



Draw a Crowd

The Big Picture guide to picture book events

booktrust

Contents

Foreword by Michael Rosen

Introduction

Practicalities

Ideas Bank

Draw a festival crowd

Draw an exhibition crowd

Draw a music crowd

Draw a theatre crowd

Draw a gallery crowd

Foreword

If you hold a picture book in your hand, you are moments away from creating an important moment for someone else, or indeed for a whole crowd of people. The words on the page are there for saying out loud, chanting, repeating or singing. Often, there are creatures or people who have voices that need you to give expression to, colouring them with age, anger, mystery or fun. You have, then, a script, waiting for you to perform it, to an audience just longing for you, their parent, their carer, their entertaining stranger to deliver it. And it's not hard. Look at the characters – you know them already: the noisy dog, the cheeky monkey, the loved teddy, the puzzled mother, the scary lion.

But alongside your voice, your eyes, your arms and legs that can express the words, you have an incredible assistant in your hand, who is, in effect, the set, costumes and lights of your show: the pictures. As we listen to your performance, our eyes can move between your animated face to the images in the book. Those monsters dancing on the beach – are they funny or scary? That cat coming in out of the snow – is he naughty or hard-done by? We'll have to scan these creatures' faces, listen to the words, sense the changing colours on the pages to pick up some clues.

And then, hold it there! There might be a question we might want to ask you: are there really elephants made up of many colours? And there might be a story that we might want to tell you: I remember once not getting to my potty in time, too!

And all the while, the cadence of the written language is going into our heads. Speech is a disjointed, curtailed way of communicating. The written language is neatly segmented, full of words that make clear who or what we're talking about. Some children may never quite get how it works. The ones who hear it being read to them will find it all the more easy to figure out its ways when they try to make sense of it as they learn to read.



Michael Rosen, Children's Laureate

Introduction

Draw a crowd is for anyone who wants to become involved in the sort of picture book event that all those who take part in will remember for years to come. We hope that *Draw a crowd* will be an aid to illustrators, event programmers and picture book readers, and that it will raise your expectations of what a picture book event can be.

Draw a crowd is built around an Ideas Bank of actual and future picture book events which we think are particularly imaginative and inspiring. The bank will grow through the course of The Big Picture campaign as we find out about more events of this kind. Please do get in touch with us with your own suggestions and we'll do our best to incorporate them so that more people can be inspired.

There is undoubtedly a place for conventional 'readings' of picture books to young children and of illustration workshops with older children. Many illustrators we have spoken to have told us that the best events they have taken part in have been readings to small groups of young children, so that the pages of the book are visible to all present.

Award-winning illustrator, Emily Gravett, comments that "it always helps to keep the kids engaged if you can get them involved with the reading, or asking them to guess what comes next. Plenty of 'raise your hands if. . .' Also they seem to listen better when you relate what you're talking about to your own childhood, and tie that in to their experiences."

There is a magic that comes entirely from seeing an illustrator live, having them open up their own pictures and, for older children, explain how they came about. Though Quentin Blake probably never did answer the seven-year-old who asked "Where did you get your imagination from?" to the latter's satisfaction.

However, we believe illustrators and programmers should not be inhibited by the size of the picture book, nor by the confines of classroom, bookshop or library. Why not commission a giant tactile picture book for very young children to explore? Consider a residency format so that the multiple skills of the illustrator and the richness of the picture book form can have longer to work their magic. Think about ways in which your illustrator event could have a legacy. Sara Fanelli became involved in the education programme at the Tate; her graphic designs and lettering now appear on the walls of Tate Modern. And finally, why not invite picture book illustrators to talk to audiences of adults?

Our Ideas Bank demonstrates many ways in which picture book events can draw large and diverse

crowds in a variety of settings.

The picture book is already an event itself, each one a drama ready for performance, by anyone, anywhere: "While listening to stories, children enter the realms of possibility; what might happen, how things could be different" (Margaret Meek).

Practicalities

For programmers

Choose your illustrator wisely

Do your research to make sure that you match an illustrator's experience and strengths to your audience and your venue. Not all illustrators will be comfortable performing in large venues; to others it might be second nature.

Consult individual publishers, Booktrust's Illustrators' Gallery (www.booktrusted.co.uk/illustrators), or the Association of Illustrators (www.theaoi.com), to get a better sense of an illustrator's work before you make your invitation.

