

READ

READ Magazine Special Issue

March 2012



In This Issue:

Alexander McNabb, Darren Shan, Sadakat Kadri, Dania El Kadi, David Almond, Maitha Al Khayat, Andy Stanton, Liz Fenwick, Peter James, Nasim Abaeian, Isobel Aboulhoul, Sarah Hathorn, Joscelyne Dimpleby, Mark Billingham, Tim Bowler, Wafa Tarnowska, Rym Tina Ghazal, David Nicholls, Kulood Al Mualla, Kate Pullinger, Lorraine Ludman, Luigi Bonomi, Rosie Garthwaite, Helena Frith Powell, Charlie Higson, Renad Qubbaj, Roseanne Khalaf, P.G. Bhaskar.

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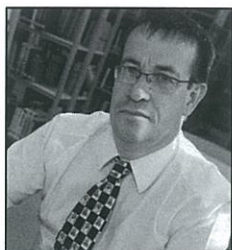
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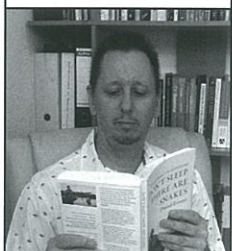
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Editorial

READ Magazine aims to create a culture of reading in the UAE and beyond through inspirational stories and practices. We are therefore delighted to be associated with the Emirates Airline Festival of Literature. This event has become the Middle East's largest celebration of the written and spoken word, bringing people together with authors from across the world to promote education, debate and, above all else, reading.

We are very appreciative that a number of authors have contributed to this Special Edition of Read Magazine by sharing their reading habits and childhood memories of what reading was like at home. We have not been surprised by the culture of reading that shaped their lives nor by the wealth of knowledge guiding them on their literary paths. We asked writers to reflect on the future of books, the impact of technology and how we should engage present and future generations in reading. We also asked them to explore how we should encourage parents and young readers to embrace literature at home. We hope some of the insights and thoughts from a few of the many authors participating in this year's event will inspire your visit to the Emirates Airline Festival of Literature.

We are grateful to our sponsors for their generous support and sincerely thank the festival and the authors for their generous contribution.

Contents - Our Contributing Authors

Nasim Abaeian	Josceline Dimpleby	Sadakat Kadri
Isobel Aboulhoul	Dania El Kadi	Alexander McNabb
David Almond	Liz Fenwick	David Nicholls
Maitha Al Khayat	Rym Tina Ghazal	Darren Shan
Kulood Al Mualla	Sarah Hathorn	Andy Stanton
Mark Billingham	Peter James	Wafa Tarnowska
Tim Bowler		



Issue Four: If you would like to write an article for our next issue please contact:

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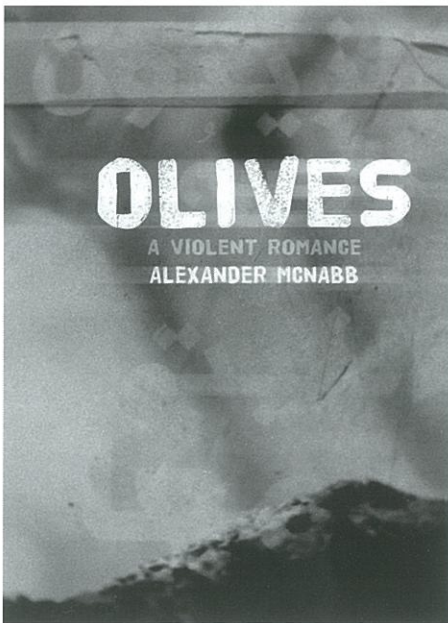
Alexander



15.00 Friday 9 March
Al Baraha 2

17.30 Friday 9 March
Al Waha

McNabb



Reading Preferences

Who are your favourite authors?

What do you like about their work?

Too many to mention here, I suspect, but Lawrence Durrell, John Le Carre, Somerset Maugham, Evelyn Waugh, TE Lawrence and Michael Moorcock have been huge influences for me. Each one has different things that make their work outstanding and special, but for me *Seven Pillars* stands as a remarkable and important 20th work, while Durrell's intricately crafted

interlinear, the *Alexandria Quarter* stands out as an astonishing literary achievement.

Who was your favourite author when you were young?

Enid Blyton. Mad about her. Seriously. They banned her from British schools because her language was sloppy and her books racist/sexist and all the other 'ist's, but she started me reading. I'd moved on to *Bridge on the River Kwai* by the time I was 8 or so, so Enid got rather left behind...

What was your favourite book when you were young?

I had a very old edition of JM Barry's *Peter Pan* that had been my grandfather's, one of those untrimmed hardbacks with colour plates that are glued onto the page. It was a wonderful thing to own.

What are your favourite books of all time? Please tell us why you like them so much.

If we're looking at a desert island book, John Le Carre's *Honourable Schoolboy* is a book I can read and reread ad infinitum, as is his *Little Drummer Girl* although I now

wonder if Le Carre would still be quite as pro-Mossad as he was when he wrote that book. I'd also take Mervyn Peake's *Ghormenghast* trilogy with me, a wonderful book of such verve and scope it is breathtaking.

What are you reading now? What do you think of it?

Graham Greene's *Our Man in Havana*. It's wonderful stuff, but I'm disturbed at how much Le Carre's *Tailor of Panama* owes Greene's book. Greene's writing is amazing; he's so compact and neat. Each sentence seems packed with paragraphs of nuance and meaning.

What new authors have impressed you the most?

Peter Morin is a friend and author and his *Diary of a Small Fish* was one of the better things I slipped onto my Kindle in 2011.

Influences on Your Writing

Which books have most influenced your life? In what way?

Oh, *Seven Pillars*. Its themes of betrayal are very much an element of my own debut novel, *Olives*. It's a

book that has helped define my feelings toward the Arab World and sparked my keen interest in Middle East history.

Which books have most influenced your writing? In what way?

There are a couple of text books on how to write and edit that have been pretty influential. A big one, oddly, was Martin Cruz Smith's *Gorky Park*. Louis de Berniere's, because he sets an impossibly high standard for a writer to aspire to.

Reading Habits

How do you find time to read?

The Kindle leather cover has a little LED light which has turned me back into being an eight year old and I read in bed, although no longer under the covers.

What do you like reading in your spare time?

No one genre. The Kindle's great for making snap decisions, for instance last year I wanted to re-read John Fowles' *The Magus* and it was on my Kindle in seconds flat. A seminal book, by the way. Similarly, last year I decided to read every Bond book one after the other. An interesting process that left me with a mild dislike of Ian Fleming and his writing, which I thought was odd. He was a terrible old misogynist.

Which books have most helped you write your latest book?

Olives was more influenced by music than books – George Winston's *Winter into Spring* and Secret Garden's *Sleepsong* are two things tied intimately into the book in my mind.

Reading with Others

How do you compare the experience of reading from a screen to reading print?

Screen is horrible. Print is lovely.

How do you see the future of books, reading and bookshops?

How long have you got? Publishing is going through a tremendous process of transformation and the industry doesn't have a clear view of how it's going to get through this. It's a mess out there and it's only going to get worse.

In your opinion, how much does a study of literature help to understand modern novels?

Not at all. I loathed studying literature at school, grinding through Shakespeare and drily grinding every grudging nuance from each over-glorified couplet.

BIO

Alexander McNabb has been working in, living in and travelling around the Middle East for over 25 years. Formerly a journalist, editor and magazine publisher, today he spends his time advising companies on their communications strategies, with a particular focus on digital and online communications.

Alexander is a frequent conference speaker, chair and moderator, particularly on issues around online and digital communications. He co-hosts a weekly radio show and is a frequent commentator on developments in the technology and online spheres. When he's not writing books, he's posting half-thoughts and snippets on his blog, Fake Plastic Souks, which he started in 2007 during the Arab Media Forum. The title refers to the 'new' souks of Dubai, so much more convenient and classy than the real ones.

Alexander's first attempt at writing a book was in 2002, when he sat down to write high-tech comedy thriller *Space*. Although *Space* was to land on the 'Editor's Desk' at Harper Collins peer review website Authonomy in October 2007, the book was not seen as a commercial proposition by agents, many of whom took the trouble to point out that humour doesn't sell. Alexander rolled up his sleeves and wrote *Olives*, a serious work that explores the attitudes, perceptions and conflicts of the Middle East, exposing a European sensibility to the strange and multi-layered world of the Middle East.

This was followed by *Beirut*, a testosterone-soaked spy thriller, which is to be released in March 2012. He is currently working on a third Middle East based novel, *Hartmoor*. Although the three books are by no means a trilogy, they follow a roughly contiguous timeline and share many of the same characters.



Darren



15.00 Friday 9 March
Al Baraha 3

10.00 Saturday 10 March
Al Baraha 3

Shan

Reading Preferences

What are you reading now? What do you think of it?

I'm reading *I Was Bono's Doppelganger*, a book by someone who was at school with the members of U2 and formed his own band around the same time. It's very engaging so far – I'm about a third of the way through.

Influences on Your Writing

Which books have most influenced your writing? In what way?

How much does your reading contribute to your writing? I think every writer starts out as a reader. I've always had a love of stories, and the more I read, the more ideas I have. Other writers inspire me to try harder, to push myself further, to go in new directions. I'm always open to being inspired by the work of others. I see it as being like a runner. If you run by yourself, you won't run as well as you will if you have other runners around you in a race.

Reading Habits

How do you find time to read?

I do a lot of my reading when I travel, on planes, trains, in cars, etc. I also try to read a little when I'm at home, but it's hard, because if I'm working it means that I will have spent all of my day looking at words!

How do you choose what to read next?

Sometimes I'll choose a book because I'm familiar with the author. Other times I will be inspired to read by a review, or a recommendation that a fan or bookseller or librarian makes.

Raising the Next Generation of Readers

What advice can you give to reluctant readers?

Books are primarily about entertainment – for me they are the same as movies, music or computer games. They're a great way to lose yourself in your imagination.

How can young people be encouraged to read more?

Convince them that books are fun. Give them books that they will want to read, exciting, fast-paced books, or books which deal with issues which they might be experiencing. I would separate reading from education – I think every group of students should have at least one lesson per day where they read just for fun.

Reading with Others

How do you see the future of books, reading and bookshops?

I definitely think that eBooks are the way of the future. They make books

far more accessible than they have ever been before, and that's a good thing. In the past, books were the preserve of the chosen few. Over the centuries they have become more and more accessible to the general public, and eBooks will drive the field a huge step forward. I understand that many people of my generation and older have a sentimental attachment to physical books, but people once had a sentimental attachment to papyrus too!! It's important that we move forward and make the most of available technologies, in order to keep our world of literature alive and vibrant and relevant. As a reader and a writer, words are all that matter to me – the form in which they are presented is irrelevant.

BIO

Darren Shan lives in Ireland. His books about vampires, demons and executioners have sold more than 20 million copies around the world. His new series will be about zombies. In his spare time he writes books for adults, because they deserve good books too!



Sadakat Kadri



13.30 Friday 9 March
Al Ras 3

13.30 Saturday 10 March
Al Ras 3

Reading Preferences

I've always thought that a good book should somehow transport its reader. When I was a child, I loved outright fantasy – anything from Lewis Carroll to Tove Jansson and Isaac Asimov. I later became fond of novels for a similar reason – fiction can open up perspectives that might otherwise remain alien – and in our fraught times, the power of a novel sympathetically to illuminate other people's lives is more important than ever. My favourite living novelist is probably Philip Roth.

Influences on Your Writing

Perhaps because my parents both came to the United Kingdom as immigrants, my reading tastes are a little skewed. There's a lot of 19th-century English literature with which I'm unfamiliar – a deficiency I'm still trying to remedy, by the way – whereas foreign writers have always interested me disproportionately. It's hard to single anyone out, because there are so many, but I was much affected during my twenties by Franz Kafka and Bohumil Hrabal, two Prague-based authors who were fantastically inventive in very different ways. Other writers only ever affect your own work indirectly – unless you're doing something very wrong – and a book's reader is generally better than the author to say what a book's literary influences are.

Reading Habits

Because I'm now a professional writer, research has become integral

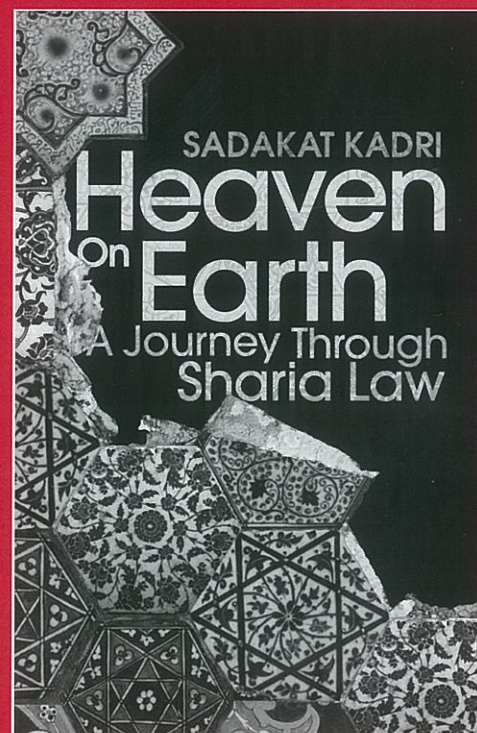
to the process of creating a book, and much of my reading is structured around whatever project I have in hand at any given time. So, although I've focused on novelists in the preceding questions, the books I've been reading over the last few years have been dominated by Islamic history, theology, and law. But it's always important to keep one's mind fresh, and I was much affected recently by a historical travelogue very different from my own: Edmund de Waal's *The Hare with Amber Eyes*.

Raising the Next Generation of Readers

Thankfully, many children don't need to be encouraged to read at all when they're young: hearing and repeating stories is the way they naturally make sense of the world. It's when the cyber-madness kicks in that the problems begin. Every family will have its own solution, but the most effective is probably the simplest: kids read if they see their parents doing it.

How do you compare the experience of reading from a screen to reading print?

Although I haven't yet bought a Kindle, I've occasionally flicked through e-ink and found it extremely convenient. But there are many occasions when I pick up a book for the pleasure of reading it, not to absorb the information it contains, and – though that might put me on the wrong side of history – I can't



ever imagine not wanting occasionally to do that by sitting back and turning real pieces of paper.

BIO

Sadakat Kadri is a London-based barrister. As well as travel guides, he has written a legal history called *The Trial: A History, from Socrates to O.J. Simpson*, and his most recent book, which traces the development of Islamic ideas of justice, is *Heaven on Earth: A Journey Through Shari'a Law*.

Dania El Kadi

Reading Preferences

Who are your favourite authors? What do you like about their work?

Different things attract readers to different authors: their ability to tell a good story, but also their style. Sometimes you want to read something because it's beautifully worded, while at other times, you enjoy simple writing with a fast moving plot.

There are so many authors to love. From the all time greats such as Charlotte Brontë, Jane Austen and Gibran Khalil Gibran, to modern Arab writers such as Hanan Al Shaykh and Ahlam Mostaghanami to commercial fiction authors such as Dan Brown and Jane Green. I'm also a shameless chicklit reader, my favorite author there is Candace Bushnell.

Who was your favourite author when you were young?

Enid Blyton, I had the entire "Famous Five" collection.

What was your favourite book when you were young?

Walter Farley's *The Black Stallion*. It captured my imagination. Every child dreams of having the kind of friendship with a horse that Alec Ramsay and Black have in that book.

What are your favourite books of all time? Please tell us why you like them so much?

They are so many. Mikhail Naimeh's "Memoirs of a Vagrant Soul" comes to mind as one of the classics that I loved. Recently, I enjoyed Hanan Al Shaykh's "The Locust and The Bird". In a very different genre, Candace Bushnell's "One Fifth Avenue" and Jane Green's "Life Swap" are lots of fun.

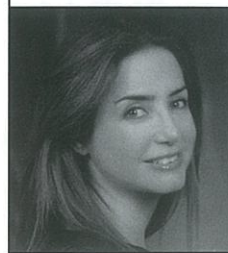
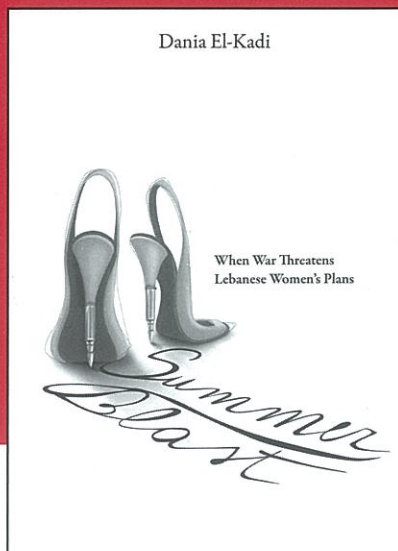
What is your favourite type of book?

Although I have favourite types, such as women's fiction and modern fiction from the Middle East, I try to read outside of my comfort zone so that I don't miss out on good books. I've joined a book club that a friend of mine started, and we've gone from classics such as Jane Eyre to fantasy and humour titles.

What are you reading now?

What do you think of it?

I'm reading a novel by Dubai-based author Alexander McNabb. It's called "Olives" and I'm enjoying it a lot. It's set in Jordan and provides a very realistic view of the modern day Middle East.



19.30 Friday 9 March
Al Khaimah

Influences on Your Writing

How much does your reading contribute to your writing?

Reading is hugely important. There's so much to learn from other writers and it keeps your imagination active.

Which writers have most influenced your writing? In what way?

I write women's fiction, so I guess I'm most influenced by writers in that genre, for example Candace Bushnell or Jane Green. Having said that, I look at the work of authors in different genres. For example, I recently read "The Accidental" by Ali Smith and "A Patchwork Planet" by Ann Tyler because both their styles are so inspiring.

Reading Habits

How do you find time to read?

I switch off the TV. It's surprising how much time you have on your hands when you don't watch TV. I also try to control my Twitter time!

What do you like reading in your spare time?

It depends on my mood. If I've been stressed and need to relax and be entertained I go for something light and commercial. If I'm interested in a certain topic, for example politics, I try to read about it.

Which books have most helped you write your latest book?

The Writers And Artists' Yearbook (UK edition, since I live in London). It opened my eyes to the realities of writing and being published.

How do you choose what to read next?

In all kinds of ways, sometimes I stumble on it in a bookstore, or online or mentioned in a newspaper, at other times it can be a friend's recommendation or my book's club's selection.

Describe where and when you typically like to read.

I read before going to sleep because it helps me unwind, I also read on weekends or when I am on vacation. In the UK, a lot of people read when they're commuting on public transport. I tried it but it didn't really work for me. I like reading newspapers on the tube, not books.

Raising the Next Generation of Readers

What advice can you give to reluctant readers?

Find the kind of stories that you like and that are relevant to you. For example, many people who read my book "Summer Blast" got in touch with me to say it was the first book they read in full in a long time and that they enjoyed it because it felt relevant to them and they could identify with the characters.

How can young people be encouraged to read more?

I think we just have to find the kind of stories that they like and the format they want to read them in. There's been a lot of talk recently about ebooks versus traditional print and some people are worried that children and young people don't have a taste for printed books. To me, if they like their reading to be interactive or supported by digital features, then that's how it should be delivered to them. We shouldn't consider this the end of the book, it's just an evolution.

If you were in charge of a school or a class, what would you do to

increase the quantity and quality of reading?

The quality of reading is the most important. I would also try to encourage analysis and discussion. Literature, in all its forms is more than just entertainment. It's a place to bring up important topics and get people thinking and talking about them.

What do you like to read to your children?

I don't have children, but if I did, I would read Arabic books to them. I don't understand why so many Arab parents only expose their children to books in foreign languages.

What are your earliest memories of reading?

I grew up during the Lebanese war; sometimes, we would go for months without school because battles were raging, so I remember long days of doing nothing but read. At the time, the choices for TV stations (and hours where we had electric power to turn the TV or games console on) were limited. I would run out of new books so I would read the same works over and over again.

Reading with Others

How do you compare the experience of reading from a screen to reading print?

To be honest, I don't have any preferences, I buy ebooks as well as print books and I find them both equally practical to read. To me, the content and the story is important, not the format.

How do you see the future of books, reading and bookshops?

Unfortunately, as we all know, online book retailers as well as ebooks have hurt traditional bookshops. But many of these stores are trying to adapt by diversifying what they do and taking advantage of the physical space provided by their store to conduct events around reading etc. I hope this

will help them transition into this new era. As to the so called war between ebooks and print books, I think ebooks will definitely keep gaining market share for a while but we may get to a point where that stabilizes and both formats coexist.

In your opinion, how much does a study of literature help to understand modern novels?

Unless it's specifically intended for a select group, I believe a work has to be able to speak to people from all backgrounds. Having said that, studying literature certainly helps view books, plots and characters in more depth.

Describe an experience where the sharing of views on a book changed your view of the book.

I experienced this while I was writing my own book: I posted a few chapters of "Summer Blast" online and was lucky enough to receive over 500 comments on them. These comments helped me view the story from various people's perspective and be clearer on what I wanted my message to be.

What do you think is the best way to share views on books?

Any forum is good, whether it's in a book club, in conversations with your friends, on a blog or in social media. As mentioned earlier, the most important thing is that literature creates a debate.

BIO

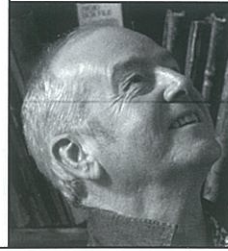
Dania El-Kadi was born in Georgia, USA; she grew up in Lebanon and lived in Brussels, Kuwait and Dubai. She currently lives in London.

Dania's novel "Summer Blast" was published in 2011 in Lebanon where it became a best seller. Her other works include a short novel, *Un Chemin Sur Son Front*, published in Paris.

www.twitter.com/Lebanese_Writer.



David



12.30 Friday 9 March
Al Waha

10.00 Saturday 10 March
Al Barha 3

16.30 Saturday 10 March
Al Barha 3

Almond

Reading Preferences

Who was your favourite author when you were young?

Roger Lancelyn Greene. He wrote wonderful retelling of myths and legends. My favourite book of his was *King Arthur and His Knights of the Round Table*, with beautiful illustrations by Lotte Reiniger.

Influences on Your Writing

Which books have most influenced your writing? In what way?

Flannery o'Connor's work has been important, especially her essays which helped me to understand what kind of writer I am/can be. Riddley Walker (Russell Hoban) and Crow (by Ted Hughes) have always

been important – a lot to do with tone, rhythm, imagery – and especially important in influencing my most recent novel, *The True Tale of The Monster Billy Dean*. Tony Harrison's poems, especially *The School of Eloquence* series, helped me to see how Northern language/experience could be accommodated in my work. Books such as *Where the Wild Things Are*, *Charlotte's Web*, *Flat Stanley* and the works of Alan Garner helped me to understand how rich children's literature can be.

How much does your reading contribute to your writing?

A huge amount. I think that every book I've ever loved has somehow influenced my own work.

Reading Habits

How do you choose what to read next?

I always have a list of books I'd like to read, and a little heap of books waiting to be read, but often the best way to choose is to wander in a good book shop and to come upon something which seems like a surprise, but which also seems to have just been waiting for me to come along.

Raising the Next Generation of Readers

How can young people be encouraged to read more?

They need to see adults reading and enjoying books. I think it's really important to read aloud to children

DAVID ALMOND
MY NAME IS MINA
AND I LOVE THE NIGHT. ANYTHING SEEMS POSSIBLE AT NIGHT WHEN THE REST OF THE WORLD HAS GONE TO SLEEP
DAVID ALMOND
THE PREQUEL TO SKELLIG 'ONE OF THE BEST NOVELS OF THE LAST DECADE.' NICK ROBBY

From the winner of the Hans Christian Andersen Award, the Whitbread Children's Book Award and the Carnegie Medal, comes the stunning prequel to SKELLIG.

Mina writes and writes in an empty notebook, and through her stories, thoughts, lessons and dreams, Mina's journal grows into something extraordinary.

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COVER TYPOGRAPHY: DAVID MCDUGALL

'The most lyrical children's author now writing.' GUARDIAN

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'With his magic realism style, he is becoming the Gabriel Garcia Marquez of children's fiction.' TIMES EDUCATIONAL SUPPLEMENT

'David Almond is a fine writer, one of the very finest we have. He is simply incapable of writing a bad sentence.' MICHAEL MORPURGO

'A master storyteller.' CAROUSEL

'Almond manages to make a work of art out of the simplest words.' AMANDA CRAIG, THE TIMES

£12.99

David Almond is known worldwide as the Michael L. Printz, Carnegie, Whitbread, and Smarties award-winning author of *Skellig*, *Clay*, and many other novels, stories, and plays, including *The Savage*, also illustrated by Dave McKean. He says, "Slog's Dad is set in the coal-mining town where I grew up, and it's very close to my heart. The two kids in it are very much like my mates and I were. It's been great to work with Dave McKean again—and to see again how his marvelous pictures open up new meanings and possibilities." David Almond lives in Northumberland, England, with his family.

Dave McKean is a world-renowned artist, designer, and film director who has illustrated several books for children, including *The Savage*, by David Almond; and *Coraline*; *The Day I Swapped My Dad for Two Goldfish*; and *The Wolves in the Walls*, all by Neil Gaiman. He also provided art and design for Neil Gaiman's celebrated comic series *The Sandman*. Dave McKean lives in England.

There really is nobody quite like Almond writing fiction today."
—*The Times* (London)

"I don't think there's anything Dave McKean cannot do as an artist."
—Neil Gaiman

Praise for *The Savage*

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"An inspired marriage of David Almond's ability to come up with bizarre, deeply resonant stories...and Dave McKean's ability to come up with disturbing, deeply resonant pictures...a great story about the power of writing to work out emotions and the power of writing to move the world."
—*Newsday*

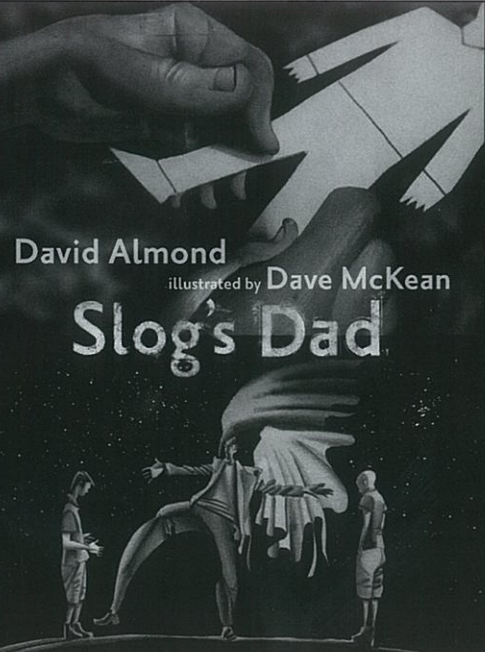
"This illuminating book captures the staggering power of raw emotions on young minds and demonstrates the ways expression can help transform and temper them."
—*Booklist*



ALMOND • MCKEAN

Slog's Dad

CANDLEWICK PRESS



"Slogger, man," I said. "Your dad's dead."

"I know that, Davie. But it's him. He's come back again, like he said he would."

Do you believe in life after death? Slog does. He believes that the scruffy man on a bench outside Myer's shop is his dad, returned to visit him one last time. Slog's friend Davie isn't so sure. Can it be that some mysteries are never meant to be solved? That belief, at times, is its own reward?

