



# Bookbite

[www.bookbite.org.uk](http://www.bookbite.org.uk)

**Ever wondered about writing down your memories or tracing your family tree? Now you can!**

Full of fun ideas for reading and writing, Bookbite can help you get started.



## My Story

Tips and inspiration to write your story – and even win a prize



## Who do you think you are?

How to find your ancestors or look into your local history



## Quiz

Just for fun

Short crime story

Competitions

And much more...

booktrust

# Welcome to Bookbite

**Booktrust is delighted to bring you Bookbite, inspiring you to get more out of reading and writing. Bookbite is an exciting new project which, as well as this magazine, has a website where you'll find lots more information, book lists and additional resources ([www.bookbite.org.uk](http://www.bookbite.org.uk)). Whether you always have your nose in a book, or just flick through a local paper; whether 'writing' to you means writing short stories for grandchildren, keeping a diary or putting a thoughtful note in a greetings card, we are sure Bookbite will provide lots of exciting new ideas.**

We hope you'll sit back, relax and enjoy the short story and poems we've selected and the thoughts of some authors and personalities. Why not enter one of our great competitions My Story or The Letter I Wish I Had Written on pages 25 and 15. Throughout Bookbite you'll find opportunities to write something and send it to us, by post or on the Bookbite website.

## **Bookbite can offer:**

- Something to dip into for a quick read
- Inspiration to write something from a letter to a story
- Ideas to polish up some old skills – or try something new
- Information on where to find people who share your interest.

## **Pointing you in the right direction:**

'How do I find out about my family tree?'

'I'm interested in local history – who can help?'

'I've got an idea for a story or poem – where do I start?'

'I want to record my memories. How do I go about it?'

'What can I do if I don't know how to use a computer?'

Bookbite answers all these questions and more, with reading suggestions and ideas for where to go for help and information.

## **Bite back – and enter our free prize draw**

We'd love to know what you think about Bookbite. There's a free tear-off form at the back for you to fill in and send back to us. Or you can complete the survey online at home or why not call into your local UK online centre? Every entry we receive will go into a free prize draw to win one of 50 book tokens worth £30.

Booktrust is delighted to be working in partnership with WRVS and UK online centres to bring you Bookbite. So happy reading and writing!



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## **Viv Bird, Booktrust CEO**

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Our thanks to the people and organisations who've made Bookbite possible

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# It's never too late...

...to discover new, enjoyable things to do. Here are some ideas to start you thinking, books to inspire you and links to helpful websites.



Here are some suggestions for things to do. Why not make a note of your own dreams and ideas?

- Pursue a new interest
- Volunteer for a charity
- Connect with old friends
- Find out more about your area
- Tell your story
- Read different types of books
- Learn new computing skills
- Write an article or short story
- Get up-to-date news online
- Trace your family tree
- Make new friends
- Compile a journal or memory book
- Listen to books and music online

Also, why not join the Bookbite online reading group or writing club? [www.bookbite.org.uk](http://www.bookbite.org.uk)

## Find out more

### Books

#### ► *If Not Now, When?*

by Esther Rantzen

#### ► *Choices in Retirement*

by Peter Hooper

#### ► *Computing for Beginners*

by Jackie Sherman

#### ► *101 Secrets for a Great Retirement: Practical, Inspirational, & Fun Ideas for the Best Years of Your Life!*

by Mary Helen & Shuford Smith

#### ► *Feeling Good!*

by Dr Alan Maryon Davis, illustrated by Quentin Blake

#### ► *The Joy of Retirement*

by David C. Borchard

### Websites

Find a course or activity at:

► [www.u3a.org.uk](http://www.u3a.org.uk)

► [www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning)

► [www.do-it.org.uk](http://www.do-it.org.uk)

## It doesn't have to cost much

Remember you don't need to spend a fortune on books these days.

Your local library might have what you are looking for or will search for it if they don't. Most libraries also offer a housebound library service if getting out is difficult. Charity shops have good selections of titles at knock-down prices. Swapping books with friends and relatives is also a good idea, or do the same online via sites such as [www.readitswapit.co.uk](http://www.readitswapit.co.uk) which is free except for postal charges.

If you have access to the internet there are also websites where you can download and print certain books for free, such as [www.books.google.com](http://www.books.google.com) and [www.promo.net/pg](http://www.promo.net/pg)

Or you could listen to book serialisations or adaptations on the radio and, again, they can be downloaded for free from the BBC Radio 4 and 7 websites and [www.librivox.org](http://www.librivox.org)



# ARE YOU SITTING COMFORTABLY? THEN I'LL BEGIN...

Vera Waters has worked in the Health Service, and been a counselling consultant and adviser to the police force. Now a life coach and inspirational speaker, she has written four books and two CDs in which she encourages her readers to find the confidence to cope with whatever life has to offer.

**In the next few pages, Vera provides some advice on storytelling. »**



Find out more at  
[www.verawaters.com](http://www.verawaters.com)

**Telling a story to a child is great fun for both of you. Here are some tips to help you.**

We all need stories in this busy, sometimes confusing world. But perhaps it's a long time since you told a story or shared a book with a child. You might feel a little out of touch, or lacking in confidence.

Take heart! Children love stories. Whether you read or tell a story to a child, you help that small person to grow and develop. And you help them to escape into another world... their own imagination. So a storyteller plays a very important role in a child's life.

**Reading a story**

Reading from a book is a great place to start. The story's there for you, and it will probably have pictures to talk about. As you grow in confidence, you might start asking questions:

'What do you think happened next?' 'Do you know anybody like that?' 'What would you do?' Some children love to be involved and be asked their opinion. Others prefer just to hear the story.

You'll soon get to know what your audience likes!

**Telling tales**

It's easy to assume that only writers can make up stories; that telling stories is more difficult than reading them. But in fact you have lots of tales to tell. Your whole life has been a story, from the day you were born. These accounts are very interesting to children. As long as you don't dwell on any sad experiences, you'll find children will ask question after question to find out more about your life. Things that you took for granted as you grew up are quite mysterious to them.

They'll want to know more. Of course, you don't just have to tell stories about things that happened in the past. Everything you do, everything you see, can be used to bring a story to life. ●

**A gift for life**

What better gift than encouraging a child to develop a lifelong love of books? Booktrust is an independent charity and works with support from publishers as well as the Department for Children, Schools and Families to offer free books to every child in England. Make sure your grandchild or family friend has received their Bookstart, Booktime or Booked Up books. For more information go to [www.booktrust.org.uk](http://www.booktrust.org.uk)



Here are some practical pointers for successful storytelling:

1. Find a comfortable place to sit. There may be a particular chair that you like.
2. Make sure that the children are at ease. Some may prefer to lie on the floor.
3. Small children usually want to be closer to you than their older sisters and brothers. If you're sharing a book, let them climb on to your knee so they can see any illustrations.
4. Remember, whatever the age of the children, whoever they are, you're taking them on a journey into their own imagination. You need to have the confidence to take the first steps to show them the way. They will follow!
5. Try to see the world from a child's point of view. To a small child, the world is full of legs – they have to step back to see more. Many people find that storytelling takes them back to their own childhood.

6. When telling a story, it's a good idea to take on the characters of the people or animals. So if Mr Duck quacks, you quack too. Or stand up tall and spread your arms, like the tree in the story. Your listeners will probably join in.
7. Children enjoy hearing the same stories re-told over and over again. Why is that so? Because as the story unfolds they know what is going to happen next. They feel as though they belong inside the story. This helps them to gain confidence. Even the shyest child wants to respond.
8. Some children are easily distracted. For them, short and funny stories are the best to hold their attention. Laugh along with them.
9. Always remember to look at the children. Eye contact is very important and so is the tone of your voice.
10. Children love to copy adults. If they see you reading a book, magazine or newspaper, they'll want to do the same.

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## Some suggestions:

### Reading with children

**The very young**  
*Ten Little Fingers and Ten Little Toes*

by Mem Fox & Helen Oxenbury

**A picture book for 3–6 year olds**

*Each Peach Pear Plum*

by Janet and Allan Ahlberg

**To share with older children**  
*Archie's War*

by Marcia Williams

For over 70 tried and tested books which are free to download go to: [www.greatbookstoread aloud.co.uk](http://www.greatbookstoread aloud.co.uk)



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[www.booktrustchildrensbooks.org.uk](http://www.booktrustchildrensbooks.org.uk)



A short story by Val McDermid

# Sneeze for Danger

‘Three times the drugs squad had initiated operations against Greg Thomas’s multi-million pound business, and three times they’d come away empty-handed. There was only one possible conclusion. Someone from the inside was taking Thomas’s shilling.’

**Read on to find out how the thrilling story unfolds to its surprising ending. »**



I shifted in my canvas chair, trying to get uncomfortable. The hardest thing about listening to somebody sleeping is staying awake yourself. Mind you, there wasn't much to hear. Greg Thomas was never going to get complaints from his girlfriends about his snoring. I'd come on stake-out duty at midnight, and all I'd heard was the tinny tail-end of some American sports commentary on the TV, the flushing of a toilet and a few grunts that I took to be him getting comfortable in the big bed that dominated his extravagantly stylish studio penthouse.

I knew about the bed and the expensive style because we also had video surveillance inside Thomas's flat. Well, we'd had it till the previous afternoon. According to Jimmy Lister, who shared the day shift, Thomas had stopped in at the florist's on his way back from a meet with one of his dealers and emerged with two big bunches of lilies. Back at the flat, he'd stuffed them into a vase

**Nobody loves us.  
Our fellow cops  
call us the Scaffies.  
That's Scots for  
bin men.**

and placed them right in front of the wee fibre optic camera. Almost as if he knew.

But of course, he couldn't have known. If he'd had any inkling that we were watching, it wouldn't have been business as usual in the Greg Thomas drugs empire. He wouldn't have gone near his network of middlemen, and he certainly wouldn't have been calling his partner in crime to discuss her forthcoming trip to Curacao. If he'd known we were watching him, he'd have assumed we were trying to close him down and he'd have been living the blameless life.

He'd have been wrong. I'm not that sort of cop. That's not to say I don't think people like Greg Thomas should be put away for a very long time. They should. They are responsible for a disproportionate amount of human misery, and they don't deserve to be inhabiting the high life. Thomas's cupidity played on others' stupidity, but that didn't make any of it all right. »



## Val McDermid, Author

Val McDermid is the author of 22 bestselling novels, which have been translated into 30 languages, and have sold over 10 million copies. She has won many awards internationally, including the CWA Gold Dagger for best crime novel of the year and the LA Times Book of the Year Award. She was inducted into the ITV3 Crime Thriller Awards Hall of Fame in 2009.



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Val's latest novel

Nevertheless, my interest was not in making a case against Thomas. What mattered to me was the reason nobody else had been able to do just that. Three times the drugs squad had initiated operations against Greg Thomas's multi-million pound business, and three times they'd come away empty-handed. There was only one possible conclusion. Somebody on the inside was taking Thomas's shilling.

Samuels, who runs the drugs squad, had finally conceded he wasn't going to put Greg Thomas away until he'd put his own house in order. And that's where we came in.

Nobody loves us. Our fellow cops call us the Scaffies. That's Scots for bin men. My brother, who studied Scottish literature at university, says it's probably a corruption of scavengers. Me, I prefer to knock off the first two letters. Avengers, that's what we are. We're there to avenge the punters who pay our wages and get robbed of justice because some cops see get rich quick opportunities where the rest of us see the chance to make a collar.

It's easy to be cynical in my line of work. When your job is to sniff out corruption, it's hard to see past that. It's difficult to hang on to the missionary zeal when you're constantly exposed to the venality of your fellow man. I've seen cops selling their mates down the river for the price of a package holiday. Sometimes I almost believe that some of them do it for the same reason as criminals commit crimes – because they can. And they're the ones who are most affronted when we sit them down and confront them with what they've done.

So. Nobody loves us. But what's worse is that doing this job for any length of time provokes a kind of emotional reversal. It's almost impossible for us Scaffies to love anybody. Mistrust becomes a habit and nothing will poison a relationship faster than that. In the end, all you've got is your team. There's eight of us, and we're closer than most marriages. We're a detective inspector, two sergeants and five constables. But rank matters less here than anywhere else in the force. We need to believe in each other, and that's the bottom line.

Movement in the street below caught my attention. A shambling figure, staggering slightly, making his way down the pavement opposite our vantage point. I nudged my partner Dennis, who rolled his shoulders as he leaned forward, focussed the camera and snapped off a couple of shots. Not that they'd be any use. The three a.m. drunk was dressed for the weather, the collar of his puffa jacket close round his neck and his baseball cap pulled down low. He stopped outside Thomas's building and keyed the entry code into the door. There were sixteen flats in the block and we knew most of the residents by sight. I didn't recognise this guy, though.

**It's easy to be cynical in my line of work. When your job is to sniff out corruption, it's hard to see past that.**



Through the glass frontage of the building opposite, we could see him weaving his way to the lift. He hit the call button and practically fell inside when the doors opened. I was fully alert now. Not because I thought anything untoward was going down, but because anything that gets the adrenaline going in the middle of night surveillance is welcome. The lift stopped on the second floor, and the drunk lurched out into the lobby, turning to his left and heading for one of the flats at the rear of the building.

We relaxed and settled back into our chairs. Dennis, my partner, snorted. ‘I wouldn’t like to be inside his head in the morning,’ he said.

I reached down and pulled a thermos of coffee out of my bag. ‘You want some?’

Dennis shook his head. ‘I’ll stick to the Diet Coke,’ he said.

It was about fifteen minutes later that we heard it. Our headphones exploded into life with a volley of sneezing. I nearly fell out of my chair. The volume was deafening. It seemed to go on forever. A choking, spluttering, gasping fit that I thought would never end. Then, as suddenly as it had started, it ended. I looked at Dennis. ‘What the hell was that?’

He shrugged. ‘Guy’s coming down with a cold?’

‘Out of the blue? Just like that?’

‘Maybe he decided to have a wee taste of his own product.’

‘Oh aye, right. You wake up in the night, you can’t get back to sleep, so you do a line of coke?’ 》

## Short Stories

### 》 *The Mammoth Book of Best British Mysteries*

by Maxim Jakubowski  
(Editor)

### 》 *The Oxford Book of English Short Stories*

by AS Byatt  
(Editor)

### 》 *The Book Lovers’ Appreciation Society: Breast Cancer Care Short Story Collection*

### 》 *African Short Stories*

by Chinua Achebe (Editor) & C.L. Innes (Editor)

### 》 *Stranger in the House: Women’s Stories of Men Returning from the Second World War*

by Julie Summers

### 》 *Best Loved Short Stories*

by Evan Bates  
(Large Print)

### 》 *Three Stories*

by Alan Bennett

### 》 *My Favourite Year: A Collection of New Football Writing*

by Nick Hornby

### 》 *One World: A Global Anthology of Short Stories*

by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie & Jhumpa Lahiri

### 》 *Oscar Wilde’s Stories for All Ages*

by Oscar Wilde  
(Also CD)

### 》 *The Homecoming and Other Stories*

by Maeve Binchy  
(Audio Book)



Dennis laughed. ‘Right enough,’ he said.

We left it at that. After all, there’s nothing inherently suspicious about somebody having a sneezing fit in the middle of the night. Unless, of course, they never wake up.

I was spark out myself when Greg Thomas made his presence felt again. Groggy with tiredness, I reached for the phone, registering the time on my bedside clock. Just after one o’clock. I’d been in bed for less than four hours. I’d barely grunted a greeting when a familiar voice battered my eardrum.

‘What the hell were you doing last night?’ Detective Inspector Phil Barclay demanded.

‘Listening in, boss,’ I said. ‘With Dennis. Like I was supposed to be. Why?’

‘Because while you were listening in, somebody cut Greg Thomas’s throat.’

On my way to the scene, I called Jimmy Lister and tried to piece together what had happened. When the dayshift hadn’t heard a peep out of Thomas by noon, they’d grown suspicious. They began to wonder if he’d somehow done a runner. So they’d got the management company to let them into Thomas’s flat and they’d found him sprawled across his bed, throat gaping like some monstrous grin.

By the time I got to the flat, there was a huddle of people on the landing. Drugs Squad, Serious Crime guys and of course, the Scaffies. Phil Barclay was at the centre of the group. ‘There you are, Chrissie,’ he said. ‘So how the hell did you miss a murder while you were staking out the victim?’ For Phil to turn on one of his own in front of other cops was unheard of. I knew I was in for a very rough ride.

Before I could answer, Dennis emerged from the stairwell.

‘Listen to the tapes, boss,’ he said. ‘Then you’ll hear everything we did. Which is nothing.’

‘Except for the sneezing,’ I said slowly.

All the eyes were on me now. ‘About twenty past three. Somebody had a sneezing fit. It must have lasted a couple of minutes at least.’ I looked at Dennis, who nodded in confirmation.

‘We assumed it was Thomas,’ he said.

‘That would fit,’ one of the other cops said. I didn’t know his name, but I knew he was Serious Crime. ‘The pathologist estimates time of death between two and five a.m.’

Samuels from the Drugs Squad stuck his head out of the flat. ‘Phil, do you want to take a look inside, see if anything’s out of place from when you had the video running?’

Barclay looked momentarily uncomfortable. ‘Chrissie, you and Dennis take a look. I didn’t really pay much attention to the video footage.’

‘Talk about distancing yourself,’ Dennis muttered as we entered the flat, sidestepping a SOCO who was examining the lock on the door through a jeweller’s loupe.

I paused and said, ‘Key or picks?’

The SOCO looked up. ‘Picks, I’d say. Fresh scratches on the tumblers.’





‘He must have been bloody good,’ I said. ‘We never heard a thing.’

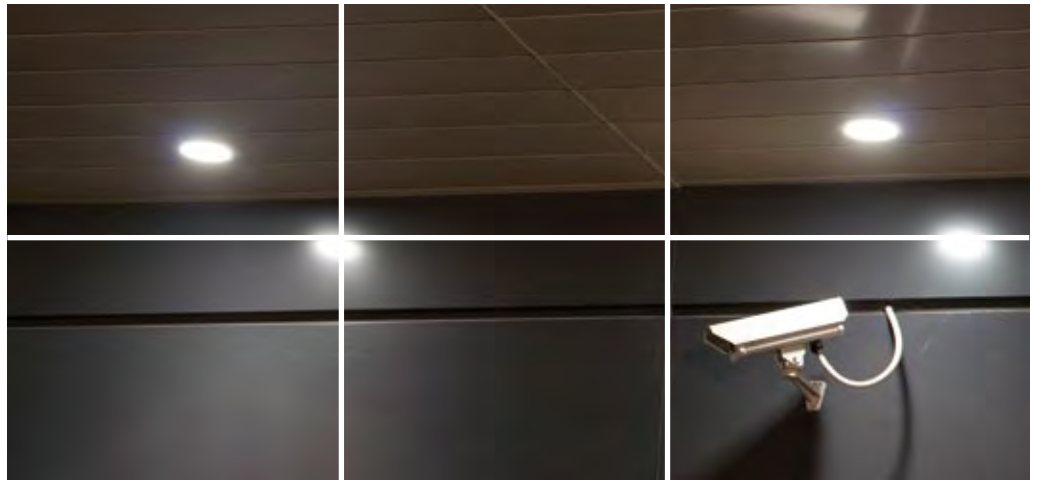
Greg Thomas wasn’t a pretty sight. I was supposed to be looking round the flat, but my eyes were constantly drawn back to the bed. ‘How come we never heard it? You’d think he’d have made some sort of noise.’

One of the technicians looked up from the surface he was dusting for prints. ‘The doc said it must have been an incredibly sharp blade. Went through right to the spine, knife through butter. He maybe would have made a wee gurgle, but that’s all.’

At first glance, nothing in the flat looked different. I stepped round the bed towards the alcove where Thomas had his workstation. ‘His laptop’s gone,’ I said, pointing to the cable lying disconnected on the desk.

‘Great. So now we know we’re looking for a killer with a laptop,’ Dennis said. ‘That’ll narrow it down.’

Back on the landing, Phil told us abruptly to head back to base. ‘We’ll have a debrief in an hour,’ he said. ‘The Drugs Squad guys can run us through Thomas’s known associates and enemies. Maybe they’ll recognise somebody from our surveillance.’



I walked back to my car, turning everything over in my head. The timing stuck in my throat. It felt like an uncomfortable coincidence that Greg Thomas had been killed the very night we’d lost our video cover. I knew Phil Barclay and Samuels were tight from way back and wondered whether my boss had mentioned the problem to Samuels. If the mole knew we were watching, he might have decided the best way to avoid detection was to silence his paymaster for good. That would also explain the silence. None of Thomas’s rivals could have known about the need to keep the noise levels down.

Slowly, an idea began to form in my head. We might have lost the direct route to the drugs squad’s bad apple, but maybe there was still an indirect passage to the truth. »

**The timing stuck in my throat. It felt like an uncomfortable coincidence that Greg Thomas had been killed...**



I made a wee detour on the way back to the office, wondering at my own temerity for even daring to think the way I was.

The debrief was the usual mixture of knowledge and speculation, but because there were three separate teams involved, the atmosphere was edgy. The DI from the Crime Squad told us to assume our unidentified drunk was the killer. He hadn't been heading for a flat, he'd been making for the back stairs. Apparently the lock on the door leading to the penthouse floor showed signs of having been forced. He'd probably left by the same route, using the fire door at the rear of the building. He showed our pix on the big screen but not even the guy's mother could have identified him from that. 'And that is all we know so far,' he said.

The silhouette I'd been expecting finally showed up outside the frosted glass door of the briefing room. I put up my hand. 'Not quite all, sir,' I said. 'We also know he's allergic to lily pollen.'

As I spoke, the door opened and the desk officer walked in, looking sheepish behind a big bouquet of stargazer lilies. The fragrance spread out in an arc before him as he walked towards Samuels. 'I was told these were urgent,' he said apologetically.

I held my breath, my eyes nailed to the astonished faces of Samuels and his cohort of Drugs Squad detectives.

And that's when Phil Barclay shattered the stunned silence with a fusillade of sneezes. ●

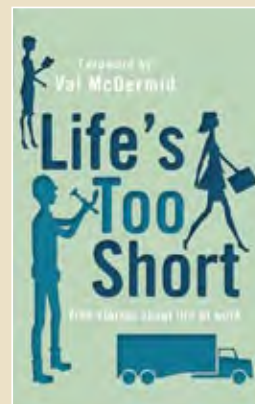
## Quick Reads

Short, sharp shots of entertainment

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*Life's Too Short: True Stories of Life at Work*  
Foreword by Val McDermid



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[www.theshortstory.org.uk](http://www.theshortstory.org.uk)



# My *life* in books

Mihir Bose

Mihir Bose is a writer and broadcaster who covers issues in sport, society and current affairs. He was appointed the BBC's first Sports Editor in 2006 and worked there until last year. He has written for nearly all the major national newspapers and magazines.

Brought up in Bombay, Mihir came to England in 1969. He has written over 22 books on subjects ranging from Indian cricket to Bollywood. Here he talks about books that mean a lot to him.

## *The Mimic Men*

by V.S. Naipaul

Naipaul was just the type of writer I wanted to be. This novel published in 1967 is about a man who comes to England from the West Indies just after the Second World War. Naipaul uses the story to comment on both England and the colonies. I completely understood the character's feelings about his home country and how it felt to be an outsider in England at that time. It was how I felt when I first arrived in the UK.

## *The Best and the Brightest*

by David Halberstam

This is a history of the administrations of Presidents

Kennedy and Johnson, during the Vietnam War. I was a student in London at the time and it had a deep influence on me. I was impressed that a contemporary history book could be as skilfully crafted as a novel.

## *Collected Essays*

by George Orwell

After reading 1984 as a student, I bought all four volumes of Orwell's essays. I love his observations about English manners and customs in the 1930s and 40s – in everything from making tea to murder! Few authors can write so objectively about the country they live in. I still dip into the Essays every now and again.

## *The Book of Daniel*

by E.L. Doctorow

This novel is about a child whose parents were tried and executed for spying in the America of the 1950s. Based on the story of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, I admired the author's skill in incorporating historical events into a fictional story. It really brought the time and place to life.

## *The Outsider*

by Albert Camus

Camus was writing about the alienation felt by a Frenchman

living in Algeria, but also about the idea that we are all outsiders. I certainly identified with this.

## *Look Back in Anger*

by John Osborne

I'd always thought of Osborne as a bit of a rebel and didn't realise until later that he was quite right wing. I agree with the critic Kenneth Tynan – I couldn't like anyone who doesn't like this play! It is a raw, evocative story of the England of the 1950s. It inspired me to be a writer.



One of Mihir's books, the first comprehensive history of India's film industry.

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# LETTERS FROM THE HEART



Of course, in today's computer age, people can make contact instantly using email, or internet sites such as Facebook.

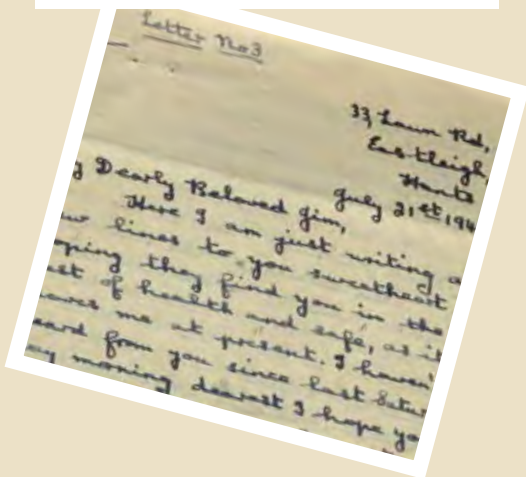
But there's something special about having a letter or card drop through your letterbox. It shows that someone cares enough to write just for you. There are other things you can do in a letter too. Here are some ideas – why not try them out for yourself?

### Keep a special friendship alive

Where would childhood sweethearts Jim and Nellie be without the 760 love letters they wrote to each other when Jim was away for five years, fighting in the Second World War? Writing about how they felt and thinking of things to cheer each other up gave them hope. It kept their love alive until they were able to marry in 1947.

### Express yourself!

In his recent biography of the Queen Mother, William Shawcross includes many quotes from her personal letters to friends and family. These show wit, strong convictions and the ability to see the funny side of life. We get a sense of who she really was as a person, rather than the familiar figurehead.





*Dear Me: A Letter to My Sixteen-Year-Old Self*  
Edited By Joseph Galliano

### Reflect on your life

If you were to write a letter to yourself as a teenager, what would it say?

That's the idea behind a fascinating collection called *Dear Me: A Letter to my Sixteen Year-Old Self*, published to raise money for the Elton John Aids Foundation. In the book, well-known personalities give advice to their younger selves, based on what they know now. Sometimes heartbreaking, often funny, the letters capture all the ups and downs of life.

### Why not have a go yourself?

The publisher is inviting people to write their own letter giving advice to themselves as a 16-year-old. You can see the blog online at [www.mydearmeletter.blogspot.com](http://www.mydearmeletter.blogspot.com).

Why not have a go at entering our letter writing promotion below.

### Share your news

You're sure to know someone who'd love to get a letter from you. Or you could surprise them with an email! If you haven't done this before, your local library or UK online centre will be pleased to show you how – see page 30 for details.

### Good reading

A letter is personal – it's not about writing great literature. But here are some examples that might inspire you.

» *Love Letters of Great Men*  
by Ursula Doyle

» *Letters from the Trenches: A Soldier of the Great War*  
by Bill Lamin

» *Letters to My Grandchildren*  
by Tony Benn (also audio CD)

» *Letter to My Daughter*  
by Maya Angelou



For more books take a look at the letters booklist at [www.bookbite.org.uk](http://www.bookbite.org.uk)

# PROMOTION

## WIN £100 OF BOOK TOKENS!

### The letter I wish I had written

Is there a letter you wish you had written to someone in your life?

How might it have affected something that did or didn't happen in your life? Now's your chance to write that letter, and tell us what it might have changed.

### Rules

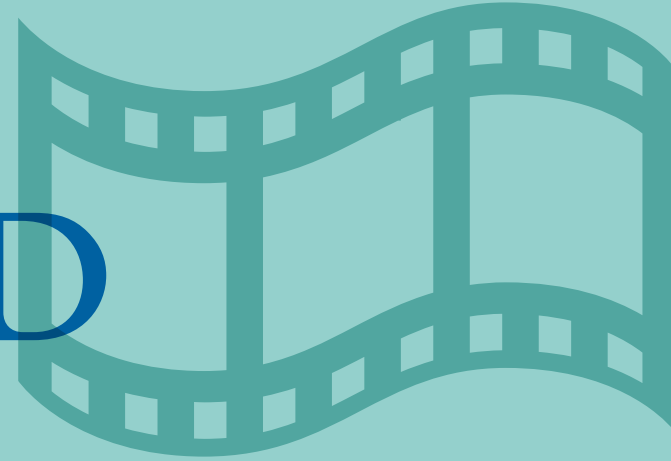
You can send your entry by email or by post. The first 25 drawn from all entries received by 31 March 2010 will each receive a £100 book token.

We'll put a selection of letters on our website. So if you don't want your full name to appear, or want to remain anonymous, just tell us on your entry form.

Please see page 36 for how to enter, what you need to attach to your entry and our Terms and Conditions.

# BOOKBITE QUIZ

# PAGES AND SCREEN



**Q1** Which film, released in 1978 and adapted from an Agatha Christie novel, saw Peter Ustinov starring as Hercule Poirot for the first time?

**Q2** Which English seaside town was the setting for many parts of the film *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, written by John Fowles?

**Q3** The 1951 Alfred Hitchcock film *Strangers on a Train* is based on a novel by which author?

**Q4** Which American actor plays reporter Gray Grantham in the 1993 crime thriller *The Pelican Brief*, a film based on the novel by John Grisham?

**Q5** Which actor played the lead in the 1993 American film *Schindler's List*, in which a German business man saves the lives of more than a thousand Polish Jewish refugees during the Holocaust, based on a novel by Thomas Keneally?

**Q6** Which single actor plays eight different characters in the 1949 film *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, a film loosely based on a novel by Roy Horniman?

**Q7** Rupert Penry-Jones played Richard Hannay in the recent TV adaptation of John Buchan's *39 Steps*. Who played the character in the original 1935 film?

**Q8** Noel Coward's adaptation of his play in which a provincial housewife and a married doctor meet at a railway station and subsequently fall in love is one of the most popular romantic British films of all time. Name the film.

**Q9** Compton Mackenzie wrote a novel based on a famous true incident in 1941 in which the SS *Politician* was wrecked off the Scottish coast. What was the ship's cargo which is mentioned in the title of the book and the film?



Test your knowledge in our quick quiz based around books and plays which have been made into films. You might find a few surprises.



More monthly book quizzes at  
[www.bookbite.org.uk](http://www.bookbite.org.uk)

**Q10** Name the film, based on Boris Pasternak's largely autobiographical novel about his fateful romance with Lara during the early years of the Russian Revolution, starring heartthrob Omar Sharif?

**Q11** Which singer, part of a famous duo, sang Bright Eyes in the soundtrack to the animated film *Watership Down* based on Richard Adam's best-selling fantasy about rabbits?

**Q12** Which film was the first of three adaptations of E.M Forster novels to emerge from the creative team of James Ivory, Ismail Merchant and Ruth Praver Jhabvala?

**Q13** Set in Salford in 1971 this film is based on a semi-autobiographical play by Ayub Khan-Din. The hilarious and moving portrayal of the culture clash between a traditional Pakistani father and his English wife and children was a surprise international hit in 1999. What is it called?

**Q14** Starring Clark Gable as Rhett Butler and Vivian Leigh as Scarlett O'Hara the film *Gone With The Wind* is based on the only novel of which author?

**Q15** Which male actor known for being a bit of a 'rebel' starred in the 1955 film *East of Eden* which brings to life the intricate details of two families and their interwoven stories from the novel by John Steinbeck?

Answers



Q1: Death on the Nile Q2: Lyne Regis Q3: Patricia Highsmith Q4: Denzel Washington Q5: Liam Neeson  
 Q6: Alec Guinness Q7: Robert Donat Q8: Brief Encounter Q9: Whisky, Whisky Galore! Q10: Doctor Zhivago  
 Q11: Art Garfunkel Q12: Room with a View Q13: East is East Q14: Margaret Mitchell Q15: James Dean

# What's *your* history?

Truth is stranger than fiction, they say. So if you are looking for inspiration, why not do some detective work into your own family story? Or perhaps you'd like to know more about your local area and its history?

Whatever your interest, you'll find lots of help to make researching fun. In this section we explain how to get started, and give you tips for exploring further.

‘The best place to start is – you!’





## Going back to your roots

People love to hear about their ancestors. It takes us on a journey into past lives, times and places. And it's fascinating to discover what we've inherited – whether it's a family heirloom or the family chin.

### Start the quest

The best place to start is – you! Write down everything you know about yourself and your family, noting:

- Full names
- Dates of birth, marriage and death
- Places they've lived.

Ask your relatives for this information too, and see how far back their memories can stretch. But remember to be tactful. What's an intriguing piece of history to you might be a painful memory for them.

### Picking up clues

When you speak to family members, ask if you can look through their official documents – often stuffed in boxes, briefcases and drawers! Particularly useful are:

- Birth, marriage and death certificates
- Wills
- Records of employment
- Pension payments
- Educational and professional qualifications
- Military service papers.

Check out heirlooms such as bibles, too, as people often recorded family trees on the inside cover.

Photo albums are another great source of information. If possible, write people's names in pencil on the back. If you can borrow the photos, you could scan them into your computer, or have someone do it for you. A picture really brings your family tree to life.

### Draw your family tree

Armed with this information, you can now start drawing your family tree – or simply fill in the chart on page 21.

- Write your name and date of birth in the bottom half of a blank sheet of paper.
- Above you, write the names of your mother and father, and above them their parents, and so on.
- Also include people's dates of birth and death if you know them. ▮

# Getting help

At some point you'll need to look beyond the family to fill the gaps in your research. There are many sources of information – and people willing to help you find it.

## Your local library

A treasure house for anyone researching family or local history. Ask the librarian to show you how to use the catalogues. They can also tell you about local societies and other useful organisations. UK online centres, some of which are located in libraries, will help you to research using different websites. Call free on 0800 77 1234 to find the nearest centre to you.

## Useful organisations

### The National Archives

The UK government's official archive, containing over 1,000 years of history.

Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 4DU.

Tel: 020 8876 3444

› [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk)

### Society of Genealogists

The national library and education centre for family history.

14 Charterhouse Buildings,  
Goswell Road, London EC1M 7BA.

Tel: 020 7251 8799

› [www.sog.org.uk](http://www.sog.org.uk)

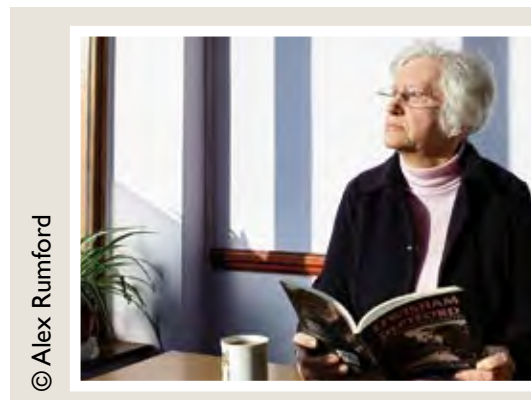
### People's Network

Online access to a range of public library services, including personal enquiries.

› [www.peoplesnetwork.gov.uk](http://www.peoplesnetwork.gov.uk)

## Books

› *Writing up Your Family History: A do-it-yourself guide*  
by John Titford



© Alex Rumford

› *Track Down Your Ancestors: How to Research Your Family History Using Archives & The Internet* by Estelle Catlett

## Family history magazines

› *Who Do You Think You Are?*

From the BBC series in which celebrities trace their family trees.

› *Ancestors*

From The National Archives.

## Family history websites

› [www.bbc.co.uk/history/familyhistory](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/familyhistory) (*free*). The BBC website is a great place to start researching your family history. You can sign up for a free newsletter too.

› [www.genuki.org.uk](http://www.genuki.org.uk) (*free*)

A huge store of tips, advice and information.

› [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) (*paid for*)

The largest family records site in the UK, with records dating back to the 1300s. Also available free in local libraries.

› [www.genesreunited.co.uk](http://www.genesreunited.co.uk)

(*free in part*). Lots of useful information and resources.

## Cultural history websites

› [www.besthistorysites.net](http://www.besthistorysites.net)

› [www.movinghere.org.uk](http://www.movinghere.org.uk)

## Ann's story

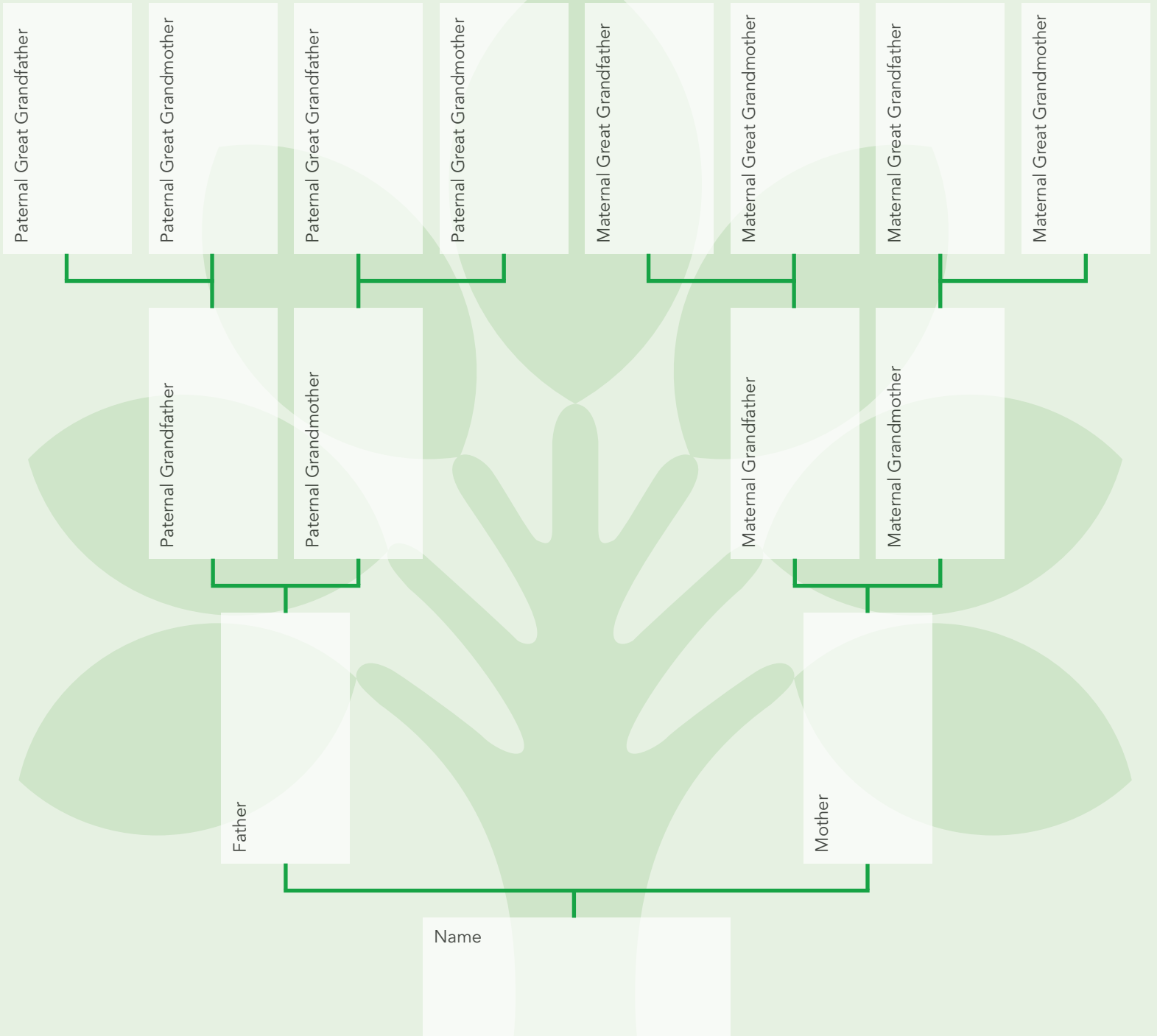
**Anyone can uncover their family history! It's easier than you might think as Ann, 73, discovered...**

Looking for a new interest to begin in retirement, Ann was introduced to genealogy by her sister-in-law. 'I went with her one day to the Family Records Centre (now closed) so I could find my mother's birth certificate. It got my imagination going when I realised how easy it was.'

Using the free resources of the Centre and the National Archives, Ann searched the censuses and has so far traced her family back to the early 1800s. She was surprised to find that her great-great grandfather had been a gas fitter in 1851 – she didn't think gas was used then.

Ann also discovered that her great-great grandfather had died re-building the Croydon Music Hall. Newspapers at Croydon Library told how a wall had collapsed, and the first thing they found was his crushed bowler hat.

Ann used the BBC's 'Who Do You Think You Are' Family Tree Maker programme on the computer and found it easy to lay out her family history as she went along. She recommends learning how to use the internet – 'It's great, every time you find something new.'



Notes

# Who Do You Think You Are?®

In the BBC documentary series, celebrities go on a journey to trace their ancestors, often with surprising or emotional results. Here are a few of them. What would your research uncover?



