



Making the most of an author event

Ideas and tips for making the most of an author event in your school or community

Age 3–18

CFE Levels Early to Senior

**Resource created with Edinburgh International Book
Festival and Georgi Gill**

scottishbooktrust.com



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About this resource

An author event is a great way to get children enthused about reading, writing and drawing. By making sure you and your pupils are prepared and excited about the author and event, you'll ensure that they get the most out of the experience.

This resource explores:

- Different options for author visits or events
- Planning your event, including support for travel
- What to do before, during and after an author event
- Suggested activities for extending the learning from your author event

If you are taking part in [Reading Schools](#), the activities in this resource could support delivery of Key Area:

- 2.3.2: Staff meaning conversations around books
- 2.3.4: Opportunities for learners to respond to what they're reading
- 2.3.5: Access to authors (Silver and Gold only)

Finding an author to visit

Working with a writer is a fantastic opportunity to inspire children and develop your practice, and there are lots of different opportunities to set up an event and tailor it to your needs.

Scottish Book Trust

The Scottish Book Trust provides opportunities for authors to visit your school through [the Live Literature funding programme](#), [the Scottish Friendly Children's Book Tour outreach programme](#), the [Schools Events Programme](#) as well as our [Sensory Storytelling programme](#) for children with additional support needs, including disability and neurodiversity. Find upcoming events and tours by visiting the Scottish Book Trust website.

Edinburgh International Book Festival

You can visit a book festival and go to an author event or workshop. There are lots of book festivals in Scotland, including the Edinburgh International Book Festival which includes the hugely popular [Baillie Gifford Schools Programme](#), including both online and in-person events, and its [On the Road programme](#) which takes author events around Scotland throughout the year.

Other book festivals across Scotland

[Literature Alliance Scotland](#) has a full list of book festivals that take part across Scotland. As well as programming for children, some festivals also run schools outreach programmes, where authors come in to visit schools. Have a look to see whether there is a festival happening near you!

Writer visits

You can also contact a writer and ask them to come in and visit your pupils. You can choose whether the event is large or small, what its aims are, and whether you want just one visit or an extended residency.

Writers should be paid an appropriate fee and expenses for the events they carry out – find out more about rates for events and funding opportunities that can help with this at the end of this resource. To find out more about Live Literature funding, see our [About Live Literature webpage](#).

Sometimes several schools have organised a writer visit together – one school hosts the event, and others travel to it. This can be a good way to share the cost of a writer visit. It can result in quite a large audience, so check what size of audience the writer is comfortable with beforehand.

Digital events

Authors Live is a series of broadcasts with world class authors and illustrators, produced by Scottish Book Trust in partnership with BBC Scotland Learning. You can watch these broadcasts live in your classroom, or catch up with previous events on the [Authors Live on Demand Library](#) or BBC iPlayer. Our [Making the most of Authors Live resource](#) takes you through how to prepare and set up for a broadcast, as well as suggested activities for longer term engagement.

Online resources

Both Edinburgh International Book Festival and Scottish Book Trust have online banks of learning resources. Why not have a browse and see if there's anything relevant to your author or topic which you can use? Edinburgh International Book Festival's Schools brochure also includes activity suggestions linked to each event.

Before your event

If you're travelling to an event at a festival

Make sure everyone knows the time of the event and where it is. Make sure you're arriving in plenty of time. There might be other things to explore after the event such as a bookshop, stall, or other activities. If so, make sure to leave time for that.

Remember to bring money if you would like to buy a book and get it signed by the

author.

Support with travel

If you're interested in attending Edinburgh International Book Festival, you can apply for the [Baillie Gifford Transport Fund](#) to help support the cost of travel to and from the festival. You can find out more via the [How to take part section of the Edinburgh International Book Festival website](#). Other festivals may be able to offer advice or support, so it's always worth contacting them if you're interested in bringing pupils to attend.

If you've invited a writer into your school

Plan with your author. Make sure you speak to the author beforehand about your goals for the event. Is the event going to be a workshop with lots of pupil participation, or more of a presentation and reading?

Also, check that the author's event will be suitable for the age and size of audience and whether they have a presentation and that this works on your school or library's computers. Think about whether you want to invite parents along too!

Read the author your class are booked to see

Sounds obvious, I know, but it's surprising how many people don't do this. There might not be time to read a whole novel with your class ahead of the visit but try to share at least a chapter or a few poems. Maybe you could watch an online book trailer together if your author has any.

Fact find about the author

It's good to do a wee bit of research with your class – look at book blurbs or the author's website. Where are they from? Have they always been a writer? Try to find get a sense of the person as well as the writing.

Think of questions to ask

Ask students to think of two questions each they would like to ask their author: one should be from them as readers (maybe about plot or characters, or a scoop on what the writer is doing next!). The second questions should be questions from young writers to an established author – a great opportunity to get tips on how to develop their own writing.