The acclaimed and award-winning creators of *The Savage* reunite for a feat of graphic storytelling that defies categorization. Eerie, poignant, and masterful, *Slog's Dad* is a tale of astonishing power and complexity.

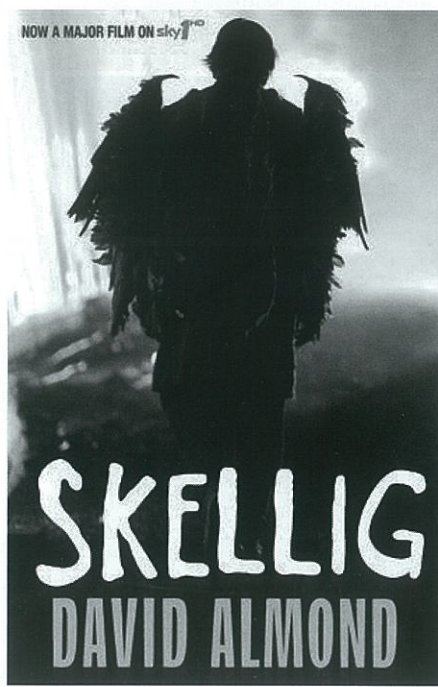
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of all ages, so that they can understand that books are not abstract things but are closely attached to the human voice and human experience, and so that they can be helped to experience the seductive power of reading.

If you were in charge of a school or a class, what would you do to increase the quantity and quality of reading?

Read stories aloud. Encourage children to write their own stories, individually and in groups. Publish these stories as books. Invite sympathetic authors and illustrators to talk about their work and to show how they make it. Make sure that there are always books around in the classroom. Don't force children to read what they 'should' read. Allow them to read comics, graphic novels, magazines etc. Make sure that teachers are seen to read. Use books as inspiration for work in drama and art. Don't overanalyse books. Use them as things to be enjoyed.



What do you like to read to your children?

Funny books. Books that sound good when they're read aloud. I like to make up stories as well.

Reading with Others

How do you compare the experience of reading from a screen to reading print?

I do read e-books, and enjoy this, but it can be limiting. I like to flick back and forwards in books, especially with non-fiction, which is difficult to do with ebooks. I also like to scribble, underline, write comments in books as I read, which I can't do with e-books. I also like the physical feel of printed books.

BIO

David Almond is the author of *Skellig*, *The Savage*, *My Name is Mina* and many other novels, stories and plays. His work is translated into over 30 languages. In 2010, he received the Hans Christian Andersen Award, the world's most prestigious prize for children's authors. His most recent novel is *The True Tale of The Monster Billy Dean*.

Maitha Al Khayat



10.00 Saturday 10 March
Al Majlis

18.00 Saturday 10 March
Al Majlis

Influences on Your Writing

Which books have most influenced your life? In what way?

A lot of books have influenced my life from an early age, amongst them *Oliver Twist*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *Wuthering Heights*, and the *Harry Potter Series*.

Most of these books talk about hardships and how the characters never lose hope right til the end. I love a book that gives me a happy feeling in the end, even if it was weird from the beginning.

Which books have most influenced your writing? In what way?

The *Cat in the Hat* and *Horton Hears a Who* by Dr Seuss. I consider these books "Masterpieces"! The text and illustrations are still enjoyable text and illustrations. My children adore them and never tire of them again and again. I wish i could do the same in Arabic. Who knows, I might be on the right track! Just watch out for my new book from Kalimat.

How much does your reading contribute to your writing?

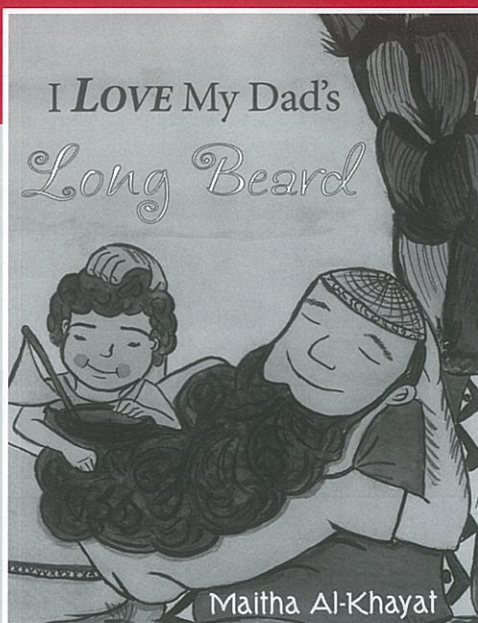
Since I mainly write for children, I'm not sure whether my adult books contribute to my writing. But the books that I choose for my kids do. I try to offer them a variety of classics and new books, which I really find interesting even as an adult, and learn from them at the same time.

Which writers have most influenced your writing? In what way?

There are hundreds of wonderful Arabic and International authors that have affected me in so many ways. However, like I mentioned above, I always go back to Dr Seuss. His writing and ideas are adorable for both adults and children and I am sure he has influenced my writing in both English and Arabic in many ways.

BIO

Maitha is an Emirati author and illustrator in children's literature. She spent the first years of her childhood in the United States and the United Kingdom growing up with books. Her first book, which she also illustrated was published by Zodiac Publishing and called *I Love My Dad's Long Beard*. *My Own Special Way* was written next and illustrated by a talented artist named Maya Fidawai. It is published by Kalimat. It won "The Best Children's Book" in Riyadh



2010. This book is soon to be released in English in 2012 by Orion Publishing in the United Kingdom. She is in the process of publishing three more children's books two of which are called *I Love My Mum's Pretty Veil* and *When A Camel Craves Loqaimat*. She is also working on a



big project to write a set of Arabic Graded Readers which will encourage and guide children to love reading. It will help them understand phonetics easily and gain confidence in reading with each level.

Andy Stanton



10.00 Friday 9 March
Al Baraha 3

Reading Preferences

When I was young, I absolutely loved *'The Eighteenth Emergency'* by Betsy Byars. I can still remember getting it out of the library when I was about eight, and reading it in one go, sitting at the kitchen table. I loved it because it was about an underdog character – a boy named Mouse – and I love underdogs. Mouse was thoughtful but cheeky, just like me at that age, and I identified with him a lot. But I loved it overall because it was so bittersweet – funny and sad all at once. I also read a lot of Roald Dahl when I was young, and a lot of Enid Blyton. But mostly, I read anything I could get my hands on. I loved reading as a child and if there weren't any books around, I'd read the ingredients on a cereal packet – anything at all. And I'm still like that today.

Influences on Your Writing

Everything I've ever read has influenced how I write. The good books teach you how to write well – and the badly written books teach you what mistakes to avoid. I suppose that Roald Dahl has been one of the biggest influences on my own writing. Roald Dahl captures a bygone Britain that is warm, cosy, funny and eccentric – but sometimes dark and dangerous too. I definitely have some of that in my books. The town of Lamonic Bibber, where my 'Mr Gum' stories are set, is quite old-fashioned, with meadows and a big

grassy hill and an old-fashioned high street where all the shops are locally owned. It's definitely cosy, but not too cute. I like to make it a bit rubbish and mundane and modern too.

Reading Habits

Reading is like going exploring, and each book is like a new town, or city, or country to discover. I don't really think about what book I'm going to read next – I just pick up one that I like the look of; or that someone once told me about five years ago; or that I happened to read a review of. Or I go browsing in book shops and just see what takes my fancy. I love exploring, rambling from book to book, following nothing but my own interest and curiosity, jumping from book to book like stepping stones. I don't really think of books as 'serious' or 'silly' or 'important literature' or 'pulp fiction'. Sometimes I don't even think of books as being 'adult' books or 'children's' books. For me, a good book is a good book, it's as simple as that.

Raising the Next Generation of Readers

I haven't any children of my own, but I'd encourage any parents whose children are reluctant readers to have a lot of books lying around the house like it's no big deal – kids shouldn't be intimidated by books, they should be familiar with having them around. I'd also encourage parents not to judge kids on the types of books they might be attracted to. If a child only wants to read factual books, or books about

football, or dinosaurs, or comic books, or whatever – let them do that. Let them get into books in whichever way they find most natural. Then, once they're hooked, start to put related, but ever more challenging, books in their way. And then start to steer them onto other types of books, other topics. Finally, if a kid doesn't respond to the first hundred books you show them, don't give up. Show them a hundred and one books. Show them a thousand and one books. Keep going, because eventually something will light their fire. You just need to rev 'em up a bit and then – watch out! They'll be off and running and there's no stopping them.

Reading with Others

To be honest, I don't really think much about the future of books because I'm not worried about them in the slightest. Whether they're made of paper or electronic circuits, books will be around forever, because people will always need stories.

BIO

Andy Stanton is the author of the enormously silly 'Mr Gum' books, which have sold over one million copies in the UK alone and which have been published in over thirty countries worldwide. He lives in London with eight million other people, but he hardly knows any of them. He is 38 years old.



Liz Fenwick



15.00 Friday 9 March
Al Baraha 2

Reading Preferences

Who was your favourite author when you were young?

I loved Mark Twain, EB WHITE and Georgette Heyer, still do.

What are your favourite books of all time? Please tell us why you like them so much.

This is such a hard question but if really pushed it would be *Katherine* by Anya Seton. It is a book that has stayed with me over so many years where other have been lost. Another would be *Daughters of Lir* by Diana Norman and *Regency Buck* by Georgette Heyer... Another that captured my imagination and continued to play in my mind was *Leo the Afircan* by Amin Maalouf. It has the best opening line ever...

What are you reading now? What do you think of it?

The Somnambulist by Essie Fox. I love the world she builds in Victorian London and the mystery.

What new authors have impressed you the most?

Deborah Harkness, *A Discovery of Witches* impressed me with her world building. She did that so well that I suspended disbelief and enjoyed a world of witches and vampires.

Influences on Your Writing

Which books have most influenced your writing? In what way?

I loved *The Thirteenth Tale* by Diane

Setterfield. I loved her words and the way I floated through the prose. I also realized that I couldn't write this way, which is a valuable lesson.

How much does your reading contribute to your writing?

It depends on the type of reading. Craft books help with the mechanics of writing. Research book do the obvious things and other writers inspire.

Reading Habits

How do you find time to read?

I try to read a bit every day even if it's just twenty minutes before sleep.

Which books have most helped you write your latest book?

Donald Maass' *Fire in Fiction*.

How do you choose what to read next?

Whim. I have a huge to be read pile and which books comes off it and into my hands depends on my mood.

Describe where and when you typically like to read.

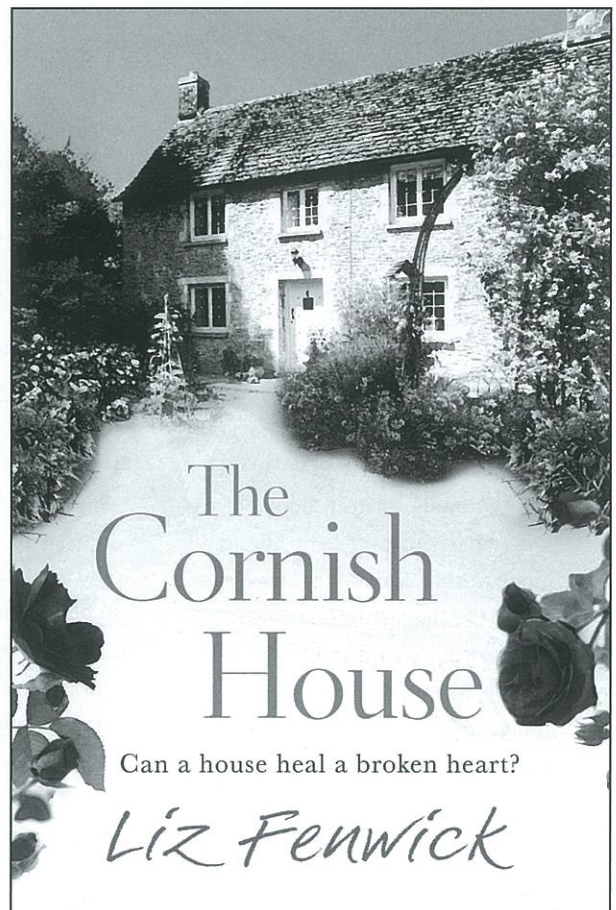
I love lying on the sofa at lunch time with a good book...I feel terribly guilty doing it though. I have to remind myself that

reading is part of my job and I'm not slacking off by reading during the day.

Raising the Next Generation of Readers

What advice can you give to reluctant readers?

As my eldest son is dyslexic my advice is twofold. One, read anything that you want. Comics are great and don't let anyone put you off them. The second is try books on tape or CD. Listening to a story is a wonderful way to immerse yourself in them without the work of reading.



How can young people be encouraged to read more?

I think adults need to set the example if possible first by reading to children or if they can't read then listening to books on tape or CD with their children. Adults need to show them the wealth of books out there that cover so many different subjects and places. Kids need to have the freedom to read what appeals to them especially if they struggle. If we make reading work then it can put the reluctant reader off.

If you were in charge of a school or a class, what would you do to increase the quantity and quality of reading?

Read to them frequently...when I was six or seven the teacher would spend the last half hour of the school day reading to us. It was magic. I still remember the books of EB White because of it.

What do you like to read to your children?

My kids are now too old but it began with Dr Seus and carried on to Harry Potter...Just over the holidays we were all laughing about Green Eggs and Ham, which I can still recite almost verbatim...

What are your earliest memories of reading?

That's a good question because I'm not sure. Possibly my mother and my father reading the *Little Matchstick Girl* to me or *Curious George* or me reading *Amelia Bedelia*....

Reading with Others

How do you compare the experience of reading from a screen to reading print?

I still prefer reading print to the screen but I find I am reading more and more on the screen. If I have a choice I buy the print book.

In your opinion, how much does a study of literature help to understand modern novels?