Pay your illustrator appropriately

Visual artists earnings are low in comparison with other professional workers with similarly high levels of education, expertise and commitment. Visual artists are around three times as likely as the working population in general to be self-employed; and as self-employed people they negotiate remuneration and other conditions on an individual basis with commissioners and clients.

Good practice guidelines for those employing visual artists are available to download free from the Artists Information Company (www.a-n.co.uk)

Make the books available

Establish links with your local bookshop well in advance. Independent bookshops often have good relationships with local communities, especially families, and might help you to market your event.

Make contact with your local library and promote their services. 97 per cent of libraries now run regular book events for babies and children; consult with the early years librarian and consider the potential of a partnership.

Network

Talk to other festivals, programmers and organisations who have worked with illustrators and picture books. There are links and contact details in this guide, and on The Big Picture website.

Evaluate

Make sure you get audience feedback to make your next event even better. Develop creative ways of finding out what children thought. And make sure you ask your illustrator about their experience of taking part.

For illustrators

Remuneration

Calculate your fee thoroughly (for instance, make sure you include your preparation time). An online toolkit to help you cost your contribution to the event appropriately is available to download free from the Artists Information Company (www.a-n.co.uk).

Preparation

Ask for confirmation of the type and size of the audience in advance, and the likely duration of the event. Allow yourself time to get familiar with the space you will be performing in.

If you're working with children or vulnerable adults you will need Criminal Records Bureau clearance. Public Liability Insurance is also valuable.

Keep in touch!

Consult The Big Picture website in 2008 to find details about training opportunities for illustrators wishing to hone their performance skills, or to embark on live events for the first time.

Ideas Bank

Draw a festival crowd

Some (though by no means all) literature festivals are reticent about programming children's book events in larger venues. The success of an event during the Southbank's Imagine Festival of Children's Literature demonstrates that it is possible to draw a large and mixed-age audience for a picture book event. Sian Williams, the event programmer, describes what happened.

Front cover

The Children's Bookshow, a national tour of children's writers, took place in autumn 2003 and visited 10 venues throughout England. This event took place in the Purcell Room in the Queen Elizabeth Hall at the South Bank Centre in London. Poet Matthew Sweeney and writer/illustrator Quentin Blake performed to a full house (around 200), mainly of families. The Bookshow was funded by Arts Council England, the Moose Foundation, and publishers.

Inside pages

As Matthew read his poems, Quentin drew rapidly in his sketch book to illustrate them. His drawings were projected onto a large overhead screen at the back of the stage. It was spellbinding to see his quick little hand transforming the spoken words into images.

After he had illustrated a number of poems this way, he turned to Matthew and asked, 'Shall we do it the other way around now?' Matthew, of stout heart, answered 'Yes!' Quentin grinned and said, 'You're a very brave man' and Matthew added, 'or a very foolish one'. Quentin then drew an eccentric old woman, boots around her ankles, a fishbone instead of a feather in her gigantic hat, who appeared to be running madly away from something. Matthew glanced at it briefly, paused, then came out with a poem. The audience roared its applause, some stamped their feet! It was a miraculous moment!

The event ended with a lively question and answer session, in which adults and children participated with equal enthusiasm.

Next in series

If you work with people of Quentin and Matthew's stature, then there's always the possibility that something extraordinary might emerge. The event was successful in terms of audience simply because of hard work. You have to cover every single base to gather your audience and to ensure that every possible publicity and marketing opportunity is taken.

The Children's Bookshow takes place annually each autumn, beginning in Children's Book Week in October, and runs until the opening of the Youth Festival at L'Institut Français. See www.thechildrensbookshow.com to find out more about this year's bookshow. Contact sianwilliams1@gmail.com or call 020 8960 0602; or call Kate Tull on 07740 256330.

Draw an exhibition crowd

Curator Gillian Rennie gives an insight into the evolution of the exhibition *Snozzcumbers and Froboscottle! The Wonderful World of Roald Dahl and Quentin Blake* which runs from June 2007 to June 2008 at Seven Stories, the Centre for Children's Books in Newcastle. Based on the success of previous exhibitions at Seven Stories, this one has a target audience of 61,000.

Front cover

The exhibition displayed over 80 pieces of original artwork from all the collaborations between Roald Dahl and Quentin Blake, with some original manuscripts.

