



Well after October-gate in TLM last month I am being very careful to get the month right this time round, we should still be in September by the time you read this so happy late September!

There is still time to take part in Banned Books Week (take a look at the links you may be surprised at some of the books that ave been challenged around the world). International Talk Like a Pirate Day was last week, I have included a short write-up of a successful event I ran that you may want to try next year or sooner. You can watch David Almond live on the Internet courtesy of Scottish Book Trust this Thursday at 11am.

National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo) is in November you may want to participate or get your groups of teens interested in dashing out a novel in 30 days. The T.S. Eliot Shadowing Scheme is even nearer plus some brilliant competitions. This month marks the return of Eight Questions With..., this month we interview the marvelous Miriam Halahmy, author of Hidden, a YA novel tackling the twin issues of immigration and human rights.

Banned Books Week

Did you know that we are in the middle of Banned Books Week? No Well fear not for all is not lost! Take a look here: <http://www.banned-books.org.uk/> and here: <http://www.bannedbooksweek.org/> for book titles and ideas for the last few days. You can even start planning now for next year!

Teens want nothing more that to get their hands on things that adults and others do not want them to look at.

International Talk Like a Pirate Day

ITLAP Day was held on the 19th September as it has been since 1995. This being the first year I have been working in a school librARRRRRy I decided to do something educational beyond the usual piratical quizzes, word searches and pirate displays.

I ran a sea-shanty singing workshop; for 45 minutes during the afternoon break I lead a rousing chorus of Yo-Ho-Ho and a Bottle of Rum, A Pirate's Life for Me and 99 Bottles of Rum on the Wall

MASTER STORYTELLER TO UNLOCK IMAGINATIONS IN LIVE BROADCAST TO YOUNG READERS

David Almond, best-selling author of the award winning novel *Skellig* and the extraordinary prequel *My Name is Mina*, is poised to bring literature to life for children all across the country when he appears in a live internet broadcast on Thursday 29 September 2011 at 11am.

The nationwide event is part of the *Meet our Authors* programme, run by Scottish Book Trust, Scotland's leading agency for the promotion of literature, reading and writing and sponsored by Scottish Friendly Assurance, one of Scotland's leading providers of tax-free family savings and investment solutions.

Meet our Authors includes an exclusive series of authors' events streamed live over the internet to provide young people, parents and teachers with the chance to get up close and personal with some of the world's leading children's writers. The programme is the first of its kind in the UK. Anyone can watch by visiting: www.scottishbooktrust.com/authors-live-with-david-almond

On 29 September at 11am David will reveal some of his most insightful tips on unlocking the potential of our imaginations on paper, including how his playful and messy approach to capturing great ideas has sustained his creative

output during the writing of his 14 published books. He will talk intimately about the writing process behind his latest books *The True Tale of the Monster Billy Dean* and *The Savage*. The masterclass will be broadcast over the internet to tens of thousands of viewers around the country. These stories are suitable for young people aged 10+ and have a readership ranging from teens to adults, they capture powerful emotional themes and are accessible to a broad range of readers.

David Almond will be the 9th children's author to take part in the **Meet our Authors** project which began in 2010. To date more than 380,000 children across the UK have taken part in the webcasts.

NaNoWriMo

What: Writing one 50,000-word novel from scratch in a month's time.

Who: You! We can't do this unless we have some other people trying it as well. Let's write laughably awful yet lengthy prose together.

Why: The reasons are endless! To actively participate in one of our era's most enchanting art forms! To write without having to obsess over quality. To be able to make obscure references to passages from our novels at parties. To be able to mock real novelists who dawdle on and on, taking far longer than 30 days to produce their work.

When: You can sign up anytime to add your name to the roster and browse the forums. Writing begins November 1. To be added to the official list of winners, you must reach the 50,000-word mark by November 30 at midnight. Once your novel has been verified by our web-based team of robotic word counters, the partying begins.

Where: You write wherever you'd like. On your computer, on your iPad, on a typewriter--anywhere is fine, just as long as you're writing!

NaNoWriMo Young Writers Program

November is National Novel Writing Month, or NaNoWriMo, the creative

writing phenomenon that has seen hundreds of thousands take on the novel-in-a-month challenge.