Having done a degree in English Literature I'm not sure it's necessary

at all and it certainly isn't necessary for the enjoyment of reading a novel.

BIO

Liz Fenwick was born in Massachusetts, and after nine international moves she now lives in Dubai. She made her first trip to Cornwall in 1989 and her heart is forever there, creating new stories. Her debut novel *The Cornish House* will be published by Orion in May 2012. German and Dutch editions are being prepared.

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Peter James



Reading Champion

What memories do you have of reading or being read to when you were a child?

I was an obsessive letter writer as a child. The earliest books I can remember devouring were the Richmal Crompton *Just William* series and Enid Blyton's Famous Five. I wrote to Enid Blyton when I was seven, saying I had just read and really enjoyed *Five Go To Treasure Island* but I was extremely worried that the Famous Five had spent seven days on this island, and not one of them had gone to the lavatory in all that time. I got a very sweet letter back from her saying that they had all gone regularly, but because she did not think little boys and girls were interested in those kinds of details she had omitted them! I then moved on to Jennings and then Biggles – and fell totally in love with this character, and devoured almost all 93 of the Captain W.E. Johns books. Many years later, when I bought the film rights to the Biggles books, I read them all over again. (I did in fact make the film, in 1985)

Can you name a book(s) that you particularly liked when you were younger?

When I was nine I read my first Sherlock Holmes story. In it, at one stage, Watson said "Gosh Holmes, how did you deduce that?" Holmes replied, "My dear Watson, because I knew we were looking for a man whose bathroom window was to the left of his washbasin." Watson said, "But how did you know that?" Holmes retorted, "Have you never noticed he is always better shaved on the left hand side of his face? From the light source, of course!"

I was blown away by Holmes's powers of observation and decided that one day I would try to create a fictional detective with powers of observation like that.

Then, when I was 14 I read Graeme Greene's *Brighton Rock* and I can honestly say this book changed my life. It is quite simply the book that made me determined to be a writer, the first time I read it, when I was a teenager. It is also the inspiration behind my setting the Roy Grace series in Brighton.

This timeless novel is both a thriller and a crime novel, although police play a small part and the story is almost entirely told through the eyes of the villains and two women who believe they can redeem them. Greene has a way of describing characters, in just a few sentences, that makes you feel you know them inside out and have probably met them, and his sense of "place" is almost palpable.

It is for me an almost perfect novel. It has one of the most grabbing opening lines ever written ("Hale knew, within thirty minutes of arriving in Brighton, that they meant to kill him"), and one of the finest last lines - very clever, very tantalizing and very, very "noir," yet apt. Greene captures so vividly the dark, criminal underbelly of Brighton and Hove, as relevant now as when the book was first written, and the characters are wonderful, deeply human, deeply flawed and tragic. And yet, far more than being just an incredibly tense thriller, Greene uses the novel to explore big themes of religious faith, love and honour.

What do you read with your children?

I don't have children, but I do a lot of talks and readings in schools – I love nothing more than to get kids passionate about reading. Tastes in authors vary hugely among kids and depending on their ages, but one thing I have found common to almost all kids is that they love to be scared and they love to hear about grotesque things! Perhaps that is why the crime novel is so popular! But seriously, I find kids love ghost stories, and huge numbers of them want to know what happens in a postmortem. One book I love to read to them are the really gruesome stories in *Strewelpeter*. They are morality tales, with wonderful illustrations. Johnny Head-In-The-Air who doesn't look where he is going and walks over a cliff. Harriet who ignored her parents' warning her not to play with matches and ended up as a pile of ash. I'm always wondering how many kids have nightmares after I've read to them!!!

What do you enjoy reading for yourself? What are you reading at the moment?

I read avidly and widely and my biggest regret is that being a writer ironically means I never get to read as much as I want. The reason is I don't like to read fiction while I am in the first draft writing process – which is around 7 months of each year – as it is too easy to pick up someone else's style. But then I read huge amounts of non-fiction, some for research and some for pleasure. At the moment I'm reading Claire Tomalin's wonderful biography of Charles Dickens. I read a broad cross section of the Bestsellers lists, crime, literary fiction, and sometimes women's fiction, because I can learn so much. I'm always looking for that one book which I put down and go "Wow! Wish I had written that!" It is a rare moment, but then I know I've read something from which I can learn. Thomas Harris's *Silence Of The Lambs* was one, and Tom Wolfe's *Bonfire Of The Vanities* another. Recent books I've read and liked are David Nicholls' *One Day*, SJ Watson's *Before I Go To Sleep*, Julian Barnes's *Sense Of An Ending* and a great debut crime novel by Claire McGowan, called *The Fall*.

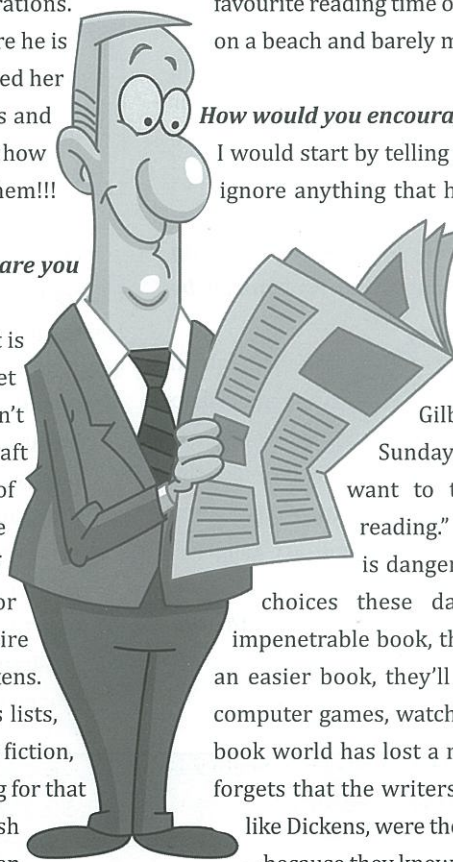
How do you find time for reading?

I try to have two reading sessions every day. Fortunately for my reading time television has become more and more trashy so there are only a handful of shows I feel compelled to watch. I write in the mornings until around 1.30 then

again from 6pm until between 9-10pm. After that I have supper on a tray in front of the television, watching either news or something super trashy, and then I try to read for an hour or so before I go to sleep. One of the reasons I write short chapters is that is how I like to read. If I'm lying in bed, tired and I flick through a chapter of a book and see it is 35 pages long, I think, "nope, too tired, will read it tomorrow..." but if it is only 2 pages long, I read it. And then I see the next chapter is only 3 pages long and I read that. And before I know it two hours have passed! Summer holidays are my favourite reading time of all – I binge read a book a day lying on a beach and barely moving all day!

How would you encourage students in particular to read?

I would start by telling them, with very rare exceptions, to ignore anything that has ever been on the Booker Prize shortlist, and begin with reading popular bestsellers. There is a terribly literary snobbishness about popular fiction – for instance I remember the late Gilbert Adair once writing in the *Sunday Times* "Any Novel that makes you want to turn the page cannot be worth reading." Not only is that arrant nonsense, it is dangerous nonsense. We have too many choices these days. If someone picks up an impenetrable book, they won't necessarily then look for an easier book, they'll turn to watching movies, playing computer games, watching tv, listening to music... and the book world has lost a reader possibly for ever. Everyone forgets that the writers from the past who have endured, like Dickens, were the popular fiction writers of their day – because they knew how to write gripping pageturners.



BIO

Peter James is the author of 22 novels. His *Sunday Times* No 1 bestselling Roy Grace crime series, set in Brighton, is published in 34 languages. He began his career as a screenwriter and producer and his many screen credits include *The Merchant Of Venice*, starring Al Pacino and Jeremy Irons. In 2010 he was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Brighton and he is currently Chair of the Crime Writers Association.

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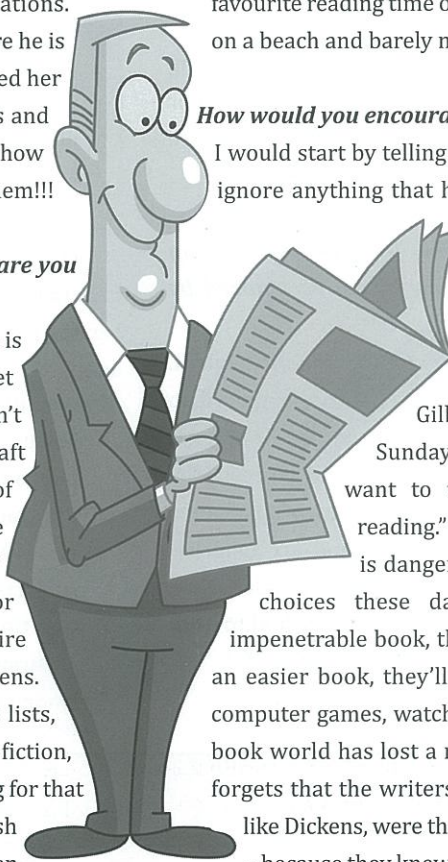
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Nasim Abaeian



19.30 Thursday 8 March
Al Waha

Why did you become an illustrator?

I have always wanted to become an artist, but I chose the illustration field after my bachelor program in Visual communication at AUS. The human figure was my favorite subject to draw, I used to spend hours in parks and shopping malls just looking at people who walk around. On the other hand, my color palette is very colorful, which is more appropriate for greeting cards and children's books.

What messages would you like to give to budding illustrators young or old and how to get recognized by publishers?

The UAE is a great place to start flourishing their talent. Illustration is pretty new to this country compared to Europe, North America or Iran, so I encourage whoever is interested in this, to not waste a single second. It's really the perfect time. I believe artists can never flourish in isolation, so I always advise my students to attend art galleries, workshops and art events. They should be very updated and bombarded with magazines, books, websites, and to keep their creativity fresh.

What sort of illustrations do you enjoy doing the best and what have been the most difficult?

In terms of content and subject matter, I tend to choose stories that are more feminine and delicate, such as princesses, little Cinderellas and such like. I also love decorations and traditional clothing. I have a hard time illustrating male characters that are supposed to look rigid and old and less colorful.

In terms of technique I am kind of open, depending on the story, I can easily use watercolors, acrylics, pastels, traditional and digital collage and mixed media. I never let the media dictate my style.

Are you an illustrator and a writer?

So far I have only illustrated, I haven't written anything to publish yet. I do have a few ideas in mind for stories to illustrate, unfortunately I haven't met an interested writer yet. I really want to write more. I know I have interesting subjects for kids. Hopefully this summer, when I have more free time I will dedicate more time on how to write for children. The easiest inspirations are kids themselves, being among them makes me so inspired.





Do you read a lot yourself?

Honestly I'm too busy with teaching and illustrating, but I usually love reading something before bed. I love real stories, specially the ones with a lot of drama. It might be odd but all women go shaky and lose control in shoe or bag shops, but I go shaky in bookstores. The whole smell of paper, ink and printed materials, for me is the best place for inspiration. I love to see book covers and read the summaries at the back, just to figure out how communicative book covers are.

What do you read, how important is reading to you and to your family?

I like feminine stories, drama and real stories. Simplicity of the words matter a lot. Complicated themes such as the ones in philosophical books are the worst for me. I guess this is why I love childish themes and illustrating for children.

My favorites are the ones that are written for adults but they have a few small illustrations (usually in black and white), in addition to bios and autobiographies of women, even if they are not famous ones. I appreciate when simple routine themes are well noticed and observed. They make me realize how blessed I am for having such precious things around me.

In terms of family, my mum has always been interested in psychology and self-improvement books, so I inherited that from her. I find self-improvement books very helpful as if they are friends talking to you.

My husband and parents in-law are very much into world history and politics.

His level of general information is pretty high; he is my Wikipedia. He also enjoys traditional Persian poetry by Rumi or Hafez.

BIO

Nasim Abaeian is an art instructor and children's book illustrator living in Dubai. After spending some time working as a graphic designer and book cover illustrator in Tehran and obtaining her MA in Illustration, Nasim has illustrated three books for children: *Ghaya va al Hanish (Ghaya and the Snake)*; *Dajajat Mithana (Mithana's Chicken)*, both published by Kalimat, Sharjah, UAE, and *Grandma Oysho*. Currently, she is an adjunct instructor at the art and design department of Zayed University in Dubai and also holds art workshops at galleries and institutes in Dubai.

Isobel Aboulhoul



Isobel Aboulhoul

My Childhood

My earliest memories of books are being read to by my parents. I can still remember waiting to hear my father's footsteps coming home from work so that he could come and read to us before we went to sleep. I grew up in Cambridge. My mother was in the RAF and met up with the surgeon, Geoffrey Keynes, who was the brother of John Maynard Keynes, the economist. They managed to persuade my mother to come and look after Dr. Keynes – the father of Maynard and Geoffrey – and Mrs. Keynes. And that is where we grew up as children. That was the earliest years of my life, growing up in this amazing house, where really eminent people would come and go, but as children we were obviously

completely unaware of that.

Mrs. Keynes was almost like a grandmother to me, and she had a very close relationship with my mother because my mother was the person she relied on to nurse her. Mrs. Keynes used to read to me. I would go down and have stories with her, so I had all sorts of funny, or very special, experiences. Both my brother and I were very lucky children. I used to love poetry, and so a favourite was Robert Louis Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses*. I've still got it – it's quite old.

A Very Special Book

There's a book that sticks in my mind forever, and I can remember where I was – I was in bed – where I finally did not see words anymore –

all I knew was that I was involved in this really gripping story. The words were not there. I can remember my mother calling down, it must have been a holiday time or a weekend, and saying "Isobel, come down, come down. I want you to do this, I want you to do that." And I just couldn't. I was in the midst of something really exciting. The book was *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett. That's the book that for me was the magic door. That's the one that was mine and mine alone. Then I went on to *Black Beauty*, and all of the Enid Blyton books. I've read every single Secret Seven, Famous Five, Mallory Towers, and I loved them. I just couldn't get enough of them. Her books were exciting. They were adventures –



page-turners – but they didn't have the depth of the Secret Garden. The Secret Garden is the one that for me is almost imprinted. There are certain books that imprint themselves on your brain. If you ask any adult what their favourite book is, they can tell you the book and they can tell you where they were because it has left such an indelible mark on them. That is the power of books. It is a very private affair between you as the reader and the writer. And there's no-one else in the middle. That was the book that got me going.

Reading to my Children

I have five children, and read to them from when they were born. It was a very natural thing to do. From the moment babies are born, they are in this world, and they are sponge-like in their ability to soak up absolutely every experience they have. It's been proven scientifically that a child that is deprived of love and is kept in a cot does not develop. So, with reading, the child gets so many of its senses stimulated – it gets, first of all, the voice because you are reading aloud to it, it has the vision because it is looking at something, and it has the kinaesthetic because it's touching. It is also a time when you are making your mark on your child. It's a time when, because the baby is sitting on your lap, you are sharing this activity together; it's very, very intimate.

I can remember when my children were at different ages, if I was reading the bedtime story, it would be a choice as to whose bed I was going to be on. We would all crowd onto that bed, so younger children would hear older stories and older children would hear younger stories,

which is great. I can remember reading 'Goodnight Mr. Tom'. My children could read, but I kept on reading long after they could read because I actually like children's books. I started reading 'Goodnight Mr. Tom' – I must have read about three chapters – and everyone was getting tired, so I stopped. But I had to continue. I took the book and I read it all because it was so gripping. I knew what happened long before they did.

Before my children were able to choose their own books, I would choose what I liked, so a person who writes for children has to please both the children and the adults. I hated Beatrix Potter, but my fourth child, perversely, loved them and so did her younger sister, so I had to read them all. I can remember with my youngest child, she must have been 9 months, and I had this Dorling Kindersley pictorial book, I think it was just called 'Baby Book,' and each page had photographs of different objects. On page 20 of this book was 'Shoes.' We never got to page 21. When we go to 20, even at that age, she was obsessed with the shoes, and she would not allow me to turn the page. She's quite a forceful character and that came through even at that age.

By sitting reading to your child, you actually come closer to knowing them, and they come closer to knowing you. I think it is a wonderful bonding activity – that's not why you do it. You do it because you enjoy it. That's the other important thing – it should never be a chore. That's why I like to choose my books – within reason. You choose to read books you like, and you see this as an activity that you

share with your children. You pass on something that is really enjoyable – it is not about school, it is not about learning.

Adopting a Country-wide Reading Habit

I've thought up a scheme and I'm hoping someone is going to take me up on it. The only way that you can make a difference is by starting with mothers, by doing something that is 'home-grown,' starting with a social meeting. When my children were little we used to get together, in this house, but you can do it in a more formal way. You can have reading ambassadors, all from the community, in a social occasion, so mothers enjoy it and children enjoy it, but it is focused around reading to children. They get to borrow books and take them away, and they meet on a regular basis. It's very simple and very cost-effective. Literacy is not the problem. You have to look at it from the right angle. If you miss the child, at that stage in the first seven years, you may never make a reader of them. I'm not saying you can't. Maybe with a great teacher who can inspire you, you can learn to read in spite of everything, when something suddenly clicks. But how much easier it is if that happens when you are a baby – how much easier your progress on that path. So, make it easy is what I'm saying. You are instilling a habit into the next generation, and also educating mothers. You can also use that forum for road safety, healthy eating – it can become a grassroots forum for instilling good habits within mothers. It will be just for mothers and children under 4.

Reading's a habit. It's like brushing your teeth. As far as I'm concerned

it's more important than brushing your teeth because you can get a second set of teeth, but you can't miss those first seven years of reading. This scheme is going back to the beginning, and it's a tool to educate mothers. What matters is the community of getting together, and somewhere in that situation you could then have your reading ambassadors who would then read to everyone, including the mothers. They could show them how to do it. I believe you would make a genuine difference, no matter how small, because out of that group of 10, you might find 3, if you are lucky, who then go and reading becomes a habit. Those children then have got the habit. This will take at least a generation, but for me this is the best way because I'm sure that for most of us that was our experience. That is what is lacking here.

Technology in Publishing

I have the Times and Sunday Times on my ipad. I'm getting used to that. But I don't read books on it. Even holding metal doesn't feel right to me. That's why I think books will survive. Books will survive if we read to our children. You're not going to sit with an ipad, every bedtime, reading to your children. If you've got your book by your bedside and you read it, and if you fall asleep and you drop it, then so what. But if it's an electronic device, it falls on the floor and could break. And books don't need a battery. There is definitely a place for electronic books, for many things, but what would you have on your shelves?

How are e-books going to develop? Well, the jury is out. The publishing industry cannot tell us what is going

to happen. We know in America, for example, that there's a huge shift to e-books, but there's also a huge shift to buying books on the internet as opposed to physical bookshops. If you put those two together that is not good news for the bookshops.

The whole experience of e-books is different, though. I don't think you are focused in the same way when you are reading an e-book because you can flip to something else. If you are on an ipad or any device that has the internet, you can then just stop reading and go to do something else and come back again. I think it is difficult for someone my age to change to reading books on an ipad or a kindle, but maybe on holiday one year I might just take one, load books on it and see how it goes. I'm not averse to technology, but I would hate to see a world without any proper books.

Learning from Authors

The first lesson that authors have for us is their experience of life. Anyone who writes is shaped by their life and their experiences, even if it is fiction. This comes out and gives them their voice. They might be more observant or more sensitive, so they allow you into their mind. That is a unique experience. You actually feel that you are inside the writer's head. I can remember interviewing Hilary Mantel who wrote *Wolfe Hall*, which is based on the life of Cromwell and how as a lawyer he is going to help Henry marry Anne Boleyn. Hilary had access to this huge amount of archive material. As I got into the book, what I found was, when I woke up in the morning in those few seconds when you don't know where you are, I was worrying about

how I was going to resolve Henry's problems, ethically. Then I would really wake up and think it's not actually my problem. When we were interviewing Hilary on the radio, I told her this, and she said that she had had the same experience, of being inside the body of Cromwell, and now as soon as she wakes up she writes for two hours, and then goes to have breakfast.

What we can do is sit in an armchair and actually have amazing experiences, inside someone else's skin because a gifted writer will be able to allow you to experience in your imagination what it must be like to be murdered or whatever. This is not the same as when someone is talking to you, because you read in silence. You read in your mind. You forget the words. The writer is communicating with you through words, but you do not see the words. What you see is what they paint. With good writers, you can see everything – where you are, what's happening, the smells, or even whether it's dusty.

BIO

Isobel Aboulhoul is the founder and director of Emirates Airlines International Festival of Literature and was the co-founder and director of Magrudy's chain of bookstores and Jerboa publishing house. She was given the Cultural Personality Award in 2011 by His Highness Dr. Shaikh Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qasimi, ruler of Sharjah, and was awarded an O.B.E. in the 2012 New Year's Day honours list in the U.K.



Sarah Hathorn

Sarah Hathorn published her first book, "Alexandra's Mission: Teenagent" last year at the age of 15. It is an adventure novel for children and is being carried in premier bookstores in Switzerland, where Sarah lives, as well as being sold on Amazon.



15.00 Friday 9 March
Al Baraha 2

10.00 Saturday 10 March
Al Khaimah

Reading Preferences

What was your favourite book when you were young?

Young? I am young – I'm only sixteen! Well...This is quite a tough question. There are so many inspiring authors out there that it is hard to say which one is my favourite. I loved the *Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis and *His Dark Materials* by Philip Pullman. I particularly enjoyed *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien for its descriptive style. But, I'd have to say it's a tie between the *Harry Potter* series by J.K. Rowling and the *Inheritance Cycle* by Christopher Paolini. I was drawn in by Harry Potter and devoured the books as they came out, growing up with the characters. I started when I was eleven, so it was an incredible read for me. Even now I love the books and admire the character development over the years. The *Inheritance Cycle* has special meaning to me personally and I was very impressed with Christopher Paolini. He was sixteen when he published *Eragon* and I had a deep admiration for his series.

Influences on Your Writing

Which writers have most influenced your writing? In what way?

I'd have to dedicate this answer to Christopher Paolini. It was in 2005 in New York City where he was holding a signing in a bookstore. I was twelve then and very excited to meet him. My Mom was standing behind me holding a pile of books for me. He noticed them and asked me whether I liked reading. Being an avid reader, I answered yes. He then responded with a question: "Do you know what is more fun than reading a book?" I shook my head. "Writing one!" he

exclaimed. I had always loved writing, and his words encouraged me to write even more. Later that year, I decided that I would actually write a book. I came up with the working title *Alexandra's Mission* and simply kept writing. I had read so many books I had loved and tried to understand why I loved them so much. I gave myself the goal to make the authors I admired proud and to hopefully meet them and thank them one day.

Reading Habits

How do you find time to read?

My mother used to confiscate my books when I was younger to deliver me from the temptation of reading under the covers. I always made time to read, especially if it was a captivating book. I read on the bus, at "boring" grown-up events, sometimes during school breaks, and occasionally hidden from sight when I was meant to be doing homework. But, I recommend avoiding that last one, for if you get caught you get in trouble (sorry Mom!) and you don't get that rewarding feeling of having deserved to read. Now I don't have as much time as I would like to spend reading. Because I'm in the final years of the International Baccalaureate program I have to put my education as a priority. Thankfully, I am taking literature in French and English and have plenty to read for my courses! During the holidays, I read as much as I can for pleasure, knowing that when school resumes I won't have that luxury. My Mom will once more intervene and threaten to confiscate my books if I don't pace myself.

Raising the Next Generation of Readers

If you were in charge of a school or a class, what would you do to increase

the quantity and quality of reading?

Actually, I am in charge of a Creative Writing Club called "ImagiNations" at my school. Currently, we are designing our own stories in the style of our favourite authors. This means we need to pay more attention to why the passage, or book is good, and not just "Yeah, it's cool, I like it!" Hopefully, when the club members pick up a book they will "actively read" and notice stylistic aspects they like and understand the quality of the book they are reading. In this way, we spend time reading excellent writers as well as writing our own stories. The group members are a terrific bunch and I am learning a lot from them too!

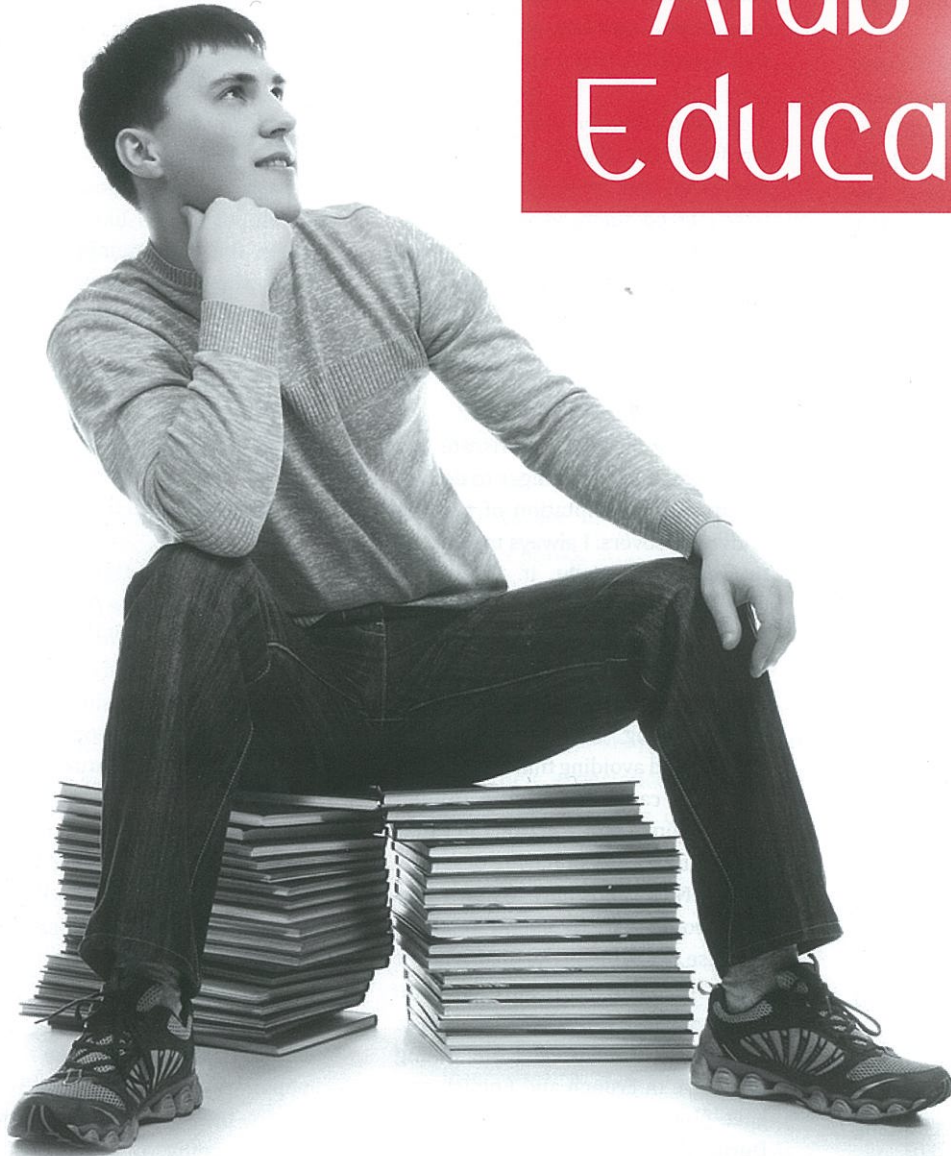
Reading with Others

How do you see the future of books, reading and bookshops?

I consider the future of books and reading very promising. With all the new technology, people will have more access to literature, any place, any time. Despite my personal preference for old-fashioned books, I must admit that e-reading devices are useful and less heavy to lug around than books while travelling. But, I do believe that people will still want to buy physical copies of books. When I go on holiday, I always buy a couple of books wherever I go. I like the feel of paper and even just the smell of books, they generate a cosy feeling. People enjoy browsing while in bookstores – the amount of hours I've spent just wandering around... "Sarah! It's time to go!" my parents would insist. "One more minute!" I would say for the 78th time. Technology makes books more accessible and practical. But I don't think it will take away the wonderful feeling of entering an amazing world of books when visiting a bookshop.

Education for productive minds

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Education



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Education



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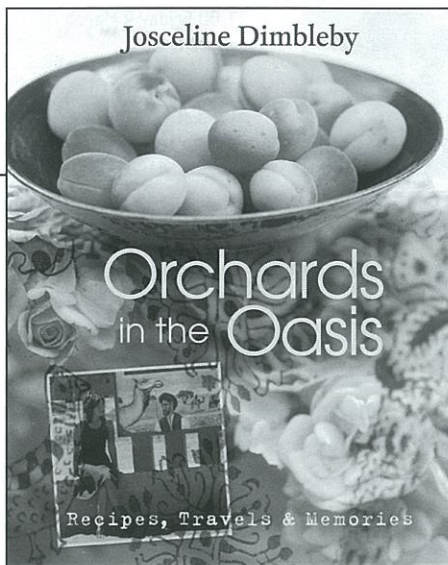
A Sayegh Company

Al Nahda Road ■ Al Qusais 2 ■ Dubai - UAE ■ Tel: 00971 4 2204007 ■ Fax: 00971 4 2204011

Josceline Dimbleby

15.00 Friday 9 March
Al Ras 2

16.30 Saturday 10 March
Anise Restaurant



Reading Preferences

Who are your favourite authors?

What do you like about their work?

Any list of my favourite authors is forever changing and being added to. For biography I specially enjoy Claire Tomalin, Michael Holroyd and Caroline Moorehead as they make them gripping stories with vivid characters. For novels I like those that are page turning, moving, cleverly constructed, and show the humorous side of life too. I particularly admire William Boyd, Barbara Kingsolver, Rohinton Mistry, Kate Atkinson and Khalad Hosseini as well as many of the classic authors of the past.

What are your favourite books of all time? Please tell us why you like them so much.

A Fine Balance by Rohinton Mistry, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khalad Hosseini because they are completely engrossing and very moving. And one of the most charming memoirs is *Basil Street Blues* by Michael Holroyd.

What is your favourite type of book?

Those that observe the human character and life's joys and tragedies the most vividly so you feel totally involved and long to return to them. I loved Barbara Levy's *Small Island*.

What are you reading now? What do you think of it?

Just finished Alan Bennet's wonderfully touching, funny and cleverly written *A Life Like Other Peoples* and started Claire Tomalin's engrossing and informative *The Invisible Woman* about Charles Dickens's secret actress mistress.

What new authors have impressed you the most?

Kathryn Stickett's *The Help* and David Nicholls' *One Day*.

Reading Habits

How do you find time to read?

I find it difficult to read books for pleasure at home as it makes me feel I should be working or doing something practical. Holidays, and especially long and boring flights and train journeys are perfect as no distractions for extended periods.

Which books have most helped you write your latest book?

My latest book, *Orchards in the Oasis*, was a memoir drawn from diaries, letters and photographs as was my book before that, a biographical story of my great grandmother's secret relationship with the Pre-Raphaelite painter Edward Burne-Jones and her beautiful daughter who died 'of a broken heart'.

Raising the Next Generation of Readers

How can young people be encouraged to read more?

By reading them stories before they have learnt to read themselves and showing them what a pleasure it is, and how it can make them escape to other worlds.

What do you like to read to your children?

It's grandchildren now and they're still very young but I have already started reading them the first books my children loved such as those of John Burningham.

Reading with Others

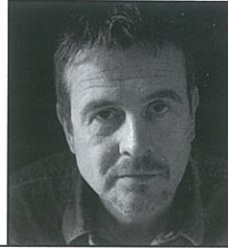
How do you see the future of books, reading and bookshops?

If I owned a bookshop I'd be very worried now because of the internet possibilities and prices of buying books and although reading books on Kindle, I-pads etc. will clearly increase and improve, I can't imagine that the pleasure of holding and reading a nicely produced book will disappear totally. And books improve the look of a house, thus 'Books do furnish a room'.

BIO

Josceline Dimbleby is a highly successful and creative cookery authors. She has written 24 books, including the first cookery books ever to be sold in Sainsbury's stores, sales of which are now well over 2 million copies. She has been a food columnist for the *Sunday Telegraph* for 15 years. She received an André Simon Award for one of her earliest books: *Josceline Dimbleby's book of Puddings, Sweets and Savouries*, and in 1993 she was named *Cookery Writer of the Year* at the Glenfiddich Awards. In 2004, *A Profound Secret*, a biography, was published. Josceline has also featured on numerous food and travel programmes on BBC radio, British television.

Mark



18.00 Thursday 8 March
Al Ras 2

10.00 Friday 9 March
Al Ras 3

21.00 Friday 9 March
Eclipse Bar

10.00 Saturday 10 March
Al Rimal 1

Billingham

Reading Preferences

Who are your favourite authors?

What do you like about their work?

Contemporary crime authors like George Pelecanos, Michael Connelly, James Lee Burke. These are the writers who have inherited the mantle of Hammett and Chandler; they tell wonderful stories while also creating a compelling social history of the time.

Who was your favourite author when you were young and your favourite books?

Sir Arthur Conan-Doyle. I LOVED Sherlock Holmes! *The Adventures Of Sherlock Holmes. The Godfather. Jaws.*

What are your favourite books of all time? Please tell us why you like them so much.

Probably, *The Maltese Falcon* by Dashiell Hammett. Eighty years on it

has not dated at all. There isn't a single likeable character in it but it remains hugely engaging.

What is your favourite type of book?

Crime novels.

What are you reading now? What do you think of it?

Currently reading *What Am I Still*

Doing Here? by Roger Lewis. Very, very funny. Makes a nice change from all the blood and gore in the books I usually read.

What new authors have impressed you the most?

Simon Lelic, Belinda Bauer.

Influences on Your Writing

Which books have most influenced your life? In what way?

Sherlock Holmes. When those books were read to me at school, I became obsessed with detective fiction.

Which books have most influenced your writing? In what way?

I read all those writers who are raising the bar in my area. The ones who continually push the boundaries of the genre, who refuse to be hidebound by it. The great storytellers.

How much does your reading contribute to your writing?

Hugely. You have to be a reader in order to be a writer. How can you be a chef if you never eat anything?

Which writers have most influenced your writing? In what way?

I'd like to think I have found my own

voice as a writer, but it takes a while. I was definitely influenced by many American hardboiled writers, and by their UK equivalents in the area of the police procedural.

Reading Habits

How do you choose what to read next and where and when you typically like to read?

It's usually rather random. I get sent a lot of books, so it might be an interesting jacket or an arresting opening paragraph. Often it's the latest book by a friend. I'd LIKE to read in a cosy chair by a roaring fire, but it's usually tucked up in bed or lying on a beach.

Raising the Next Generation of Readers

What advice can you give to reluctant readers?

Find a book that you love. Not something you've been told to read at school, but something you've discovered for yourself.

How can young people be encouraged to read more?

Obviously parents need to encourage their children. To explain that their imagination is fired by a book in a way that it never can be by an X-Box!

If you were in charge of a school or a class, what would you do to increase the quantity and quality of reading?

I would choose a book that I was passionate about myself. Passion is infectious.

What are your earliest memories of reading?

I remember discovering popular fiction when I read *Jaws* and *The Godfather* back to back one summer when I was about twelve. I was knocked for six. These were not like the books I had been told to read at school...

Reading with Others

How do you see the future of books, reading and bookshops?

It's clearly a period of transition which is proving tough for independent bookshops, but I hope that things will even themselves out soon. E-books are here to stay which means that reading itself is as

popular as ever. But we may find ourselves doing it in different ways in years to come. But the book as an object will survive. Reports of its death are premature...

In your opinion, how much does a study of literature help to understand modern novels?

Obviously a study can guide you towards books that are "important" but not necessarily towards the books you might enjoy. If a modern novel is difficult to understand, then perhaps you should not be reading it. There is nothing wrong with reading for pleasure.

Describe an experience where the sharing of views on a book changed your view of the book.

I don't think my view has ever been changed, but it's always fun to exchange views. The beauty of a book is that each person takes something different from it and every view is equally valid.

What do you think is the best way to share views on books?

There are many blogs and forums online where this can be done. But I don't think you can beat sitting and talking about a book with a drink in your hand. Though of course this means that views can get quite heated!

BIO

Mark Billingham is one of the UK's most acclaimed and popular crime writers whose books have recently been adapted for television. His debut novel, *Sleepyhead* was chosen by the Sunday Times as one of the 100 books that had shaped the decade and each of his novels has been a Sunday Times Top Ten bestseller. Mark Billingham's latest novel is *Good As Dead*. His next novel, *Rush Of Blood*, will be published in August 2012.

The Power of Radio Talking Of Books is a weekly review



A weekly review show harnessing the insights of some of Dubai's most well read people. From new releases to chats with local and international authors, this is a must-listen for any bibliophile. Every week the panel, which consists of co-hosts Isobel and John, regular reviewer Linda Park plus one guest, discuss and review a selection of books. These books are generally a range of fiction and non fiction, including topics such as business, mind/body and spirit, travel, history and memoirs, etc. Most weeks Isobel and John also manage to secure a phone interview with an author relevant to that week's discussions. You can also enter the weekly quiz for a Dh100 Magrudy's gift voucher and hear all about the latest best sellers in store! And if you fancy taking part in the show you can, every week Isobel and John select a Book Champion to come on the show and talk about their favourite book, so if you have a book you're passionate about email talkingofbooks@arnonline.com and we could be hearing you on the show!



Talking of Books

Hosted by John MacDonald and Isobel Abulhoul

Live shows every Saturday
from 12nn to 3pm on Dubai Eye 103.8



Tim Bowler



10.00 Friday 9 March
Al Waha

10.00 Saturday 10 March
Al Baraha 3

15.00 Saturday 10 March
Al Baraha 2

What is your favourite type of book?

My favourite books are the ones that grip me. It's as simple as that. I have to be hooked and held by the story. I also need to have my emotions engaged. If the book is clever or amusing or thought-provoking or whimsical, that's fine but it's not enough on its own. If the story doesn't involve me emotionally as well, it will never rank among the reading experiences I treasure most. *The Iliad* is still with us after nearly three thousand years because Homer makes us care deeply about the characters. It's a masterclass of storytelling.

Which books have most influenced your life? In what way?

Books have had a profound influence upon my life. It was reading that first led me to writing. I have always read widely with a balance of fiction and non-fiction (the latter mostly in the areas of history, music, philosophy, mysticism and poetry). During my childhood, my fictional reading was dominated by sea stories, especially the novels of Arthur Ransome (*Swallows and Amazons* etc), CS Forester (*Hornblower*) and later Patrick O'Brien. I also loved thriller writers like Arthur Conan Doyle and John Buchan. I think my interest in philosophy, mysticism, poetry and thrillers unconsciously helped to fashion the kind of writing style I have today.

Describe where and when you typically like to read.

I just read when I feel like it, but mostly it's in the evenings. During the day I'm busy with my own writing and reading other people's words can interfere with the flow of my own, so I tend to keep off reading during the day. Once I've written my own pages, however, I'm free to pick up someone else's book and read that. Usually I have several books on the go at any one time, typically of different kinds. At the moment I'm reading 1. the letters of Wagner and Liszt, 2. the memoirs of Imogen Holst (daughter of the composer Gustav Holst), 3. a book about the poet Edward Thomas, 4. a collection of essays by Christopher Hitchens, and 5. a novel by Dave Cousins called *Fifteen Days Without A Head* (plus other bits and pieces).

How can young people be encouraged to read more?

I always encourage reluctant young readers to read in very small doses. I tell them that if they can just read for 15 minutes a day, they will read 12-20 books a year without any problem. 15 minutes a day doesn't feel like such a huge chunk of time to them, so it doesn't take loads of willpower to do it. They can usually squeeze 15 minutes into a busy day if they want to. I tell them that even a person with a slow reading speed will still manage 2-3000 words (and probably more) in those 15 minutes. So if they can just commit to that small amount of time per day, they can read lots of books in a year and still have time for their football.

How do you compare the experience of reading from a screen to reading print?

I've got used to reading from a screen since I bought a Kindle. I have no problem with the concept of e-readers at all. Books are lovely, screens are lovely. It's the words that count. I treasure my beautiful Arthur Ransome books. They sit on the shelf and the first one on the series is the most battered of all. I acquired it from my brother when I was a small boy and the inside flap still shows my childish handwriting where I scratched out my brother's name and wrote my own above it as the proud new owner. It's now nearly fifty years later and I feel exactly the same sense of pride when I pick up that book. But my Kindle is starting to feel special too, particularly with the library of books it now contains, and you can be sure that as I sit on the plane on my way to the Emirates Festival, I will be switching the device on with great affection.

BIO

Tim Bowler has written over twenty books for teenagers and won fifteen awards, including the prestigious Carnegie Medal for *River Boy*. He has been described by the Sunday Telegraph as "the master of the psychological thriller". His works include *Starseeker*, *Apocalypse*, *Frozen Fire*, *Bloodchild*, *Buried Thunder* and the *BLADE* series.

