy London commuter-belt so many of the families have a greater than average disposable income, and the students therefore have many other ways to spend their free time, but this does not fully explain why, when asked, the boys claim that reading is boring, uncool, a waste of time, and so on. Our work at the school is still in its infancy; so far we have introduced the Reading Champions scheme, a Reading Passport programme, and we have male staff reading out loud every Friday at breaktime. These measures have met with varying degrees of success – as an example of what I am up against, we spent a lot of time promoting the recent Reading Champions Wrestlemania competition and had a grand total of two entrants – but I refuse to give up!

At a particularly low point back in October I decided to try my hand at writing a blog that would focus on raising awareness of the vast wealth of 'boy-friendly' books that have been published since Harry Potter burst onto the scene. After all, if I wasn't having much success at school, maybe I could try a much larger audience? Less than three months on and I feel overwhelmed by the response I have had so far from young people, parents and fellow bloggers. I have even had authors, whose work I have read and loved, volunteering to be interviewed. When I started www.bookzone4boys.blogspot.com I thought I would be writing one review a week, using books from my own collection that I felt would appeal to boys. However, encouraged by the early comments and emails I received, as well as the new friends I was making on

Twitter, I was very soon publishing an average of four posts a week, and then publishers started emailing me, asking for my address so that they could send me books. Of course, this makes it even harder to choose which books to read and I am having to devote a little more of my time to reading, but you won't hear me complaining about this!

2010 is already looking like it is going to be a very exciting year for kids' and YA books. MG Harris is about to release *Zero Moment*, the third book in her excellent *Joshua Files* series, Rick Riordan (author of the soon-to-be-in-cinemas *Percy Jackson* series) has promised the first in a brand new series of books, and there are a number of very exciting new authors to watch out for, including William Hussey (author of *Witchfinder: Dawn of the Demontide*) and A.G. Taylor (author of *Meteorite Strike*) – reviews for both of these books can be found on my blog, and I can highly recommend them as having huge appeal to both boys and girls.

Back at school, I am planning to implement a number of new ideas this term. The first is a big spend on Graphic Novels – they are popular with the boys and we simply do not have enough of them in the library. Once we have these on the shelves I hope to promote them with competitions, and also by showing anime films on the library's interactive whiteboard during break times. If anybody else has any innovative ideas then I would love to hear them. You can email me at bookzone4boys@gmail.com. However, the short time I have been writing my blog has shown me that more work is still needed at a national level as many boys are not aware of the wealth of great boy-friendly books that are currently in libraries and book shops. There are many fantastic agencies like the NLT working hard to achieve similar aims but they also need help. Why is there no weekly TV programme to promote books for kids and Young Adults? We have the annual Blue Peter Book Awards... how about a weekly spin-off show? The BBC recently revived the old Jackanory, giving it a fresh new format, but it appears to have no regular broadcast slot. We need use the media to make reading look cool; the most important thing I have learned so far is that you cannot tell boys

they have to read, you have to somehow make them decide that they want to read.

Thanks for reading this piece. I hope you will find my blog useful should you decide to pop by, and please feel free to comment or email me with other recommendations for books that might appeal to boys.

Costa Book Award winner

Congratulations go to Patrick Ness who has won the children's category of the 2009 Costa Book Award for *The Ask and the Answer*. Tense, shocking and deeply moving, *The Ask and the Answer* is a terrifying novel of resistance under the most extreme pressure, acclaimed by the Costa judges as "a major achievement in the making."

Authors to Watch in 2010

Tamsyn Murray

I haven't always wanted to be a writer. When I was four, I wanted to be Princess Leia from Star Wars when I grew up, but only if I got to marry Luke Skywalker – I was totally disgusted when I found out they were brother and sister. At the age of six, I decided I'd like to be a vet, until I realised it wasn't all cute kittens and fluffy bunnies. In fact, over the years I've tried all sorts of jobs, from fruit picking to burger flipping, but it wasn't until 2008 that I realised suddenly everything I'd done before was just research for my real career – writing.