Identify aims for the visit

Before you know it, festival trips or author visits can flash by in a wonderful, noisy whirl of tents, snacks and books. To maintain focus, ask students to think of their aims for the day - maybe they want to want to hear a new story, find out how writers work, or be inspired to write a book of their own.

Prepare to be a good audience!

It's not just the people on the stage that make the events a success – the audience has an important role too (although sometimes it's a non-speaking part!). Have a chat with your class – what do they think the audience should do? How can they join in and maximise enjoyment?

Poster people

Get your whole class excited about the event by creating your own posters. Rewrite the event description including what you're looking forward to doing, and include your own picture of the author, characters, venue etc. Make sure to include time and venue details, then put all your creations up on the classroom wall for everyone to see.

Another time, another place?

Is the book set in a different time period? If so, do some research and find different sources from that period of history. What do they tell you about life, beliefs and politics in that time? When you read the book, compare the fiction to what you know

about the era. If there are any inconsistencies, why do you think this is?

During the visit

Join in!

It's really good for you to get involved with the activities the writer does with your pupils – it shows both the writer and pupils that you value the event and helps to send out the message that events are fun.

Engagement and safeguarding

If you invite a writer into school, please bear in mind that you should not leave them alone with pupils. Remaining with the author is not only important in terms of safeguarding but is also a way to model interest and engagement. It can be useful to have some questions up your sleeve to ask the author – that way if pupils are a little hesitant, you have something ready to get the conversation started!

After an event

Reflect on your author event

As a class think about what you saw and heard. What did you learn? Were there any surprises? What were the highlights? Students could write brief Twitter-style reviews of the event, summing up their experience in less than 140 characters. You could share these with @edbookfest or @scottishbktrust on the students' behalf!

Revisit your pre-visit

How many of your questions were answered? Even though every student won't have had the opportunity to ask their question, a lot of these will probably have been addressed during the event.

Make a book list

As a class and individually, what do your students want to read now? Some books by the author you saw would be a good starting point. Maybe she or he mentioned

their own favourite authors or the writers who have inspired them. Or maybe some of your students want to explore a particular genre. Make a 'To Read' list – how many can you finish this term?

Imitate to innovate

Choose techniques that your class admire in your event author's writing – maybe he or she specialises in short, snappy descriptions or conveys their characters' feelings brilliantly through diary entries. By examining and then emulating the chosen technique in a piece of their own writing, students can feel supported to achieve in their own writing – it's like using a float to improve swimming!

Prepare to perform

Authors who do events for children and young people are usually accomplished performers. What could your class learn from the author you saw? How did she or he put pace into their reading? How did they use their voice or body to make their performance funny or scary or sad? Agree on three things you've learned about what to do (or not do!) when performing. Can you incorporate this learning into your next class assembly?

Post event class activities

All CFE Levels

Reading wall

An author event is the perfect way to spark an interest in reading. Why not start a recommendations wall in your classroom or school after the event? Pupils and staff can contribute recommendations on post it notes, and you can ask pupils to design and organise the wall.

What next?

Read the book as a class and when you get to the end of a chapter stop and make predictions. What do you think (or hope) will happen next? Read on and find out if

you were right.

Tell others

Tell the rest of the school about your event, perhaps in an assembly. You could each stand up and tell them what your favourite thing about the event was or what you learned. This can encourage other classes to attend author events and help create a reading culture in your school.

Early Level

Story map

LIT 0-07a, LIT 0-16a, ENG 0-17a, LIT 0-09b, LIT 0-31a, EXA 0-04a

Help your pupils re-tell the story. You can use story mapping for this – getting pupils to draw pictures of key moments to help them remember the plot. You can also use story stepping – getting them to take a step and make up an action to represent a key moment, then repeating this for other key moments of the story.

Create puppets

TCH 0-04b, EXA 0-13a

You could also get pupils to create puppets to help them act out the story for someone else!

Invite a character

LIT 0-09b, LIT 0-31a, EXA 0-04a

Ask children to choose a character from a text they have read and to design a simple invitation, inviting him or her to their house. The invite should include a picture or sentence about what they will do during the visit (using information about likes/dislikes from the text).

Illustrate a scene

LIT 0-01c, EXA 0-04a

Choose your favourite scene from the book and illustrate it. If your class all choose

different scenes, at the end you could have a visual representation of key moments in the story to display on your wall. Or choose one scene and make a life-sized collage picture. See [our resource on 10 expressive arts activities you can do with any book](#) for more inspiration.

First and Second Level

Write an alternative ending

LIT 1-07a, LIT 1-20a

What did you think of the ending of the book? If you didn't like it (or wonder what would have happened if something different had occurred) then why not write your own ending.