Who Do You Think You Are? is a trademark of Wall to Wall Media Limited and is used under licence

## Kevin Whately

Well known for his roles in 'Inspector Morse' and 'Lewis', actor Kevin Whately traced his ancestors back to the 1700s. He was related to Robert Thompson, a major in the Civil War, whose commanding officer was Oliver Cromwell! Thompson was also mentioned in Samuel Pepys' diary. Kevin said the research had been an overwhelming experience.

## Zoë Wanamaker

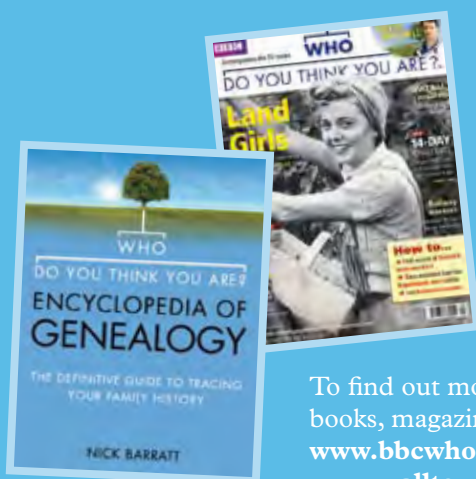
Zoë, star of 'My Family', is the daughter of American actor Sam Wanamaker. Sam, a former Communist, left the US at the start of the McCarthy witchhunts. Zoë learned that his parents had left the Ukraine because of anti-Jewish violence. Life was hard in the US, and her grandfather led an industrial dispute. Zoë believes this was where her father's radicalism began.

## Rick Stein

TV Chef Rick Stein wanted to learn more about his father Eric's manic depression. With his German-sounding surname, Eric endured prejudice as a child growing up in the First World War. Later he won a place at Oxford, but had to work in the family business. Reflecting on their strained relationship, Rick said 'I always felt I had to make something of myself.'

## Barbara Windsor

The 'EastEnders' actress was born Barbara Deeks. Her parents were second cousins, and her mother, an Ellis, always looked down on the Deekses. Barbara wanted to know why. She found that her great grandfather, John Deeks, was a skilled bricklayer but the family was always poor. The London Metropolitan Archive revealed that overpopulation in the East End meant huge competition for jobs. By 1889 John was in the workhouse, where he spent the last 20 years of his life. Ironically, Barbara discovered a similar story on her mother's side.



To find out more about the BBC books, magazines and software go to:  
[www.bbewhodoyouthinkyouaremagazine.com](http://www.bbewhodoyouthinkyouaremagazine.com)  
[www.walltowall.co.uk](http://www.walltowall.co.uk)

# Local history – bringing a time and place to life

Perhaps you have memories of a workplace that's gone forever – a factory, coalmine, cinema or dancehall for example. Perhaps you want to get in touch with members of your old regiment, hospital staff, football squad... Or you might simply be curious about the local area or the house you live in.

Whatever your interest, you can be sure that others will share it. That's why researching local history can be such a sociable and rewarding activity.



© Edward Miller/Hulton Archive/Getty Images

## Where to start

Again, your local library is a great place to start. Many have collections of local historical documents, newspaper articles and photographs. You might have to arrange to see them in advance, so it's worth ringing the library, or checking their website if you're online.

In addition, most large towns and local authorities have a record office or local studies library. They often publish their own guides to research, and store a wide range of original local documents, including:

- Local parish and government records
- Records of local businesses, societies and groups
- Legal records
- Diaries of individuals
- Maps and estate papers
- Census returns
- Visual and spoken history material
- Newspapers.

Your library or record office will also be able to tell you about local history societies, courses and publications.

### Local history websites

#### › [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/localhistory/guide](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/localhistory/guide)

A storehouse of information of historical interest – from collieries, canals, docks, railways and shipping companies, to maps, tax assessments and court records.

#### › [www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)

A collection of 10 million photographs, documents, plans and reports about the historical environment of England.

#### › [www.24hourmuseum.org.uk](http://www.24hourmuseum.org.uk)

News, listings and other information from over 3,000 museums and galleries in the UK. The website also has online trails on specific topics, which lead you to information, photographs and links.

### Local history books

› *Local History: A Handbook for Beginners* by Philip Riden

› *Tracing the History of Your House: The Building, the People, the Past* by Nick Barratt

› *How to Research Local History: Find Out All About Your House, Village or Town* by Pamela Brooks

› *Reader's Digest Local History Detective: Explore Your Landscape, Your Community and Your Home* Reader's Digest



Find more useful books and websites at [www.bookbite.org.uk](http://www.bookbite.org.uk)

# My story

Many of us feel the need to 'make our mark' as we get older, by writing down our life story. We want to record our ups and downs, achievements and what ifs, for ourselves and others.

In this section you'll find ideas, tips and examples to inspire you. And if you'd like to share a particular memory, read on to find out about our 'My Story' competition.

People have different reasons for writing their life story. Reliving the past in this way can help make sense of it. Or perhaps you want to pass on family history to younger members and future generations, so it will never be lost or forgotten.

You don't have to write an autobiography. There are many ways to record your life – it depends on what appeals most to you. You can:

- Keep a diary every day
- Send and keep letters
- Make scrapbooks using bits and pieces you've collected on holiday, or from special events such as a wedding or the birth of a child
- Write notes in your photo albums – give photos a caption and description. There are computer programmes that will put it all in one file for you, including photos and video clips. You could ask UK online centres (see page 30) about this. ●

## COMPETITION

Everyone has a story – we'd like to hear yours

Why not have a go at writing your own story? However odd, inspirational, poignant or bittersweet, we want to hear about it!

Try to focus on a key event or a special moment. What happened? Why does it stand out in your memory? How did you feel? Perhaps it was the first time you did something; or it was a turning point in your life. See the writing tips on page 26 for ideas on how to get started.

The maximum number of words is 750, which is not really a lot once you get started. You can write less if you want.

The closing date is 31 March 2010. The three winning stories will go on the Bookbite website.

1st prize **£500** book token  
2nd prize **£350** book token  
3rd prize **£150** book token

You can send your story to us by email or by post. See page 36 for entry details and Terms and Conditions.



© Alex Rumford

## Joe's gift

Joe Moisey, 87, turned his memories into a wonderful book. With support from the Furzedown Project in London, Joe published *Moisey into Sacks* himself last year.

It all started when Joe was 63. Visiting his elderly aunt in Northampton on Saturdays, Joe noticed a young woman also turned up sometimes. He didn't know her identity until some years later, when a letter dropped through his door. Revealing herself to be Joe's young cousin, Denny told Joe she'd always wondered what her father meant when he said, 'It's a wonder Joe turned out so well, considering the childhood he had.'

Joe knew that the two sides of the family had never mixed, but felt he should share the family history with Denny. So he started writing letters that brought the past to life. Describing his early life – sleeping in haystacks, working as a gamekeeper, flying RAF sorties during the war – brought back some painful memories. But Joe feels this was part of giving 'the gift of history' to Denny. Over several years of letter writing, they developed a close friendship.

Joe says, 'I never thought it would become a book, but I'm grateful to Colette at the Project, who put it together, and I'm very proud of it.'



## Kate conquers computers

Writing has always been a passion for 86-year-old Kate. Now computers have helped her make her hobby even more satisfying. When Kate retired from nursing, she wrote down her experiences in an autobiography for her family. She then wrote the life story of a friend.

Concerned that others wouldn't be able to read her handwriting, Kate signed up for a computer course at the Open Age UK online centre in London. They showed her how to adjust the size of the text so she could see better.

'I was so proud I'd learned how to use a keyboard, mouse and even email that I pinned my certificate to the fridge!'

Kate found a company to make a book of her stories. She uses email to keep in touch with friends and family abroad, and goes to the Open Age UK online centre twice a week.

## Further reading

There are lots of great biographies, as well as books on how to write and publish them. Here are a few to get you started:

### ! *That's Another Story*

by Julie Walters

### ! *The Last Fighting Tommy: The Life of Harry Patch, the Only Surviving Veteran of the Trenches*

by Harry Patch and Richard Van Emden

### ! *At My Mother's Knee*

by Paul O'Grady

### ! *My Life, My Way*

by Cliff Richard

## Websites

BBC My Story

! [www.bbc.co.uk/mystory](http://www.bbc.co.uk/mystory)

The Remembering Site  
(commercial)

! [www.therememberingsite.org](http://www.therememberingsite.org)

Age Concern Write Your Own Memory Book

! [www.ageconcern.org.uk/AgeConcern/hobbies/memorybook.asp](http://www.ageconcern.org.uk/AgeConcern/hobbies/memorybook.asp)

WRVS My Life, My Story

! [www.wrvs.org.uk/mystory](http://www.wrvs.org.uk/mystory)

Creative Memories (commercial)

! [www.creativememories.co.uk](http://www.creativememories.co.uk)



Find more useful books and web links at  
[www.bookbite.org.uk](http://www.bookbite.org.uk)

## Writing tips

# TOP WRITING TIPS

By Anna McKerrow

*Anna McKerrow works on Booktrust's Everybody Writes project, helping school teachers to create exciting writing projects. Anna is a writer and teaches creative writing to adults. She loves encouraging people to have confidence in their writing.*

[www.everybodywrites.org.uk](http://www.everybodywrites.org.uk)

Actually, there's no need to read this article. I can reveal the two secrets of how to be a creative writer in five seconds. The two best things you can do are:

1. Relax and do it.
2. Keep doing it.

That's most of it covered! But if you're one of the many people who find it hard to get started – and keep going – this article's for you.

### **Tip 1: Relax.**

Sometimes, people are so worried that their writing won't be good enough that they never actually start. So just aim to get your first thoughts down. Don't try to express everything perfectly. You can come back to it later and make it better.

Also, you don't have to have it all planned out and know everything before you start. Ideas will develop naturally as you write.

### **Tip 2: Practice.**

This is the 'keep doing it' bit. Don't be disappointed with anything you've written – think of it as loosening up your writing muscles! As with any skill, you have to practise to get better. Believe in yourself and keep going, and I guarantee you'll get more and more confident. Here are some fun ideas to get you started.

## Exercises to try

### **I remember**

Write 'I remember' at the top of a page. Now, in 10 minutes, make a list of all the things you remember, from yesterday or 30 years ago. Go into detail with some. For instance, I might write:

### **I remember:**

- Boiled potatoes on Monday nights
- Sewing badges on my Brownie uniform
- The time it snowed so much it went up to my knees. We had gone out to go to the shops but we had to turn back because we were too cold
- My granny's hair
- Watching EastEnders with Sara
- My wedding day.