I started off this new career by writing a short story. It was about a woman planning to murder her husband for snoring (can you guess where the inspiration for that came from?) and it was funny for all the wrong reasons. But the more I wrote, the better I got so that by the time I tried my hand at writing my first novel, titled *My So-Called Afterlife*, I sort of knew what I was doing and some of the comedy was actually intentional. Someone else thought so, too, because before I knew it I had an agent and then a publishing deal. I'm still pinching myself over that.

My So-Called Afterlife tells the story of Lucy Shaw, a fifteen year old ghost trapped in the men's toilets on Carnaby Street in London. It isn't until a lighting engineer called Jeremy

walks in and she realises he can see her that things start looking for Lucy. Once he helps her find a way out of the loo, she discovers that there's a whole afterlife waiting to be explored. Together with her new best friend, Hep, and the divinely snuggable Ryan, Lucy tracks down her killer. But she also finds that catching him comes with a hefty price. Will the ultimate cost of closure be more than Lucy is willing to pay?

My So-Called Afterlife will be available from 26th February 2010. You can find out more about me at www.tamsynmurray.co.uk

Twilight as a Teaching Resource

Edward Cullen is not just the supernaturally dashing - if emotionally abusive - teenage vampire hero of the Twilight series of books and films. He is also a teaching resource.

Designed by Rachel Simmons, a California-based writer and educational consultant, this concept is proving to be very popular amongst a certain group of readers. Find out more here: <http://bit.ly/5RcA15> on TES Connect.

If you are not a fan of the Twilight juggernaut this essay on how Twilight works may be of interest: <http://bit.ly/7eQyEM> (courtesy of The Oatmeal)

Viva la Reading Revolution

Join Michael Rosen as he leads a revolution aimed at turning every school into a 'book loving' school, a place where books are prioritised and enjoyed.

<http://www.readingrevolution.co.uk>

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Special thanks go to Alyxandra Harvey for answering the Eight Questions With... interview

All submissions of articles, reviews & ideas are welcome and can be sent to teenlibraryservice@gmail.com

Subscribing to Teen Librarian Monthly is free just send an e-mail to: teenlibraryservice@gmail.com

Eight Questions With... Alyxandra Harvey

Q1 What made you decide to write for Teenagers?

I never actually planned to write Teen Fiction but when I gave it a try during “The Three Day Novel Writing Contest” I found I absolutely loved it. And I enjoy not only promoting a love of books, but the knowledge that the teen years may be tough, but you’re tougher and will get through it! And it’s just plain fun.

Q2 How do you get into the heads of your characters?

Finding the right first name is a big part of that. Then I make lists of physical characteristics and personality traits and then I kind of discover their story as I go along. And they always surprise me!

Q3 Do you know instinctively what will appeal to Teens or is it more a hit or miss process?

I just let the story take me where it wants to go.

Q4 What is the most satisfying part of the writing process for you?

There are so many parts that I love: the actual writing, creating new worlds, discovering a story, that sudden spark of a new idea that consumes me. And, of course, holding the actual book in my hands. That’s always a thrill!

Q5 Do you ever read the works of other Teen/YA authors? If yes what can you recommend?

I couldn’t write in a genre that I didn’t also enjoy as a reader. I’m especially fond of Holly Black and Charles de Lint. I’ve also really enjoyed the works of Melissa Marr and Cassandra Clare. I have a giant TBR pile that I’m excited to get through so I can discover new favourites!

Q6 Are any of your novels based on personal experiences?

I haven’t used any specific experiences but since my stories can’t help but be filtered through my own personal lens, there’s definitely a healthy dose of “me”. In fact, I have a friend who says she laughs every time she comes across an “Alyx-ism” in my books.

Q7 What are you working on at the moment?

I am currently in the last bits of a new YA supernatural novel that I hope to turn into a series. No vampires, but there are ghosts and spells gone wrong and zombies. That last part surprised me! I’m also percolating a Steampunk novel and a YA post-apocalyptic. And of course, I have book 4 and 5 of the Drake Chronicles happily clamouring to be written. I’m dreaming of YA historical fiction as well.

Q8 Do you ever do Library visits to Teen Reading Groups? If yes, what is the best way to get into contact with you or your agent about it?

I would be happy to, but keep in mind that I’m in Canada. Any inquiries could go through my agent Marlene Stringer or through Walker Books/Bloomsbury.