

## Case Study: Liz Rose, School Librarian, Box Hill School, Surrey

### National Poetry Day across the Curriculum

Liz Rose is the librarian at Box Hill School, an independent co-ed school in Surrey. She wanted the school to celebrate National Poetry Day and for this to be a fun experience for students and teachers in these Covid times. However, National Poetry Day, which is held on the first Thursday in October, is fairly near the beginning of the busy autumn term and post-lockdown preparation time was minimal. In 2020, because of working under Covid conditions, teachers were busier than ever so she needed something that could be delivered quickly and easily, with minimum stress and little preparation from teachers as well as away from the library, to which not everyone would have access.

Liz came up with the idea of compiling a full text list of short, light-hearted, poems themed around school and the subjects that are taught, asking teachers to incorporate them into tutor time and in as many lessons as possible. However, she wasn't sure if she would have time to compile the list, which she intended to do using poetry books and the internet, but was lucky enough to secure the help of one of the school's learning support assistants to help her look for poems so was able to go ahead with her idea. Liz found searching for poems, both via the internet and in books, quite time consuming; a list of some of the books and websites used can be found below. Liz also searched specifically for limericks and funny poems on the subjects and found it particularly difficult to discover poems for Computer Science, PSHE and the Theory of Knowledge (TOK) part of IB; she only found one short poem for each of these and no suitable poems for Psychology.

Liz e-mailed the Deputy Head Academic and the Head of English to ask if she could go ahead with her idea and both were supportive.

About a week before National Poetry Day she put a notice explaining the idea in the staff bulletin asking staff to look out for an e-mail the following week. On the Monday before National Poetry Day Liz sent out a message to all staff with the list of poems attached asking teachers to incorporate these into lessons wherever they could and explaining that they could use one poem all day, a variety or substitute their own poem on any topic. She suggested that the Modern Languages Department might like to use poetry in the languages they were using to teach that day. Liz received an email from the head of Design Technology saying how much they liked the poems she had found for them and one of the Spanish teachers copied her into an e-mail to their head of department saying that it sounded like a fun idea so Liz was confident that some departments would take part.

On the morning of National Poetry Day Liz sent out another e-mail to all teaching staff reminding them to use poetry in their lessons that day. She read a poem about libraries to her library study group of international students which they enjoyed and as she was walking about the school at lunchtime two teachers told her that they had read poems in maths and history classes. The marketing department asked Liz to take some photos for school social media and she was able to take a photo of the head of Design Technology reading a poem to year 9 boys all dressed in their DT overalls.

One of the reasons Liz carried out this activity was because it helped fulfil the school aim of providing a holistic education including a wide experience of the creative arts. It fulfilled one of the aims from the Teaching and Learning Action Plan 2019/2020, which was "to embed and develop literacy initiatives and strategies." It also fulfilled many English department aims around language development, reading, writing, speaking and listening, developing empathy and understanding and introducing students to a range of literature. The activity was also a great example of cross-curricular working.

At the end of the day Liz emailed all staff again to thank them for participating and ask for feedback. She learnt that poetry had been used in English, Design Technology, History, Maths and Spanish lessons as well as tutor time. In tutor time and Maths, reading the poems has resulted in students performing and rapping them. The Geography department had really embraced Liz's idea and had encouraged students to write poems about what they were learning with the geographers producing some great poems.

As a legacy of this event, Liz would like to continue to celebrate National Poetry Day as a whole school in future by further involving even more students and maybe having a visit from a poet.

### **Advice, if you are planning something similar:**

1. Leave plenty of time put together your poetry list, get help to do this if you can.
2. Speak to Heads of department such as science and PE about their possible involvement.
3. Give staff plenty of notice about what you intend to do and have conversations about it where you can.

### **References**

- Box Hill School Website:  
[www.boxhillschool.com/about-us/aims-ethos](http://www.boxhillschool.com/about-us/aims-ethos)

### **Poetry Books Used**

- *Everything All At Once* by Steven Camden (Macmillan Children's Books, 2018)
- *Michael Rosen's A-Z, The Best Children's Poetry from Agard to Zephaniah* (Puffin, 3rd edition, 2010)
- *Read Me And Laugh, A Funny Poem For Every Day Of The Year*, chosen by Gaby Morgan. (Macmillan Children's Books, 3rd edition, 2008.)
- *Read Me Out Loud, A Poem To Rap, Chant, Whisper or Shout For Every Day Of The Year*, chosen by Nick Toczec and Paul Cookson. (Macmillan Children's Books, 2007)
- *They Think It's All Over*, Football poems chosen by David Orme. (Macmillan Children's Books, 2011).

### **Websites Used**

- Children's Poetry Archive  
<https://childrens.poetryarchive.org>
- Dr Goose's Economical Limericks  
[www.limericksecon.com](http://www.limericksecon.com)
- Joshua Seigal Website  
[www.joshuaseigal.co.uk/my-poems](http://www.joshuaseigal.co.uk/my-poems)
- Poetry Foundation  
[www.poetryfoundation.org/poems](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems)