**Talking Loving Libraries and Performing Poems with Joseph Coelho**

**Cressida Cowell**

I'm Cressida Cowell, I'm the current UK Waterstones Children's Laureate and I'm the author and illustrator of the How to Train Your Dragon and Wizards of Once books. I'm so glad you've joined me for the Reading is Magic Festival. Every day is themed around a point on my Laureate Reading Charter and today's theme is about extraordinary librarians and brilliant booksellers whose superpower is helping children find their own magical story. Every child has the right to access advice from a trained librarian or bookseller. Getting the right book into the hands of the right child at the right time is skilled work. A trained librarian or an expert bookseller can help a child to find just the kind of book that they'd like to read. Or they'll tell them it's OK to stop reading a book if they're not enjoying it and try something else because they have the expertise to recommend a book a child would love. Look how many books there are in the world. Even in my house. Look, there's all those books. How do you choose what's the right one for you, right now? I'm a big believer, if you need heart surgery, you want an expert to do it, you don't want any amateurs mucking around with your heart. So, we all need advice from experts. Booksellers and librarians are the magicians, the wizards who can find you the right kinds of books. Book shops are incredible places to visit if you get the chance, especially if there's a really good independent one near where you live. The shelves are full of magic and there's always a lovely bookseller somewhere nearby to help you choose book to buy just for you. Libraries are just as incredible. The real magic library is you can take the book home for free. You have to take it back after a while so someone else can read it, but as always, you need it, it's yours and it's a great place to try out [books]. I always used to try out books in the library to see whether I was interested in that author or those books, so libraries are wonderful. I hope you enjoy this.

**Karim Zeroual**

Hey, Karim Zeroual here. Are we ready for another amazing event? I bet lots of you know, poet and author, Joseph Coelho already. He's won writing awards, published lots of books and has been on TV, just like me. Joseph is going to talk to us about why libraries are so important, including the story of his trip around the country, becoming a member of lots of different libraries. He'll also be reading us some of his brilliant poetry and giving tips on how to perform your own poetry.

**Joseph Coelho**

Hello, Joseph Coelho here for the Reading is Magic Festival, led by Bath Children's Literature Festival. It's such a pleasure to be with you today. And it's National Poetry Day, which is an added bonus! So, today, I'm going to be talking to you about poems and one of my first loves; libraries. Now, libraries have always meant a great deal to me and they feature a lot in many of my books. My first picture book, Luna Loves Library Day, was set in the library. So that's how much I love libraries. And even one of my latest middle grade novels, Fairy Tales Gone Bad: Zombierella, begins with a librarian. Why are you so crazy about libraries? I hear you ask. Well, I shall tell you.

You see, when I was young, I was very lucky to always live near a library. When I grew up, I grew up in Wandsworth in London, and our flat was very close walking-distance from a library and from an early age, my mum would take me and my sister to our local libraries. And what ended up happening is that as I got older, I would keep going to the library. I took part in the summer reading challenge, which many of you, I'm sure, will know. So, the summer reading challenge happens every year and basically, you get points for reading books over the summer period and if you complete your challenge of reading several books, you can get a certificate and a medal at the end. I remember having so much fun, I think I read six books over the summer holidays and I had a little spaceship token that was on a board in the library and I would go in every time I'd finished a book. I think I read about Six Roald Dahl books in a row because I was such a huge, and still am, a huge Roald Dahl fan. So I take my little token and move it across and then at the end of the summer holidays, I got my certificate and I was over the moon. That really solidified my reading, it made me realise just how much joy there was to be had in looking in, researching in books, reading books, finding out about stories, but not just stories, also reading non-fiction books and finding out fascinating facts. I used to love going to the oversized book section in the library and I'd get giant books out about myths and monsters and magic. Now, as I got older, I ended up working in my local library. Can you believe it? I actually worked in my local library! After school I would run to the library and I would do about two and a half hours, helping the librarians put books away back on the shelves. So, libraries have always been very close to my heart.

And actually, last year I gave myself a challenge, a very big challenge to join a library in every library authority in the UK. Now, I didn't realise at the time that there are 209 library authorities, which means that I had to join 209 libraries. In fact, I haven't finished it yet because we had lockdown and things happen. And so I've managed to join one hundred and forty odd libraries. I've got about 70 odd left to do before I've completed my challenge. So I'm very nearly there and once all the libraries are back open and it's nice and safe to be travelling up and down the country again, I will be joining my last 70 libraries so that I can have a library card from every single library authority in the UK.