Wafa Tarnowska



13.30 Saturday 9 March
Al Khaimah

Reading Preferences

Who are your favourite authors? What do you like about their work?

Authors writing for adults: Gabriel Garcia Marquez especially his book *Love in the Time of Cholera* probably my favourite novel of all times because of his profound understanding of human nature and a most beautiful prose without one word extra, sheer music to my ears:

- "To him she seemed so beautiful, so seductive, so different from ordinary people, that he could not understand why no one was as disturbed as he by the clicking of her heels on the paving stones, why no one else's heart was wild with the breeze stirred by the sighs of her veils, why everyone did not go mad with the movements of her braid, the flight of her hands, the gold of her laughter. He had not missed a single one of her gestures, not one of the indications of her character, but he did not dare approach her for fear of destroying the spell."

- Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *Love in the Time of Cholera*

- "He allowed himself to be swayed by his conviction that human beings are not born once and for all on the day their mothers give birth to them, but that life obliges them over and over again to give birth to themselves."

- Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *Love in the Time of Cholera*

- "The heart's memory eliminates the bad and magnifies the good."

- Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *Love in the Time of Cholera*

- "No, not rich. I am a poor man with money, which is not the same thing."

- Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *Love in the Time of Cholera*

My second favourite author is Turkish writer Elif Shafak and my favourite book of hers is *The Forty Rules of Love* because of her clever interweaving of a modern middle aged woman's quest to find love with the lives of Sufi poet Rumi and his beloved Shams al Tabriz. The story is told by a range of characters including Rumi's wife and sons it mixes first-person prose with letters, emails and Shams's 40 rules of love.

I am a great admirer of Sufi poets, my second book, the *Seven Wise Princesses* was based on the original poem by Sufi poet Nizami who lived in the 12th century.

Who was your favourite author when you were young?

I loved Enid Blyton and the Famous Five series which I devoured as well as *The Secret Seven* written between 1949 and 1963.

What was your favourite book when you were young?

My favourite book as a child was *The Black Tulip* by Alexandre Dumas Pere. The main plot line, involving fictional characters, takes place in 1672 in Holland. The city of Haarlem in the Netherlands has set a prize of 100,000 guilders to the person who can grow a black tulip, sparking competition between the country's best gardeners to win the money, honour and fame

The young Cornelius van Baerle has almost succeeded, but is suddenly thrown into prison. There he meets the prison guard's beautiful daughter Rosa, who will be his comfort and help, and at last his rescuer. The novel was originally published in three volumes in 1850 as *La Tulipe Noire* by Baudry (Paris).

What are your favourite books of all time? Please tell us why you like them so much.

See question one. But I also absolutely loved and admired Rabi Alameddine's *The Hakawati* which uses one of the oldest forms of storytelling, the frame tale which was used in the *Arabian Nights*. The framing narrative, set in 2003 is about a young man's trip from Los Angeles to his father's deathbed in Beirut where he and his relatives exchange jokes, tales and legends during the weeks of their vigil. Some of their stories are contemporary, others are ancient from the *Panchatantra*, the Old Testament, Homer, Ovid, the Koran, the uncensored *Thousand and One Nights*, a collection of medieval gay poetry called *The Delight of Hearts, Flowers From a Persian Garden* and many other sources.

What is your favourite type of book?

My favourite type of book is exactly the kind of books that Rabi Alameddine and Elif Shafak write a blend of East and West, old and new, real life and fiction.

What are you reading now? What do you think of it?

I am reading Salma Dabbagh's first novel *Out of It* which

follows the lives of Rashid and Iman from Gaza as they try to forge places for themselves in the midst of occupation, the growing divide between Palestinian factions, and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. Written with extraordinary humanity and sharp humour, this book re-defines Palestine and its people.

I am loving it. I met her on Friday in London and she will be coming to the Emirates Festival of Literature in March.

What new authors have impressed you the most?

I also love Rawi Hage's *De Niro's Game*, a finalist for the Scotiabank Giller Prize, a finalist for the Governor General's Award for Fiction, the winner of the Paragraphe Hugh MacLennan Prize for Fiction and the winner of the McAusland First Book Prize. It is set mostly in the Beirut of civil war Lebanon in the 1980s which I experienced. It is a very powerful and honest piece of writing.

Influences on Your Writing

Which books have most influenced your life? In what way?

The books of Amin Maalouf the Lebanese writer who now lives in France. I was especially influenced by the *Rock of Tanios* which reminds me of my village in the Chouf Mountains and *The Crusades Seen by Arab Eyes*, *On Identity*, and *Origins* which discuss such important matters as how we define ourselves and how identity is understood by different cultures. I especially identify with his belief in respecting the multiplicity of identities we each carry and the dangers of people reducing each other to one aspect of their identities. I believe like Maalouf that we should all be encouraged to recognise our identities as the sum of various parts rather than an irreducible whole.

Moreover, Maalouf not only won the prestigious Goncourt Prize for the *Rock of Tanios* in 1993 but he has been accepted to the Académie Française, to the former seat of Claude Lévi-Strauss. Wow!!

Which books have most influenced your writing? In what way?

As a body of work, it is definitely the books of Maalouf because through them he builds bridges between East and West and that's what I aim to do through my children's books as well.

How much does your reading contribute to your writing?

Reading in three languages is what contributes to my writing. I think it makes it richer and now that I am learning Italian I am so enjoying seeing how words are created in languages. I also love the sound of words so I like to listen to oral poetry. I remember being transfixed by listening to Dylan Thomas reading:

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And being absolutely transfixed by it.

I also adored his *Child's Christmas* in Wales written before I was born and which I heard as a student in Australia one evening on radio. I said to myself, that's how words should be used.

Which writers have most influenced your writing? In what way?

Amine Maalouf for bringing the Middle East into the consciousness of the West, Gabriel Garcia Marquez for being the Master of Magic Realism in which magical elements blend with the real world and more importantly for his belief that vows of love made as a young person may yet be honoured, much later in life. I also

admire Annie Proulx for placing her characters against difficult circumstances whether landscapes or crushing social situations and choosing every word carefully like a musical note without an ounce of dissonance. I only discovered recently that she started writing fiction when she was in her fifties and I think that she deserves every single accolade for her impeccable writing including the Pulitzer.

Reading Habits

How do you find time to read?

On the train coming back from work(I commute Daily between London and the countryside), in bed before I go to sleep, on holidays and weekends.

What do you like reading in your spare time?

All the writers I have mentioned above but also children's books, Arabic Poetry (Nizar Kabbani, Adonis and Mahmoud Darwish), French Poetry (Jacques Prevert, Aragon and Apollinaire) and *Vogue magazine* and *Vanity Fair* when I travel.

Which books have most helped you write your latest book?

The original version of *The Arabian Nights* as translated by Husain Haddawy.

How do you choose what to read next?

Friend's recommendations, book reviews but mainly I like to follow the writing of Arab authors translated into French or English.

Describe where and when you typically like to read.

My dream is to go for a month to a beautiful beach with a suitcase full of books and read and write and swim the whole time I am there.

Raising the Next Generation of Readers

What advice can you give to reluctant readers?

Start with cartoons! My son started reading Asterix and Tintin when he was young and suddenly developed into the most avid reader I know.

How can young people be encouraged to read more?

If their parents read to them nightly, if they are taken to listen to readings by famous children's authors or the authors they like, by putting on stories in the car when they are being driven, by seeing films based on books and then reading the book.

If you were in charge of a school or a class, what would you do to increase the quantity and quality of reading?

Invite as many real authors as possible to the school, have reading competitions, make the library the funnest place in the school, with beanbags to sit on and soft music and cool librarians.

What do you like to read to your children?

My children are now 24 and 25 and fantastic readers but

when they were young both my husband and I read to them nightly. My husband read them *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Water Babies* and I read to them Beatrice Potter, *Angelina Ballerina*, the *Berenstain Bears* and the *Paper Bag Princess*, the story of young girl who, filled with courage, charity and brains, goes off to rescue a young prince from a ferocious dragon, but does not marry him!!

What are your earliest memories of reading?

In my ancestral village in the Chouf mountains during long and beautiful summer holidays.

We used to have a small public library in the village set up by my father and his friends. I went every couple of days and borrowed books from it. Also every time I had to go to the dentist, my father used to buy me a book so I would behave myself.

Reading with Others

How do you compare the experience of reading from a screen to reading print?

I prefer to touch books, smell them and read in print rather than on the screen. I spend my days at work reading from a computer screen so I only switch off properly in front of the printed page.

How do you see the future of books, reading and bookshops?

The future is downloads and electronic books and more and more sophisticated kindles and ipads but I think that one day hand written or hand annotated manuscripts by famous authors will be as valuable as Leonardo da Vinci's ones.

What do you think is the best way to share views on books?

Book clubs, book shows like Talking of Books on Dubai Radio or on TV like Richard and Judy or Oprah and of course Literary supplements.

BIO

Wafa' Tarnowska was born in Lebanon but has worked and lived in Australia, Lebanon, Poland, Cyprus, India, the UAE and the UK. Her first children's book *Dances with the Gods* was published by Rimal publications in 1997. Her second book *The Seven Wise Princesses* was published by Barefoot books and translated into several languages.

The Atlas of Arabia and the Rest of the World, published by Jerboa, was translated by her into Arabic and published in Dubai. Her fourth book, *The Arabian Nights*, also published by Barefoot books, was translated into French, Danish and Spanish and is now a paperback. It was selected by the Smithsonian magazine as a notable children's book for 2010 in the USA. In 2011, the *Arabian Nights* won two prizes: the Gold Moonbeam award for creating a book that inspires our children to read, learn, and dream and the Aesop Accolade for Children's Folklore. Wafa' has also translated numerous children's book from English to Arabic for dual- language publishers Mantra Lingua.

Rym



16.30 Thursday 8 March
Al Waha

11.30 Friday 9 March
Al Khaimah

Tina Ghazal

Reading Preferences

What are your favourite books of all time? Please tell us why you like them so much.

The Giving Tree, by Shel Silverstein & *The Story of a Horse* by Leo Tolstoy. As a child, I grew up on a farm with plenty of animals and a lush forest with all kinds of trees. I love everything about that time in my childhood, and instead of trying to explain my love for nature and its animals, I simply like to hand over copies of these two books. They are timeless as they capture the noble hearts of their characters, a tree and a horse respectively, their pain and love, and how at the end of it all, they are wiser and more giving than any human.

And I have read every book that Oscar Wilde and Jane Austen have written. I owe my 'wit' and cynicism to him, and I owe my drive to turn the most banal of daily activities into exciting stories thanks to Jane.

Alice in Wonderland by Lewis

Carroll; I have reread this book at different stages of my life whenever I needed inspiration and a reminder of our own vast ability to imagine different worlds and possibilities.

I also never went to bed without reading a bedtime story from a collection of fairytale books like Brothers Grimm and *One Thousand and One Nights*. They enrich our imagination and add more color to already colorful dreams.

What is your favourite type of book?

One that leaves you thinking.... Also the vast different types of Japanese Manga inspire me to challenge my own imagination and creativity.

Influences on Your Writing

Which books have most influenced your writing?

In what way? Classical books and their adaptations into movies have influenced my writing the most. I was a poet before I was a writer, and so rhythms and metaphors appear in my expressions. Classical music also shaped how I write. I would hope my writing has taken some of Oscar Wilde's biting wit, Agatha Christie's mastery over mystery, the pain and losses captured best in Russian classical novels, and timelessness of themes found in religious books like The Quran and bible.

I also like to start my days with comic strips, funny ones like *Mutts & Garfield*, action ones like *Superman* and *Wonder Woman*, and of course Manga comics like *Black Jack* by Osamu Tezuka. They clear my mind and put me in the right mood to work and write for the rest of the day.

Reading Habits

How do you find time to read?

I can't fall asleep without reading a book. Even if I am dead tired, and I can barely keep my eyes open, I will pick up a book and read a few sentences before I doze off.

How do you choose what to read next?

I go through phases, where I would read mystery for over a month, then move onto fantasy and then perhaps a month full of Manga related material. If I discover a new author I like, I tend to try to read more of his or her stuff within the same week.

You can see what the latest collection of books I am reading by checking the corner next to my bed. I go through piles and piles....Besides animal welfare, I spend the most of what I make on books.



Raising the Next Generation of Readers

If you were in charge of a school or a class, what would you do to increase the quantity and quality of reading?

I would make it fun by asking the youth to first share their stories. They would get to write down their own “scariest” short stories, “funniest” then “saddest” so on and share them with the rest of the class.

Then each one would bring their parent’s favorite books and we would analyze why and when and how. Slowly go through batches of classics, new and upcoming books. I think it helps to make those that don’t like books to treat them like letters or emails sent over by friends that need a reply.

Reading with Others

How do you compare the experience of reading from a screen to reading print?

While I have to file my work via computers or via BlackBerry, I still like to write down ideas and main points on an actual notebook. Reading from the screen eventually gives me a headache, so I don’t like to read lengthy pieces on the computer. Nothing like holding a book, feeling it, even smelling it, before starting to read. The smell of a book is important to me, and so I really hate it when a book smells of pesticide.

What do you think is the best way to share views on books?

On couches, at home or at tea or coffee shops. The human exchange of gestures and tones of voices adds life and dimension to any discussion on books.

BIO

Rym Tina Ghazal, a senior journalist and writer with *The National* newspaper, is the author of *Maskoon*, a young adult horror book. She has worked as a psychologist, a researcher, a teacher, a photographer, an artist, a writer and dabbled in theater, radio and car racing before combining all of these passions into her current career as a journalist. Before moving to the UAE, she worked at *International Herald Tribune’s* *The Daily Star* where she covered assassinations, bombings, and did investigative pieces on such topics as mass graves and missing persons.



David Nicholls



19.30 Wednesday 7 March
DFC Heritage Venue

19.30 Thursday 8 March
Al Ras 2

Reading Preferences

Who are your favourite authors?