The aim is to exercise your memory and start getting ideas for a story. Stories are often about small things. And because it happened to you, it should be believable and interesting.



### Using photos

Look at your photo albums for pictures of an event that means something to you. Take them out and really look at them.

- Are there details you'd forgotten?
- If it's a black and white photo, try to remember what the colours were.
- Who else is in the photo?

### Messy maps

Have you got an idea for a story but are not sure how to develop it? A good solution is to draw a messy map of all your random thoughts on the subject. Write everything you can think of on a piece of paper. It might just be odd words here and there, written inside boxes or bubbles.

It's easier to see where to start when you've got all your ideas onto a page, and you don't forget any important bits either.

### Characters

Great stories are often about great characters. To get a feeling of what a character I am creating is all about, I like to make a collage from old magazines and newspapers.

Find pictures of things like:

- How they might look
- The car they might drive
- The sister they might have
- The food they might like to eat, and so on.

You don't have to include a sister or the type of car they drive in your story. The point is to feel that you know your character as if they were a real person.

### What happens?

People wanting things is what makes things happen, in life as well as stories. So think about your characters:

- What might they want?
- How will they get it?
- What might stand in their way?
- How will they overcome that obstacle? Will they overcome it?

When you've answered these questions, you've got the outline of what happens in your story.

### Use your senses

It's natural to write what we can see in our mind's eye, but we don't always think about what we might smell, hear, feel or taste.

Take a few minutes to notice what's going on around you, with all your senses. What background noises can you hear? What smells can you detect? How does your clothing feel?

Using your senses in this way makes your writing richer, and helps bring the reader into your story.

### The power of objects

Many mature people have saved something from the past. For instance, an uncle or grandfather may have a tool in the shed that belonged to his father. To a child growing up now, that tool is part of history – their history.

Why not search round the house to see what you can find? Perhaps you have an old coin hidden away in a drawer. Or a wooden clothes peg, a piece of material, an old button... They're all proof of times past, and you can weave your stories around them.

### And finally...

Everyone has a story to tell, and yours are as real and good as the next person's. Writing is fun – relax and enjoy it!

See what you can do in five minutes over the page. »



# 5

## Just five minutes

Get a pen and paper, and make sure you won't be interrupted for five minutes. Now open a magazine or newspaper at any page, or turn on the TV, and write down the first line you read or hear.

Use this line as the first line of your writing. It doesn't have to be a story, or even make sense.

Do this every day for a week and see what happens – are you loosening up?

See what you can do in five minutes using one of our tips.

### **Further reading**

If you'd like to find out more about the craft of writing, here are some books, magazines and websites to help you.

】 *Writing Down the Bones*  
by Natalie Naimark-Goldberg

】 *Becoming a Writer*  
by Dorothea Brande

】 *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*  
by Stephen King

Writer's News magazine  
】 [www.writersnews.co.uk](http://www.writersnews.co.uk)  
A guide to the world of writing, with the emphasis on getting into print.

Mslexia magazine  
】 [www.mslexia.co.uk](http://www.mslexia.co.uk)  
Wide-ranging articles for women who write.  
BBC website  
】 [www.bbc.co.uk/mystory](http://www.bbc.co.uk/mystory)



# WHY I WRITE

**Nii A Parkes**  
Booktrust Writer-in-residence

I started writing because there wasn't always someone to talk to, and there was always something on my mind. Also, as a child, writing was my way of being right. In stories, my parents and my teachers could be wrong and I could be right!

Later on, writing really helped me understand myself. By writing ideas down I came to understand how I fit into the world.

# THREE GOLDEN RULES

**Sherrie Hewson**  
Actress and Writer

Keep your writing succinct, simple and truthful. Readers don't want fussy details. They don't want to know what shoes you were wearing when you were crossing the road – they want to know what happened when you crossed to the other side!

Sherrie Hewson, ex-Coronation Street star and a regular on ITV's 'Loose Women', won the chance to write and publish her first book *The Tannery* through the BBC's Murder Most Famous. She is now writing a full-length novel.

# WRITE ABOUT WHAT YOU CARE ABOUT

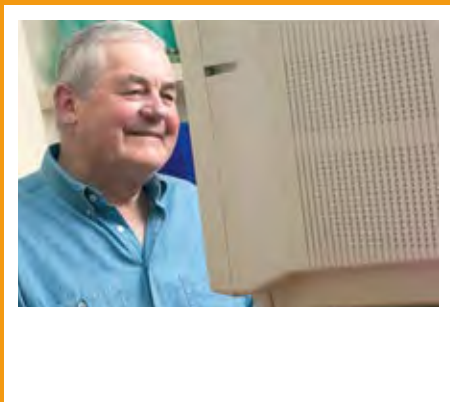
**Malorie Blackman**  
Children's author and scriptwriter

My best piece of advice is to write what you care about. Write about something that thrills you or makes you intensely angry or afraid or happy or sad. Then those feelings will shine through in every word you write.

© Dominic Turner



# Try your local **UK** online centre



## Switch on to computers

There are so many benefits to being online, it's a shame to miss out. The good news is that you can get the support you need to build your computer confidence, at low or no cost.

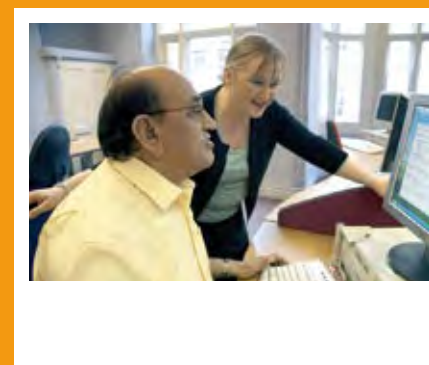
## Don't have access to a computer or the internet? Try your local UK online centres

UK online centres are staffed by friendly people who are experts at helping people use computers and the internet. They're based in places like libraries and community centres. Call 0800 77 1234 to find your nearest UK online centre.

## Got some experience, but need a little help? Try myguide.

**www.myguide.gov.uk** is an easy-to-use website which enables you to search the internet and offers a free email account. It also has short courses on:

- Starting with computers
- Using the web
- Using public services online
- Understanding banking online.



Pauline, 70, wanted to keep her brain active after she retired. Having never even switched on a computer, she went to her local UK online centre.

'I was anxious at first,' she admits, 'but I soon started to take things in. It's amazing what's on the internet. You can look up recipes, or fill out forms like insurance and road tax.'

'Also, my husband has Parkinson's disease, so we don't get out much.'

Being online helps us keep in touch with friends and family. Internet banking and shopping would be a real help too.

'You can tap into so many wonderful new experiences online. I'd recommend it to anyone.'

# A new window on the **WORLD**





## Older people's charity

# WRVS

WRVS are assisting Bookbite by helping us to deliver copies of this book to their volunteers to use with the people they visit. Here they give us a glimpse of what they do and who they work with.

### About WRVS

WRVS offers a range of practical services to help older people to live well, maintain their independence and be active in their local community.

'Books and reading play a large part in that, which is why we're delighted to be involved with Booktrust', says Chris Dobson, WRVS Head of Volunteering.

### It's all about people

Shirley is a WRVS home library volunteer. 'When I deliver books I always try to stop for a drink and chat. Our service isn't just about books – it's about care and friendship.'



Shirley delivers audio books to 97-year-old Mrs Hare, who told us: 'It was an awful shock being registered blind. When I discovered that WRVS could bring me audio books at home, it meant I could continue with one of my greatest pleasures.'

### Surprising lives

In summer 2009, we ran a campaign to challenge stereotypes of old age. We got a huge response from people sharing their experiences. Here are some:

### Writing my book

'I am 76 and have just finished writing my life story. My great friend of 70 years typed it. I cannot use the computer but she is self-taught. Without her help it would never have been finished.' Ann

### Off-duty adventures

'I was a Wren at Bletchley Park during the second world war and wrote a book called *Off Duty!* about my adventures. I've been a scribbler all my life and still live life to the brim!' Anne

### Prisoner of war

'As a gunner/signaller in the war, I spent nearly four years in prisoner of war camps in Korea and Japan. I secretly kept a diary and wrote about the experience when I returned home.' A. Gregg

### It's never too late ...

'I wrote a book about my life called *Whatever Next!* two years ago, when I was 87, so I hope this will inspire others to write theirs!' Hazel

To find out more visit

[www.wrvs.org.uk](http://www.wrvs.org.uk) or call

**0845 601 4670** to discuss WRVS volunteering opportunities.

### Did you know?

- WRVS is one of the largest voluntary organisations in Britain
- Around 50,000 volunteers – men and women – help older people stay active and independent
- WRVS runs shops, cafes and other services in over 300 hospitals
- Teams of volunteers are on call to support people caught up in emergencies.



# The pleasure of poetry



You may already enjoy reading or writing poetry. Or perhaps you've dipped into it in the past and decided it wasn't for you. Whatever your starting point, you can always find deeper rewards in poetry.

Sometimes it's about the pure enjoyment of language. Sometimes it's about exploring new thoughts and ideas. Sometimes it's the comfort of recognising a feeling we've never quite been able to express ourselves.

## **Certainly, poetry can raise lots of questions. But don't let this put you off!**

This section gives a taster of different types of poetry, with ideas on how to read and perhaps write some yourself. We've also suggested some books you might like to look out for.

## **About poetry**

Spoken poetry and storytelling were with us long before reading and writing. It's thought poetry was originally a way of memorising information to pass on to others. As writing developed, so too did poetry, and poetic forms like the epic and the sonnet were established. In the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, some poets broke away from these traditional forms and took a more experimental approach.

Poems can have different effects on us. They can entertain us, make us cry, make us see things differently. Some forms of poetry are associated with certain purposes, such as prayers to thank or praise, or limericks to amuse.



## Some types of poetry

### Free verse

This style is 'free' from the more structured, formal rules of poetry. Free verse often uses colourful and descriptive words, as well as punctuation and word placement, to get its ideas across. Walt Whitman (1819–1892) is said to be the father of free verse. Visit [www.bookbite.org.uk](http://www.bookbite.org.uk) to see one of his poems, or ask at your library for more information.

### Haiku

A traditional Japanese haiku (high-koo) is a three-line poem with a total of 17 syllables: five in line one, seven in line two, and five in line three. They pack a lot into those three lines – usually a personal or philosophical comment linked to nature or a particular season. Here's an example:

**Sunlight shines on all  
Regardless of the day's news  
Starting fresh again**

Why not have a go now? Get familiar with the 5:7:5 pattern to start with – try clapping out the syllables.