Visitors are invited to enter the exhibition through a whirling checkerboard tunnel inspired by Willy Wonka [of Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*]. Inside they come face to face with Quentin Blake's illustrations, introduced by colourful wall-sized characters. Visitors can hide in the BFG's cave to relax and read stories; they can sit on a red velvet theatre seat to listen to story excerpts; they can work in the Studio to produce Blake-inspired illustrations and watch a specially commissioned 'Blake at work' film. The exhibition offers the visitor a unique insight into the creative process of Quentin Blake and Roald Dahl and inspires them to explore their own creativity.

The exhibition was conceived in response to seeing 'Quentin Blake & Roald Dahl: The Illustrations' at the National Theatre, London and subsequently developed in close collaboration with Quentin Blake and MkW Design Partnership. It is financed by Seven Stories core budget, Puffin Books, Random House. Dahl & Dahl Ltd and other in kind support.

Inside pages

The curation process:

- Initial exhibition proposal drawn up by Seven Stories, then email correspondence with Quentin to reach agreement.
- A meeting with Quentin to agree terms of loan of material, themes of exhibition and key messages
- Initial designs drawn up and sent to Quentin for approval with ongoing approval of artwork, designs/elevations, exhibition text and talks/workshops/opening event throughout design process
- Installation
- Early evaluation demonstrates visitors' delight at viewing original Blake artwork and Dahl manuscripts and their appreciation of having a gallery facilitator in attendance.

Next in series

The experience of reading a picture book is very different to accessing a picture book in a gallery setting. **Picture books work because of the chemistry between words and pictures. This needs to be kept in mind when designing the exhibition.**

Young children need lots of help and support to feel comfortable in a gallery setting and to engage with the original material. Interactives help but must be thought through to ensure that they engage children rather than distract them.

Parents and carers also need support. Give them the option of making use of instructions on what to do in the gallery.

Always set careful and focused aims for the exhibition and carry out visitor observation and evaluation.

Find out more about Seven Stories at www.sevenstories.org.uk. Their next major exhibition is *Up to Mischief with Horrid Henry* which will run from February 2009 to February 2010 (and will incorporate Peter Rabbit, Dennis the Menace and Goldilocks).

Draw a music crowd

On Sunday 4 November, the Philharmonic Orchestra at the University of Hertfordshire will perform children's classics including Stravinsky's Fireworks, Rimsky Korsakov's Firebird and Prokofiev's Peter and the Wolf.

Illustrator James Mayhew will 'accompany' the orchestra with narration and illustration. The illustrations will be projected onto large screens around the auditorium as they are being composed.

This event is being programmed by the Federation of Children's Book Groups. See www.fcbg.org.uk to find out more about their work. Call 01707 281127 for tickets to the concert

James Mayhew is published by Chicken House – find out more about his work at www.doublecluck.com

Draw a theatre crowd

Theatre is one of the most natural cultural pairings for picture books. Illustrator Polly Dunbar tells us more about her puppet show, *Shoe Baby*, based on the picture book of the same name.

Front cover

Shoe Baby is a puppet show aimed at very young children. The show takes place within a wooden booth, with four puppeteers squeezed inside. We have about 25 different puppets ranging from sock-puppet giraffes to giants that are full costumes. We normally perform in small studio theatres to audiences of about 100. We have our own lighting and a sound equipment so that we can also set up in schools or at community events. The show started off as a labour of love, and we funded the making of it ourselves. Now we do get paid by theatres per performance. Our company, Long Nose Puppets, has just received an Arts Council grant to help fund [making] our new show *Flyaway Katie*.

Inside pages

Shoe Baby is a faithful adaptation of the book written by my mum, Joyce Dunbar, published by Walker Books. When we were making the puppets we wanted it to have the feel of the picture book, so visually it is very similar. **Each scene change is almost like the turn of a page, but of course it has music and movement.** Most of the show takes place within the booth, but when 'the giants come by', we break the fourth wall and come out into the audience in full giant costume. This moment is very surprising and for some of the children, a little bit frightening; but it is immediately obvious that they are friendly giants and they soon start joining in with the music again.

We have been told that it is as much of a pleasure to watch the children's faces as it is to see the show (of course we miss this, being inside the booth). After the show we come out and meet the children and let them say 'How do you do?' to the puppets.