Character fact file

LIT 1-04a, LIT 1-05a, EXA 1-04a

Write a fact file about your favourite character. Write down what you learn from the book and then add in any other details that you can think up yourself to expand the character. Draw a picture to accompany your fact file.

Write a review

LIT 1-04a, LIT 1-06a

Imagine that your reader hasn't read the book – what would you tell them to encourage them to read it?

Make a prop

TCH 1-09a

Make a model of one of the characters, or an important prop from the story. Try different materials like recycled boxes, natural materials, clay or papier mache.

Make your own book jacket

EXA 1-04a

Don't judge a book by its cover – make your own! Don't forget to add a summary on the back cover and maybe some quotes from reviews.

Location map

EXA 1-04a

Is the book set in an interesting location? Draw a map then annotate it with what happens at different places.

Book review in a box

LIT 1-04a, EXA 1-04a, TCH 1-09a

This is a good way to engage reluctant readers and can support pupils to talk about what they've read. Tell pupils to get creative and decorate their box with elements about character, plot and setting. They can decorate inside and outside the box, the only stipulation is no words allowed!

Third, Fourth and Senior Phase

Write in any genre

LIT 2-20a, LIT 2-26a, LIT 2-28a

Is the book fantasy, horror, crime or comedy? Whatever the genre, use the event as inspiration to write your story in that style.

Fan fiction

LIT 2-26a, LIT 2-28a

Did you love the characters and want to see more of them? Why not try your hand at writing some fan fiction? Put your favourite characters in another situation or imagine their exciting back stories.

Create a book trailer

LIT 2-28a, TCH 2-02a, TCH 2-14b

A book trailer is a movie-style teaser for a book to entice potential readers. You can find resources and videos to help you create a book trailer [on the Scottish Book Trust website](#).

Create a comic strip

LIT 2-01a, EXA 2-03a, EXA 2-04a

Adapt a scene from the book into graphic novel format. You can find resources to help your pupils [on the Scottish Book Trust website](#).

Character poem

LIT 2-01a, LIT 2-20a

Ask pupils to write a poem from the point of view of one of the characters in the book. You could hold a poetry slam event where pupils perform their pieces – slam poetry can be a very powerful medium to help pupils re-evaluate their stance on poetry! For more ideas, see our [Performance poetry learning activities](#) and our resource for [Writing poetry in Scots](#).

Debate and discuss

LIT 2-02a, LIT 2-04a, LIT 2-07a

Is your book controversial? Do some of you like the ending (or the main character) and some of you don't? Why not organise a debate and let your opinions fly! It can be fun to also get some pupils to argue an opinion which isn't their own and make them see someone else's point of view.

Make a marketing campaign

LIT 2-24a, LIT 2-26a, EXA 2-03a, EXA 2-04a

Create your own marketing campaign for the book by making posters, a trailer or organising a photoshoot. You could even role play at being the author and hold press interviews or talk-show appearances.

Get acting

EXA 2-01a, EXA 2-02a, EXA 2-03a, EXA 2-13a

Books which are full of action and adventure are perfect for acting out and creating your own classroom production! Many aspects of the Expressive Arts curriculum can be incorporated as you create backdrops and props and make accompanying music and sound effects. Have a rehearsal to practise your movement, and then you're ready to go. All you need is someone to read the text as you act out the story.

For more ideas for performing texts, see our [Storytelling activities](#) or [Quick drama activities for performing picture books](#).

Freeze!

LIT 2-07a, LIT 2-09a, EXA 2-13a

In small groups, choose your favourite scene from the book (preferably one involving quite a lot of action!) Working together create a freeze-frame showing one point in the scene (if you don't know what this is, imagine you're acting out the scene and someone yells freeze). Exaggerate your pose – and don't forget facial expressions.

One by one the teacher should tap each person in the scene on the shoulder. As they do, that person unfreezes and tells everyone what they're thinking and how they feel.

After everyone has spoken, they freeze again. Once everyone is frozen again the teacher should shout "unfreeze." On this command the group starts to act out the scene. Let them do that for just a few minutes and then shout "freeze" again.

In the Spotlight

EXA 2-13a

Assign different pupils a character from the book. One by one they will come to the front of the class and, in character, answer questions put to them by the rest of the class, in the style of a police interrogation. Questions can be simple or more

complex. You might want to ask about the character's background, motives, relationships. Once all the questions have been asked, the next character should step up!

Further resources

- Find out more about the Live Literature funding programme, and browse the database of authors, on [the Live Literature section of the Scottish Book Trust website](#)
- Find out about all of the [Scottish Book Trust Schools Events and Opportunities on our website](#)
- Find the [Authors Live on Demand library on the Scottish Book Trust website](#), as well as our resource on [Making the most of Authors Live](#) in your class or school
- To find out more about Edinburgh International Book Festival, see the [Baillie Gifford Schools Programme](#) or [On the Road](#) sections of their website