What do you like about their work?

Charles Dickens, George Orwell, Muriel Spark, Scott Fitzgerald, Thomas Hardy, John Cheever, Chekhov, Raymond Carver, JD Salinger, Richard Yates, Philip Roth, Penelope Fitzgerald, Flaubert, Bulgakov...

What are your favourite books of all time? Please tell us why you like them so much.

Great Expectations – a beautiful, gripping, deeply moving book; the first great novel that I read and loved. *Tender is the Night* – a sad, melancholy, epic love-story that's even better than *Gatsby*. *Franny* and *Zoey* – two novellas, both little gems, about youth, idealism, family. Once again, and even better book than the more famous *Catcher in the Rye*.

Bleak House – bigger, more ambitious than *Great Expectations*. For me, those two books, along with *Middlemarch*, are the high points of the 19th century novel.

Influences on Your Writing

Which books have most influenced your writing? In what way?

Dickens was my first great love, closely followed by George Orwell. In Dickens, I admire his range, his ambition, his sense of engagement with the real world. He's a big,

emotional storyteller. He can be both hysterically funny and

heartbreakingly sad, often within the space of a chapter or two. A populist, but with great integrity, he's remarkably forward-looking and experimental too; a risk-taker. Dickens lead me into the world of books. I'm sure I wouldn't have become a novelist if I'd not come across him at that early age.

Reading Habits

How do you find time to read?

I try to wake early to read, though with small children it's now harder than ever. My constant ambition is to get away from the screen – TV or computer – and sit and read instead. But it's a constant battle. Planes and trains are increasingly my only escape into a book.

Raising the Next Generation of Readers

What are your earliest memories of reading?

I was an obsessive visitor to the local library. It was a sanctuary, an escape, the source of most of my pleasure and inspiration for many, many years, and at least as important to me as my schooling. I inhaled books there, ploughing through picture books, novels, non-fiction, horror stories, thrillers, biographies, encyclopedias. I found the freedom of the library quite

exhilarating – reading what interested me, not what I was told to read.

Reading with Others

How do you compare the experience of reading from a screen to reading print?

For me, it has to be the page. My day is spent in front of a screen, and I want what my reading to be an escape from that world. Certainly I don't want to read on the same machine that holds my emails and *Angry Birds*. The digital book is the future, I'm sure, and as an author I'm grateful to readers no matter what format they choose. But for me, there's a romance, a nostalgia, a connection with the author that only comes from ink on paper.

BIO

Born in Southampton, England, David Nicholls trained as an actor before turning to writing. He is the author of three novels (*Starter for Ten*, *The Understudy* and *One Day*) as well as television drama (*Cold Feet*, *Much Ado*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*) and many screenplays. His next project is a feature-film adaptation of *Great Expectations*, due for release in late 2012.



Collage of Thoughts on Reading

When I was sixteen I read F. Scott Fitzgerald's 'The Great Gatsby'. This novel made a huge impression on me, with its strong sense of doomed romance and adults turning out not to be the people you had hoped or wanted them to be. I was also amazed by the beauty of the writing and so, for a time, Fitzgerald was my favourite writer. **(Kate Pullinger)**

Anything and everything, magazines, newspaper supplements, back of the cereal packets - anything interesting! Always had a thirst for knowledge. **(Lorraine Ludman)**

My favourite authors are authors who write stories of great drama where a simple thing can turn someone's life upside down. I love Daphne Du Maurier and William Trevor's short stories. He is a genius story teller who can evoke someone's entire personality by the way he collapses onto a chair or the way he looks down at the floor. There are echoes of William Faulkner here and Henry James too. **(Luigi Bonomi)**

My all-time favourite author is P G Wodehouse, whose books I first chanced upon when I was fifteen. I can read and re-read his books. I almost feel like I am a part of the Wodehouse family. Put me at Blandings or in Bertie's apartment and see how comfortable I can be! **(P.G. Bhaskar)**

Shakespeare's plays have enriched and touched my life in extraordinary ways. Ever since high school I've been captivated by the remarkable range of his themes and how they transcend time and place. **(Roseanne Khalaf)**

Haruki Murakami - anything by this man. Such vivid images and character. I love his soft Japanese approach to the writing mashed with edgy modern story lines. Some of the people in "Norwegian Wood" will live with me forever. Evelyn Waugh - from the serious to the surreal. Reading him is like walking through a timewarp into the very strange worlds he inhabits. **(Rosie Garthwaite)**

I read a tremendous amount, to me reading is a vital part of my life as well as my writing practice. I read very widely, from contemporary to 19th century, from crime to literary fiction. I tend to read much more fiction than non-fiction, and most of the non-fiction I read as part of the research I do for my own writing. For instance, the novel I am currently working on has a character who is from Pakistan, so I've been reading lots of fiction by Pakistani writers, as well as books about Pakistan. **(Kate Pullinger)**

I was, and still am, a big fan of *The Cat In The Hat Comes Back*, by Dr Seuss. I love the language, and the pictures, but what I love most about it is the idea that these poor kids have been left alone in the house and they let in this anarchic adult presence that they have to try and deal with. I nicked the idea for my own book *Monstroso*, and of course, the theme of kids trying to deal with life without the help of adults is central to my new horror series, *the Enemy*. **(Charlie Higson)**

Good question... "The Great Gatsby" is one. I think it is one of the most perfect novels ever, and "Wuthering Heights" which I fell in love with when I was fifteen. I was also inspired as a teenager by one of our most popular chick-lit writers called Jilly Cooper, and I always said all I wanted to

be was a Jilly Cooper. I was never really going to write serious fiction. Although I do find her books a bit obvious nowadays. I also love "The Leopard" by Lampedusa and "Cheri" by Colette. Another classic author I adore is Edith Wharton, her novels "The House of Mirth" and "The Age of Innocence" are brilliant and her short story "Roman Fever" is, to me, the perfect short story. **(Helena Frith Powell)**

Books were invaluable, and having or reading one was a luxury and privilege. I remember that some books I read at that time were very torn and worn, because they were moving around from one person to another, sometimes among hundreds of people, and anyone was considered lucky to have a chance to get to read them. We were very passionate towards books, and we looked at them as treasure. I remember putting a book under my desk at school to read some lines in the class or in the small breaks between the lessons, because I knew that many others were waiting to read it and that I couldn't keep it forever. I also remember the summer vacations when my uncle used to visit us, coming from Egypt, and that I waited for his visit each year as he used to bring me books as a gift. I still have some of them even after 30 later, as they were the most beloved gift I could have. It was a tough time, but I will never forget the smell of those books and my heartbeat while holding one. Those difficult days made us all appreciate, love and realize the value of books, and I still hold these feelings now, and try to pass them on to my children and the people I work with. **(Renad Qubbaj)**

Khulood



21.00 Thursday 8 March
Al Khaimah

21.00 Friday 9 March
Al Majlis

Al Mu'alla

Reading Preferences

Who are your favourite authors? What do you like about their work?

I have many favourite authors not only the well known ones but also young writers and it will be hard to list especially the non Arab ones because I do not want to misspell their names. I like novels and poetry, literature, biographical and historical books, spirituals etc.

Who was your favourite author when you were young?

I liked reading Najeeb Mahfoth, and classical poetry like Al Mutanbbi, and some books on Arab heritage.

What are your favourite books of all time? Please tell us why you like them so much.

Novels and modern poetry. I like novels and biographical books because they appeal to you, no matter where you come from. You can somehow relate your own life and struggles to those of the characters in the books. On the

personal level, I find comfort in that, and it helps to escape from pressure and a busy life to a peaceful time and allows me to relax, learn and find strength. It can put your own issues and thoughts into perspective.

Influences on Your Writing

How much does your reading contribute to your writing?

Reading is not the only thing that influenced my writing style or shaped my value system exhibited in my writing. There are different things in life that contributed to my writing.

I would not have attained what I am today if I hadn't been open and receptive to reading many writers and an infinite number of topics.

Reading Habits

How do you find time to read?

I make the time. It is not easy all the time, but I have to program it into my daily affairs. It is a ritual.

What do you like reading in your spare time?

In between daily activities I prefer light reading, such as cultural magazines and journals. But as I said, I dedicate time for reading, not just as a spare-time hobby.

Which books have most helped you write your latest book?

What motivated me to write my latest book was the series of books I had written before the latest. While I was writing my latest, thoughts and ideas were coming strongly and crystalizing for the next book. It is like a chain reaction.

How do you choose what to read next?

There are areas that I need to read either for added knowledge, or curiosity. There are certain writers who are a must-read for one reason or another, including prize winners. But more than anything else, my next book to read is always driven by the subject that I want to pursue.

Raising the Next Generation of Readers

What advice can you give to reluctant readers?

Reading is all about good thinking. When you read, you get exposed to different thoughts, views, ideas; your knowledge and language improve, and when your knowledge and language improve, that enhances your thinking. Enhanced thinking will in turn improve your ideas and views. I haven't come across anybody who does not want to have a superior thinking and an eloquent way of expressing it; reading is an effective way to achieve that.

How can young people be encouraged to read more?

Young people's lives are filled with a lot of things more fun than reading. Reading has to be managed systematically into their lives. School and home should collaborate to do so and they are the right place to encourage and insist on reading until reading becomes natural and a habit.

If you were in charge of a school or a class, what would you do to increase the quantity and quality of reading?

Get the child to read every night to their parents and their parents to sign for it. Start with books with more pictures and less talk, and progress further towards more talk. Reward the kids for reading and those who finish a book will go to the next book. Reward the kids who finish more books within a certain time.

What do you like to read to your children?

I would start with the all-time

classics such as Little Red Riding Hood, Goldilocks and the Three Bears, The Three Little Pigs and the like.

Reading with Others

How do you see the future of books, reading and bookshops?

It is like the game consoles in the hands of every kid and the arcades in the mall. Kids have all kinds of game consoles but still go for the coin-operated arcade machines. Books, reading and bookshops still have a future.

In your opinion, how much does a study of literature help to understand modern novels?

It could help. What I see as more important is interest and frequently reading literature helps to understand modern novels. In my opinion, literature is a very good way of encouraging reading. It helps to appreciate the novels or poems and the writers and why they have written them, understating the themes and the characters. All of that takes the reader beyond the written material, opens new horizons and gives meaning to a lot of things.

Study of literature however is not necessarily a prerequisite to understanding modern novels. Otherwise, they will have a narrow and specialized audience which is not the case. Modern novels do appeal to and are appreciated by a wide world audience who come from different walks of life.

Describe an experience where the sharing of views on a book changed your view of the book.

I am not sure that there has been an

incident where sharing my views of a books has been changed by others. I don't shape my views without basis, and this basis is not necessarily from only reading the book itself. I have to do my homework and link the dots and go beyond what is in hand if I have to make an opinion. I don't ignore my reserve of experience and future outlook.

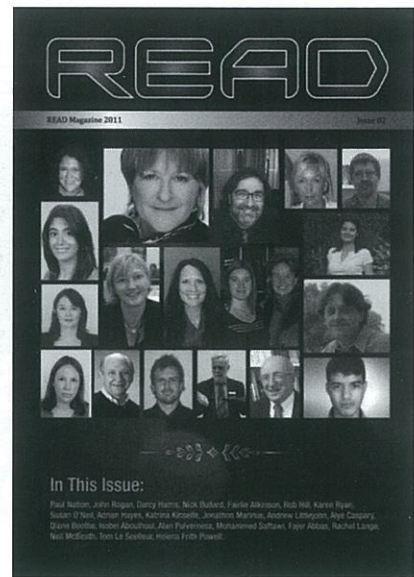
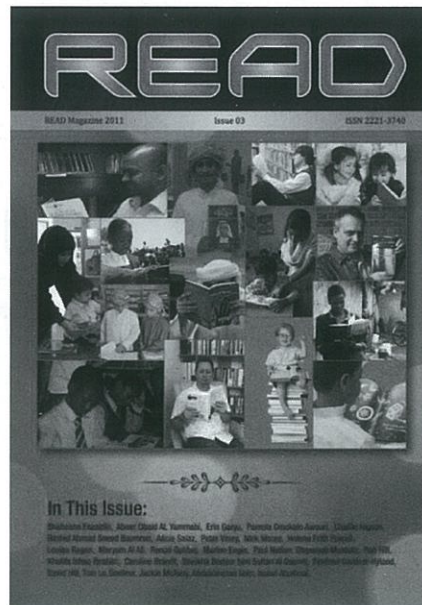
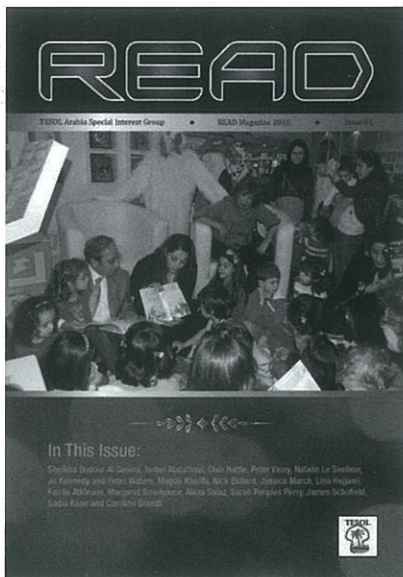
What do you think is the best way to share views on books?

Sharing views in general is important not only about books. Sharing views about books helps readers to evaluate different thoughts and ideas, and learn from each other's views. What is also important is the author's view, and the readers do not have to subscribe to the same view all the time. On the other hand, independent thinking is also key here. People could be right or wrong on many issues and do not have to be judged accordingly.

BIO

Khulood Al Mu'alla is a poet from the UAE who currently resides in Dubai. Khulood has to date published five volumes of poetry. She is now beginning to receive international recognition as well, with a selection of poems from her four books translated into Spanish and Turkish that published in 2010 and 2011 respectively.





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