### Acrostic

An acrostic is usually about a person, place, object or theme. The word is written vertically down the side of the page with one letter per line. Each line must then start with that letter. For example, if we take 'book':

**Bound and stitched  
Open for reading  
On my knee  
Keeping me interested**

They're great fun to do. Here are some words to get you started:

H  
O  
M  
E

(Cat, Tree, Rain, Happy, Fire...)

### Rhyming poems

When you read some types of poetry, you may notice a rhyming pattern at the end of lines. The most common form is a 'rhyming couplet', where two lines rhyme. There are many types of poem which sometimes use rhyme, including sonnets, ballads and limericks. A good example by Pam Ayres can be seen on the next page. ▶

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Why not have a go at creating your own poem here?



## Pam Ayres – entertaining through rhyme

It is hard to believe that this year Pam will celebrate 35 years as a professional entertainer. It was November 1975 when Pam made the first of her appearances on the ITV talent show, 'Opportunity Knocks'. She is unique as an entertainer having established her career by writing and performing comic verse.



Pam always wanted to be a writer. By the time she left the WRAF she was writing and performing poetry for a local folk club in Oxfordshire. In 1974, she read one of her poems on BBC Radio Oxford, and it was chosen for BBC Radio 4's Pick of the Week. Since appearing on 'Opportunity Knocks' she has appeared in many TV shows in the UK and overseas, has sold over three million books and was awarded the MBE in 2004.

Today, Pam still performs her solo show in theatres throughout the UK, has recently featured in a list of Britain's 20 Funniest Women and on BBC Radio 4 she is a favourite on programmes such as 'Just A Minute', 'Loose Ends', and her own series of 'Ayres On The Air'.

Here is an example of her unique, chatty style.

### When I Get up from My Chair

Quiet please! Kindly don't impede my concentration,  
I am sitting in the garden thinking thoughts of propagation,  
Of sowing and of nurturing, the fruits my work will bear,  
And the place won't know what hit it...

Once I get up from my chair.

I'm at the planning stages now, if you should need to ask,  
And if I'm looking weary, it's the rigours of the task,  
Creation of a garden is a strain, as you can guess,  
So if my eyes should close, it isn't sleep of course...

It's stress.

Oh the leeks that I will dibble and the beans that I will stick,  
The bugs that I will slaughter and the seedlings I will prick,  
I'll disinfect the greenhouse, I will organise the shed,  
And beside my faded roses I will snip off every head.

The mower I will cherish and the tools that I will oil,  
The dark nutritious compost I will stroke into the soil,  
My sacrifice, devotion and heroic aftercare,  
Will leave you green with envy...

Once I get up from my chair.

Oh the weeds that I shall mutilate, the clumps that I will split,  
I'm foaming at the mouth just at the very thought of it,  
I am heaving at the traces, I am tearing out my hair,  
And you'll see a ruddy hero...

Once I get up from my chair.

I will massacre the bindweed and the moss upon the lawn,  
That hairy bittercress will curse the day that it was born,  
I will rise against the foe and in the fight we will be matched,  
And the woolly caterpillars they will curse the day they hatched.

Oh the branches I will layer and the cuttings I will take,  
Let other fellows dig a pond – I shall dig a lake,  
My garden, what a showpiece! There'll be pilgrims come to stare,  
And I'll bow, and take the credit...

Once I get up from my chair.

From *The Works*



Some of Pam's books of poetry include:

**Poetry collections**

*The Works*

*Surgically Enhanced*

*With These Hands*

**Audio CDs and cassettes**

*Pam Ayres – The Broken Woman*

*Pam Ayres – Ancient & Modern*

*The Pam Ayres Poetry Collection*

**DVD**

*Pam Ayres Unsupported*

[www.pamayres.com](http://www.pamayres.com)

## How to read poetry

Some people read poetry regularly, but most of us tend to hear it read out on special occasions. You can probably think of a wedding, funeral or other event where a poem has been used to express emotions.

Even if you're reading a poem by yourself, you can understand it better if you read it aloud – they are meant to be spoken, after all. Then go back and look at the title. Think what the poet might be trying to communicate to you, by asking yourself:

- Does it have a shape?
- Is there any use of rhyme?
- What does the poem make you feel?

There's no right or wrong way to respond to a poem. You might need to read it through a few times before you get it to flow and really start to understand what is being said. If you enjoy reading poetry, the chances are you'll enjoy writing it too.

## Why I write poetry

Poetry is at once a very primitive and a very subtle thing – an expression of our fundamental and passionate delight in rhythms, sounds and patterns, and also of our more sophisticated need for ingenuity. It is the form which puts us most deeply in touch with ourselves, which connects us with the wider world, and which also helps us prove our sense of the numinous.

**Sir Andrew Motion**

Poet Laureate

1999–2009



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› **[www.poetryarchive.org](http://www.poetryarchive.org)**

The Poetry Archive – the world's premier online collection of recordings of poets reading their work

› **[www.poetrysociety.org.uk](http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk)**

The Poetry Society  
Tel. 020 7420 9880

› **[www.poetrylibrary.org.uk](http://www.poetrylibrary.org.uk)**

The Poetry Library has a tool to help you create your own poetry



A selection of books to help you read, write and enjoy poetry. Your local library may stock these, or order them for you:

› ***Too Black Too Strong***

by Benjamin Zephaniah

› ***If I Don't Know*** by Wendy Cope

› ***Penguin's Poems for Life***

edited by Laura Barber

› ***The Nation's Favourite Poems*** by Griff Rhys Jones

## Do you have a favourite poem?

Why not visit our website, [www.bookbite.org.uk](http://www.bookbite.org.uk) and see if your favourite poem is there. You can vote for and see if it is the overall winner at the end of March.

# Competition and Promotions entry & eligibility

## Details and Terms and Conditions

By entering the 'My Story' competition, the 'Bookbite Survey' promotion or the 'Letter I Wish I'd Written' promotion contained within this Bookbite magazine (the 'Promotions'), you agree to be bound by these terms and conditions (these 'Terms and Conditions'). Promotional materials relating to the Promotions, including information on how to enter the Promotions, also form part of these Terms and Conditions. In the event of any conflict between any terms referred to in such promotional materials and these Terms and Conditions, these Terms and Conditions take precedence.

1. The promoter of the Promotions is Booktrust (company number 0210012), whose registered office is located at Book House, 45 East Hill, London, SW18 2QZ, United Kingdom ('Booktrust').

2. Participants must be at least 60 years old and legally resident within England. Employees and agents of Booktrust or any of its subsidiary or affiliated companies and their immediate families and members of their households and anyone otherwise connected with operation or fulfilment of the Promotions are not eligible to take part. Booktrust reserves the right to require participants to prove that they are eligible. If a winner of a prize is found to be ineligible, Booktrust reserves the right to award their prize to another participant and to require the return of any prize already awarded.

3. Each of the Promotions commence on 1 February 2010 and all entries must be received by 17:00 GMT on the closing date for each Promotion of 31 March 2010.

4. The 'My Story' competition will operate on the Bookbite website at the following URL address: [www.bookbite.org.uk](http://www.bookbite.org.uk) (the 'Website'). To enter the 'My Story' competition you must write a story relating to an event that actually happened in your life in no more than 750 words and then submit your entry together with your: name, postal address, telephone number, either via the entry form located on the Website, by post (in handwritten or word processed form) to The Bookbite Project Manager, Bookbite Competitions, Booktrust, Book House, 45 East Hill, London, SW18 2QZ, or by email to [promotions@bookbite.org.uk](mailto:promotions@bookbite.org.uk). Entries by facsimile will not be accepted; only those submitted via one of the official methods of entry. You may make a maximum of 1 entry into the 'My Story' competition and joint entries with other participants are not permitted (for the avoidance of doubt, gaining assistance from someone for the typing or hand writing of your entry for submission shall not be considered a joint entry for these purposes, but gaining assistance with the

content of your entry shall render your entry a joint entry). Any entries in addition to this may result in your disqualification. All entries must also be written in English. At the end of the 'My Story' competition, your entry will not be returned to you. Booktrust may place a selection of entries received to the 'My Story' competition on the Website, both between the promotion period of 1 February 2010 to 17:00 GMT on 31 March 2010 and following the closing date for this competition.

The 'Letter I Wish I'd Written' promotion will also operate on the Website. To enter the 'Letter I Wish I'd Written' promotion you must write a letter that you wish you had written to someone in the past in no more than 500 words. You must also submit a paragraph of no more than 50 words explaining how such a letter may have affected your life if you had written it in the past and then submit your entry together with your name, postal address, telephone number either via the entry form located on the Website, by post (in handwritten or word processed form) to The Bookbite Project Manager, Bookbite Competitions, Booktrust, Book House, 45 East Hill, London, SW18 2QZ, or by email to [promotions@bookbite.org.uk](mailto:promotions@bookbite.org.uk). Entries by facsimile will not be accepted; only those submitted via one of the official methods of entry. Entry to the 'Letter I Wish I'd Written' promotion is free; no purchase is necessary. You may make a maximum of 1 entry into the 'Letter I Wish I'd Written' promotion and joint entries with other participants are not permitted (for the avoidance of doubt, gaining assistance from someone for the typing or hand writing of your entry for submission shall not be considered a joint entry for these purposes, but gaining assistance with the content of your entry shall render your entry a joint entry). Any entries in addition to this may result in your disqualification. All entries must also be written in English and must relate to true events in your life. At the end of the 'Letter I Wish I'd Written' promotion, your entry will not be returned to you. Booktrust may place a selection of entries received to the 'Letter I Wish I'd Written' promotion on the Website, both between the promotion period of 1 February 2010 to 17:00 GMT on 31 March 2010 and following the closing date for this promotion.

To enter the 'Bookbite Survey' promotion you must complete the survey located on the back page of this Bookbite magazine together with your name, address and telephone number and return it to Booktrust, by post, using the response card provided. Entries by facsimile, email or other methods will not be accepted; only those submitted via the official method of entry.

Entry to the 'Bookbite Survey' promotion is free; no purchase is necessary. You may make a maximum of 1 entry into the 'Bookbite Survey' promotion and joint entries with other participants are not permitted (for the avoidance of doubt, gaining assistance from someone for the hand writing of your entry for submission shall not be considered a joint entry for these purposes, but gaining assistance with the content of your entry shall render your entry a joint entry). Any entries in addition to this may result in your disqualification. All entries must also be written in English.