Next in series

I think our show has become popular because it is friendly, funny, accessible and quirky. There is very little theatre for children so young. *Shoe Baby* is often their first experience of live theatre, and they are at that magic age where there is no problem in suspending their disbelief. It follows that it is probably also the first bit of live theatre that new parents share with their children, so it is a very bonding experience for them.

The children often go home and want the story reread to them over and over again. This is lovely to hear as it means we have succeeded in bringing the book to life in a special way.

Shoe Baby will be on at the New Wolsey Theatre in Ipswich from 12 December 2007 to 5 January 2008. Long Nose Puppets will be launching their new show *Flyaway Katie* on 16 December 2007 at Brighton's Komedia. The show will be touring the UK in spring 2008. More information on www.longnosepuppets.com or www.pollydunbar.com.

Draw a gallery crowd

One of the best established and most successful initiatives bringing picture books, illustrators and galleries together is Young Cultural Creators.

A Young Cultural Creators programme allows children:

- a visit to the local library
- to explore of a museum, archive or gallery with a writer or illustrator, who will introduce them to pictures or artefacts that illuminate their books in some way.
- a follow-up workshop at the library with the same writer or illustrator to develop children's own creative responses in writing or pictures.
- a display and celebration of young people's work in the library
- on-going activities that build on these experiences

Anthony Browne worked with *The Shape Game* (Doubleday) at Tate Modern in conjunction with 'Lobster Telephone' and 'Mountain Lake' by Salvador Dali, 'The Uncertainty of the Poet' by Giorgio de Chirco, and 'Celebes' by Max Ernst.

Young Cultural Creators (YCC) was conceived by the London Libraries Development Agency (LLDA) and the Tate Gallery and is now coordinated and funded by Museums, Libraries and Archives London, the regional development agency for museums, libraries and archives in the capital. Find out more on www.youngculturalcreators.com

About Booktrust

Booktrust is an independent national charity that encourages people of all ages and cultures to discover and enjoy reading. The reader is at the heart of everything we do.

The Big Picture is our new campaign to celebrate and reawaken public interest in picture books. The campaign will support all those working with picture books, from art schools to teachers, from librarians to literature festivals, from booksellers to nurseries. www.bigpicture.org.uk

Booktrust runs a variety of other schemes, projects, prizes and websites, all of which aim to promote books and reading. Listed below are just some of the things we do relating to children's books.

> **www.booktrusted.com**

Booktrust's children's book website, aimed towards parents, teachers and librarians. The website features a searchable database of more than 1,500 book reviews, picks of the month, an illustrators' gallery, interviews with authors and teachers' resources.

> **Bookstart**

A national programme that works through locally-based organisations to give a free pack of books to babies with guidance materials for parents and carers. It aims to promote a life-long love of books and is based on the principle that every child in the UK should enjoy and benefit from books from as early an age as possible.

www.bookstart.org.uk

> **Booked Up**

A national programme which encourages Year 7 children to read for pleasure. Every 11-year-old in England is entitled to choose a free book from a list of 12 specially selected titles.

www.bookedup.org.uk

> **Children's Book Week**

Each year schools, libraries and bookshops hold events and activities that focus on the enjoyment of reading and aim to encourage as many children as possible to enjoy books.

Booktrust provides colourful and useful resources to help run successful book weeks or events.

www.booktrusted.com

> **Writing Together**

Visit www.writingtogether.org.uk for advice on organising author visits to schools.

> **Bookmark: Books and Disability**

This website is for anyone looking for information or advice about reading difficulties, disability and children's books. www.bookmark.org.uk

> **Children's Laureate**

The post of Children's Laureate is awarded once every two years to an eminent writer or illustrator of children's books to celebrate outstanding achievement in their field.

www.childrenslaureate.org

> **Booktrust Early Years Awards**

This prize is divided into three categories: Baby Book Award, Pre-School Award and Best New Illustrator Award.

www.booktrust.org.uk

> **Nestlé Children's Book Prize**

Formerly the Nestlé Smarties Book Prize. Awarded to the nation's best children's books in three age categories, as voted for by children themselves.

www.booktrust.org.uk

> **Booktrust Teenage Prize**

Recognises and celebrates the best contemporary teenage fiction.

www.bookheads.org.uk