NaNoWriMo's Young Writers Program gives teachers the tools and support to bring this life-changing experience into the classroom.

"The Young Writers Program has a profound effect on participants," says Chris Angotti, NaNoWriMo Young Writers Program Director. In 2009, 35,000 students and 1,200 classrooms participated in the program. Teachers worldwide discovered significant improvements in student self-esteem, confidence, and time-management skills.

In addition to this overall boost in well-being, the Young Writers Program has long-term benefits for grammar, spelling, and punctuation skills, despite the fact that NaNoWriMo encourages participants to focus primarily on getting the story down on paper.

"Letting students invest in the story without being slowed down by mechanics leads to powerful attachments to their work. When you then use those pieces as vehicles for editing, grammar, and spelling lessons, it's far more meaningful, and ultimately a more effective teaching tool," says Angotti.

The Young Writers Program provides resources ranging from downloadable lesson plans and free classroom kits to forums for teachers and students. These connections with other participants from all over the world is part of what makes the NaNoWriMo experience so profound.

"NaNoWriMo reaches a huge variety of students, many from under-served populations. This crazy process can be a benefit and an equalizer," says Angotti. "Everyone shares the same experience, and that experience can change students' outlooks on far more than just how they write."

For more information on the Young Writers Program visit ywp.nanowrimo.org or contact press@nanowrimo.org.

The T S Eliot Prize Shadowing Scheme 2011

A great way to introduce secondary school pupils to the best in contemporary poetry

The T S Eliot Prize Shadowing Scheme provides an excellent opportunity for students to engage with the best new poetry by shadowing the judges of the T S Eliot Prize for Poetry. Two poems from ten collections shortlisted for the T S Eliot Prize will be available to download from www.poetrybooks.co.uk/projects/15 from **1 November**.

The Shadowing Scheme is run by the Poetry Book Society in collaboration with the English and Media Centre. Students are encouraged to read the poems and to take part in a poll to vote for their choice of winner. There will also be a competition for individual 'A' level (or equivalent) students to write the best 500 word rationale for their choice of poet.

Prizes for the winning student include tickets to the T S Eliot Readings and the award ceremony in January 2012, with the chance to meet the winning poet, and a complete set of the 10 shortlisted titles.

For further details, please visit the Poetry Book Society website at www.poetrybooks.co.uk/projects/15. The Scheme will start on 1st November and a teachers' guide will be available on the emagazine website at www.emagazine.org.uk.

Anthologise

A new poetry anthology competition was launched by Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy on 7th September at Alexandra Park School in north London, with support from Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Cornwall. The competition is open to all secondary schools in the UK. Students are invited to work together to create a new anthology of poetry. Carol Ann Duffy said: "This is a wonderful opportunity for young people to see their world through poetry,

to select the poems which excite or move them most, and to learn the skills of anthologising, editing and costing."

Guidelines and resources are available from the website at www.anthologise.co.uk and the winning anthology will be announced in June 2012 when the Poet Laureate will visit the winning school. The anthology will be published by Picador and go on sale in bookshops in 2013. Visit www.anthologise.co.uk for more details. **The competition closing date is 1 March 2012.**

Inanimate Alice

Inanimate Alice depicts the life of a young girl growing up in the early years of the 21st century through her blog and episodic multimedia adventures that span her life from childhood through to her twenties. It has been created to help draw attention to the issue of electro-sensitivity and the potentially harmful pollution resulting from wireless communications.

<http://www.inanimatealice.com>

Teen Librarian Needs You!



To share your ideas for teen events and activities in Libraries! Send your ideas to: libs4teens@gmail.com

Everyone who submits ideas will be credited (unless anonymity is requested). Where two or more people submit the same or similar ideas credit will be shared.

Eight questions with... **Miriam Halahmy**

1. What influenced your decision to write for teenagers?

It was a sort of accident really. I started writing for children a few years ago, having always written for adults. I was commissioned to write a story for 6-9 year olds about, Peppermint Ward. As soon as I started writing it was like a tap had turned on. Then I pitched short stories to Tony Bradman for his anthologies and two were taken for 'Give me Shelter' and 'Under the Weather.' From one of these stories the idea for HIDDEN emerged and at first I thought I was writing a novel for 7- 11 year olds. But others said, No, that's for teens and so I started to write with older kids in mind. I really enjoyed the freedom that gave me to take on more challenging material and that was when the Hayling cycle took off. One book turned into three and I haven't looked back.