5. There are three prizes to be won in the 'My Story' competition and they are: 1st prize – £500 worth of National Book Token gift vouchers; 2nd prize – £350 worth of National Book Token gift vouchers; and 3rd prize – £150 worth of National Book Token gift vouchers. There will be 25 winners selected for the 'Letter I Wish I'd Written' promotion and each winner shall win £100 worth of National Book Token gift vouchers. There will be 25 winners selected for the 'Bookbite Survey' promotion and each winner shall win £30 worth of National Book Token gift vouchers. The winners of each of the Promotions are personally responsible for any personal or incidental expenses and any VAT, national and/or local tax liabilities incurred in claiming or using their prize. The prizes for each of the Promotions are as stated and are non-exchangeable and non-transferable. There is no cash or other alternative to any of the prizes, in whole or in part. By participating in one or more of the Promotions, you agree that the prizes for the Promotion(s) you enter are awarded on an 'as is' basis, and that neither Booktrust nor any of its subsidiary or affiliated companies, make any representations or warranties of any nature with respect to such prizes. The prizes are subject to the terms and conditions applicable to the use of National Book Token gift vouchers which can be found at [www.nationalbooktokens.com/corporate](http://www.nationalbooktokens.com/corporate)

6. The winners of the 'My Story' competition will be those who create a story that best meets the following criteria: (a) the story is remarkable; (b) the story entertains the reader; (c) the story provokes empathy and is inspiring; and (d) strong characters are created as part of the story. The winner will be selected on Friday 16 April, by a panel of judges and the judges' decision is final. The winners of the 'Letter I Wish I'd Written' promotion will be the first 25 entrants drawn at random from all complete, eligible, properly submitted entries received by 17:00 GMT on 31 March 2010. The winners of the 'Booktrust Survey' promotion will be the first 25 entrants drawn at random from all complete, eligible, properly submitted entries received by 17:00 GMT on 31 March 2010. You agree that any copyright and other intellectual property rights vesting in your entry to a Promotion will be owned by Booktrust and to this effect by entering a Promotion you agree to hereby unconditionally and irrevocably assign to Booktrust, as legal and beneficial owner and with full title guarantee, by way of present assignment of all present and future rights, all rights, title and interest in all intellectual property rights in or arising out of your entry to that Promotion, for their full duration.



You also hereby agree to irrevocably and unconditionally waive any and all moral and similar rights vesting in your entry to that Promotion and to undertake to execute all such documents as are reasonably required by Booktrust to perfect the transfer or assignment of all rights, title and interests referred to in these Terms and Conditions to Booktrust. You hereby represent and warrant that you have all rights necessary to grant the rights provided for in this clause 6.

7. You represent and warrant that any entry you submit to any of the Promotions complies with these Terms and Conditions and: (a) is your original work; (b) it has not previously been submitted in any competition or other promotion and has not been previously published or won an award or prize of any kind; (c) does not contain any use of the names, likenesses, photographs, or other identifying elements, in whole or in part, of any person, living, or dead without permission (proof of which must be provided to Booktrust upon request); (d) does not include trade marks, logos, or copyright protected material which belongs to third parties unless you have permission from the owner to use the same in your entry; (e) is not subject to any third party agreements, and Booktrust will not be required to pay or incur any sums to any person or entity as a result of its use (as set out in these Terms and Conditions); (f) does not defame, misrepresent, or contain disparaging remarks or any other content which could adversely affect the name, reputation or goodwill of Booktrust or any other individuals and/or entities, the determination of which shall remain in the sole discretion of Booktrust; (g) does not contain pornographic or sexual content, hateful content of any kind (including racism, sexism, etc.), content which promotes violence or harm to another living creature or any other offensive, obscene or inappropriate content, the determination of which shall remain in the sole discretion of Booktrust; (h) does not include threats of any kind or that intimidate, harass, or bully anyone, or invade the privacy of any person, the determination of which shall remain in the sole discretion of Booktrust; (i) does not violate any applicable legislation or include any content that would encourage or provide instructions for a criminal offence; and (j) it does not contain any known virus, trojan horse, worm, trapdoor or similar software that may in any way infect or affect any of Booktrust's hardware or software systems.

8. The winners of each of the Promotions will be notified during the week commencing 19 April 2010 via either the postal address, email address (in the case of the 'Letter I Wish I'd Written' promotion and the 'My Story' competition) or telephone number provided with their entries. The winners may be required to submit valid identification before receiving their prizes. The prizes will be sent to the winners by post to a postal address within England notified by the winners in advance. If a winner refuses or is unable to provide an eligible postal address for Booktrust to post the prize to by 26 April 2010, Booktrust reserves the right to award their prize to another participant in the Promotion concerned. If a winner has not claimed his or her prize by the date specified in the notification of winning, Booktrust reserves the right to award their prize to another participant in the Promotion

concerned. Where new winners need to be selected for a Promotion, Booktrust shall conduct a further draw to award the prize(s) concerned in the case of the 'Letter I Wish I'd Written' and Booktrust Survey' promotions and shall award the prize(s) concerned to another entrant in the case of the 'My Story' competition.

9. In the event that, for reasons beyond Booktrust's reasonable control and not related to the winner of a Promotion, Booktrust is unable to award any of the prizes as described in these Terms and Conditions, Booktrust reserves the right to award a prize of a similar nature and an equivalent value, or at Booktrust's sole discretion, the cash value of the prize in relation to the Promotion concerned. In the event of an error resulting in there being more winners than prizes for any of the Promotions, Booktrust reserves the right at any time to allocate the available prizes by the means of a prize draw or to divide the prizes or the value of the prizes between the winners of the Promotion concerned.

10. The provision of the prizes relating to the Promotions does not imply endorsement by Booktrust of National Book Tokens or any other third parties concerned in any way with the Promotions. Any complaints or queries relating to the use of the prizes should be directed to National Book Tokens.

11. By entering a Promotion, you agree to have your name and photograph featured in publicity materials relating to that Promotion if you win without further reference, payment or other compensation. This includes making your name as a winner available on the Website between 3 May 2010 and 31 May 2010. Details of the winner will also be available to participants and the public on request by sending letter and stamped addressed envelope to The Bookbite Project Manager, Bookbite Competitions, Booktrust, Book House, 45 East Hill, London, SW18 2QZ by no later than 31 May 2010.

12. Booktrust will collect and process your personal information in order to conduct the Promotion you enter and it will be shared with Booktrust's agents to the extent necessary for the prizes of that Promotion to be delivered to the winners. If you do not provide any of the information requested when entering the Promotion, you may not take part in the Promotion concerned. Your name and other personal details from your entry will be collected and stored by Booktrust and held in accordance with Booktrust's privacy policy in place from time to time (see [www.bookbite.org.uk](http://www.bookbite.org.uk)).

13. Booktrust reserves the right to modify, cancel, terminate or suspend a Promotion in whole or in part, at its sole discretion, if it believes that Promotion is not capable of being conducted as specified within these Terms and Conditions or in the event of a virus, a computer bug or unauthorised human intervention or any other cause that is beyond the reasonable control of Booktrust that could corrupt or affect the administration, security, impartiality or normal course of that Promotion. Neither Booktrust nor any of its subsidiary or affiliated companies are responsible for any condition, circumstances, losses, failures or delays caused by events beyond its or their control

such as (but not limited to) the acts or defaults of National Book Tokens (or any other supplier selected by Booktrust to provide a prize) or otherwise that may cause a Promotion to be disrupted or corrupted, or that may lead to loss or damage of prizes in transit to a winner.

14. Save where it has been negligent, Booktrust will not be responsible for any damage, loss or injury resulting from participants' entry into a Promotion or their acceptance and/or use of a prize, or for technical, hardware or software failures, lost, faulty or unavailable network connections or difficulties of any kind that may limit or prohibit their ability to participate in a Promotion. Booktrust will not be responsible for any lost, damaged, defaced, incomplete, illegible or otherwise unreadable entries. Proof of posting is not proof of receipt by Booktrust of any entries.

15. Any illegible, incomplete or fraudulent entries will be rejected. Any participant who enters or attempts to enter a Promotion in a manner, which in Booktrust's reasonable determination is contrary to these Terms and Conditions or by its nature is unjust to other entrants (including without limitation tampering with the operation of the Promotion, cheating, hacking, deception or any other unfair playing practices such as intending to annoy, abuse, threaten or harass any other entrants or Booktrust and/or any of its agents or representatives) may be rejected from the Promotion concerned at Booktrust's sole discretion. Furthermore, where such actions have significantly impaired the Promotion concerned, Booktrust may, at its sole discretion, add further stages to that Promotion as it deems reasonably necessary in order to resolve any problems arising as a result of such actions.

16. By participating in a Promotion, you agree to release and hold Booktrust, its subsidiary and affiliated companies, together with their respective employees, officers, directors, agents and representatives, harmless from any and all losses, damages, rights, claims and actions of any kind in connection with participating in that Promotion or resulting from your acceptance or use of a prize, provided that nothing in these Terms and Conditions shall in any way limit Booktrust's liability for death or personal injury caused by its negligence or for any other matter where liability may not as a matter of law be limited.

17. All Booktrust's decisions in relation to the Promotions are final in all matters and Booktrust will not enter into any correspondence with participants other than the winners of the Promotions.

18. These Terms and Conditions are governed by English law. The courts of England and Wales shall have exclusive jurisdiction to hear any dispute or claim arising in association with the Promotions or these Terms and Conditions.

**For a large print version of these details call 020 8875 4829 or email [promotions@bookbite.org.uk](mailto:promotions@bookbite.org.uk)**

We would like to give our thanks to the following for their contributions:

Age Concern Newcastle  
Age Concern Salford  
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20 Plus 30  
Gregory and Company  
BBC Magazines  
Wall to Wall Media Limited  
Acorn Entertainments Limited  
Debi Allen Associates  
Open Age

Bookbite is brought to you by Booktrust, an independent charity dedicated to encouraging people of all ages and cultures to engage with books. The written word underpins all our activity and enables us to fulfil our vision of inspiring a lifelong love of books for all.

Bookbite is just one of many reading and writing projects Booktrust runs. If this magazine has got you thinking, you might also be interested in finding out about the great books and stories which have been recognised in our prizes and awards, such as:

- BBC National Short Story Award
- The Orange Prize for Fiction
- The John Llewellyn Rhys Prize
- The Roald Dahl Funny Prize
- The Blue Peter Book Awards
- Booktrust Early Years Awards
- Booktrust Teenage Prize.

Details of Booktrust's bookgifting programmes can be found on page five inside. [www.booktrust.org.uk](http://www.booktrust.org.uk)

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