2. How do you get into the heads of your characters?

First of all I need a name. That usually comes quite quickly. But then I need to hear their voices. That can take a while and it is a combination of literally walking in their shoes and building the back stories. But once my characters start talking they tell me all about themselves and I don't even need to take notes. As soon as I resume writing each day they just pop out and take off. In between they float around in my thoughts talking to each other, so it becomes a continuous thread.

3. Do you know instinctively what will appeal to Teens or is it more of a hit and miss process?

Books appeal for so many different reasons that in the end I think we just have to write the books we want to read. I have always preferred to read realistic challenging stories that make me think, What would I do in that situation? I think young people like risk – I still love risk – I try to get them to take a risk in my books, whether it is through extreme sports, or standing up to the town gangster. I also try to keep them guessing and I try to choose something they may not know much

about. Many teens have told me that HIDDEN introduced them to ideas about immigration and human rights about which they knew nothing before.

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

I always find writing the first draft a very nerve-racking process. I'm dying to get to the end and see the full arc of the story. But after that I relax and I love the redrafting process. I particularly enjoy micro-editing. When I have a problem to solve in a chapter or across a few pages. I print out the pages and read them aloud several times. Then I try out different ideas, go for a walk, fill the washing machine, etc., and return and return to the pages until the problem is resolved and I can move on. Solving problems in the narrative is the most satisfying part of the process for me.

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

I read a lot of fiction for children, teens and adults because good quality, well written fiction inspires me to work harder on my own books. I read a lot of teen fiction and I prefer realistic gritty fiction. I am quite fussy and want a very high standard of writing, as well as a strong plot and convincing characters. I love both historical fiction and contemporary fiction. I would read anything by Leslie Wilson, Siobhan Dowd, J.D. Salinger, Morris Gleitzman and Malorie Blackman to name just a few. This year I have really admired and enjoyed Being Billy by Phil Earle and Killing Honour by Bali Rai. All of these writers take on the kind of subjects that I find interesting and stimulating. They are not afraid of tackling very difficult subject matter which has often not been addressed before in teen fiction. Of course, so does Melvin Burgess and he has a very tempting new novel out which I will be reading this autumn. There are so many authors I could recommend but I had better stop there.

6. Are any of your novels based on personal experiences?

In a way all of my writing is based on my personal experiences but they are not works of autobiography. They emerge from the experiences of my life. I have worked with asylum seekers since the 1980s and so I had a wealth of material to draw on when writing HIDDEN. But also my parents lived on Hayling Island where HIDDEN is set and I love the Island and have been visiting it for 40 years. The second novel in the cycle, ILLEGAL, is about Lindy who is drawn into the drugs trade. I have worked with young people with similar experiences. The second main character in ILLEGAL is Karl who is Mute. I have taught several teenagers who were Mute but Karl is a completed imagined character. I believe that all of our writing comes from the experiences of our lives. The skill of the fiction writer is to take these inspirations and create purely fictional plots and characters which convince us that they are real.

7. Are you are working on anything new at the moment or do you have anything planned?

Once that tap turned on it has never turned off again. I have had a constant flow of ideas over the past few years which have already turned into three novels, several short stories and a whole raft of poems. I make careful notes about all of my ideas and store them in a folder. They include two ideas for book series for 8-12 year olds which would be a lot of fun to write. However, I have been researching a new novel for a while now on a very challenging and specialised area. I started writing over the summer and now my characters are chattering away in my head all the time, so I know the engine has turned on and the book will be completed this year. That's all I can say at the moment. Ask me again next year!

8. 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 love visiting groups and will be working with groups of teenage asylum seekers at the Tricycle Theatre this autumn. I am available to visit any groups that would be interested in my books and my work. You can contact me directly on miriamhalahmy@gmail.com www.miriamhalahmy.com