But whilst I was visiting those libraries towards the end of last year, I had so much fun. In fact, last August I took my little camper van out on the road and for three weeks in a row I travelled up and down the country joining libraries. I went all the way to Scotland. I slept on camp sites. I saw wonderful old libraries that had wooden lifts with scratches in them. I saw Carnegie libraries, so Carnegie libraries are very old, beautiful buildings with stained glass windows. I saw some beautiful libraries. I saw a library in a bus. I saw a library that was in a converted flat. I even saw a library that was right in the middle of a park in a little building a tiny little cottage in the middle of a park. So that was great fun, and now I have a huge folder filled with library cards.

I'm going to read you a little bit from my latest middle grade. It's a verse novel, Fairy Tales Gone Bad: Zombierella. I'm going to read you the prologue. So, that's the bit right at the beginning, because the prologue, the beginning of this story features the librarian. And as you might have guessed from the title, Fairy Tales Gone Bad: Zombierella. It's similar to a story you may have heard of, I'm sure you've heard of the story of Cinderella.

But in this story, she slips down the stairs, dies and is turned into a zombie. But it has a happy ending. So, this is the prologue featuring the librarian.

'Hello. I'm the librarian. I used to believe in nice things, sweet things, fairy tales and butterflies that don't bite. Then I began to work in the library in the reference section. The section for adults only, where there are big books, dangerous books, forbidden books. I spent my days stamping books, shelving books and reading books. I found a hidden section at the back of the library covered in powdery dust as thick as snow. A section full of old books, unread books unthumbed books, unloved books. You know how when you leave fruit in a bowl uneaten, it goes off. Mould starts to bloom on the skin, the flesh goes brown and soft. Flies lay eggs, maggots squirm. Horrid smells find their way into the fruit.

The same happens with books. The same had happen to these books. These books, these fairy tales had gone off. Their covers were swollen, cracked leather. Their spines were bent and creased, their covers strained against the chains that bound them, a padlock orange with rust decorated with the gaping, snarling face of a demon. It’s terrifying mouth forming the keyhole kept the books locked tight. I had the key. This key. I slipped it into the mouth of the demon padlock. It chewed at the key; the key was hard to turn. Creaking and groaning metal against metal. I twisted with all my might until the lock sprang open. I wrestled the chains off the books and peered at their titles. And this is what I found.

Goldilocks and the Three Bears had changed its title to Granny Locks. The Ugly Duckling had changed its title to The Monstrous Duckling. Jack and the Beanstalk had become Jack and the Flesh-Eating Beanstalk. The Boy who Cried Wolf had become The Boy who Puked Up a Wolf. Sleeping Beauty had become Creeping Beauty.

And Cinderella.

Had become a Zombierella mwhahaha. I took Zombierella off the shelf, its pages were musty smelling. This book had not been read for a very long time. It was very off, way past its sell by date. Inside, I found all sorts of horrible, disgusting, foul and nasty changes to the story. I started to read and as I read, I began to change.

I was no longer just a librarian of normal books. I was the librarian of decrepit stories, ragged legends, putrid parables. I was the librarian of fairy tales that had gone bad.’

So that's the prologue. The very beginning of Fairy Tales Gone Bad: Zombierella, which is in all good bookshops now. So, if you enjoyed that beginning, then hopefully you'll check it out.

I'm going to read you some poems from my poetry collection, Poems Aloud. Now, you can find loads of fantastic poetry books at your local library. So, when you next get a chance, make sure you check out the poetry section in your library. I'm going to start off with a tongue twister. This first tongue twister is called Try and there's lots of Ts. So, lots of the words start with T, so there's lots of alliteration in this tongue twister. What I'm going to do is, I'm going to read the lines and then I want you to repeat the lines after me, OK? So I'll read a line. You repeat the line. I read the line, you repeat the line. Here we go.

Try

Try twisting your tongue.

Then tuning your teeth.

Try taking your tonsils.

From a tummy tickling thief.

Try tasting your tears, then trumpeting your toes.

Try taping your temper.

To the tip of your nose.

Did you repeat after me? How did you do? Did you manage to get the words out? It's a bit tricky, isn't it?

We're going to try another one. This one's called Red Robots, and there's more alliteration in this poem, but it's with lots of words, starting with the letter R..

Red Robots

Red robots are on the rise.

Grasping their red radiating bellies.

Red robots have red eyes.

And red rust on their radio relays.

Red robots race on rails.

Repurposed from railways.

Red robots are revolutionary.

With their radioactive rays.

How did you do on that one? It's quite tricky, isn't it? Getting your mouthful into those strange positions. But, what's great about tongue twisters is that they warm up your mouth. They get you ready to say more, to read more poetry or more stories out loud.

This next tongue twister is very hard. It's called The Slime Takeover. And once again, I'll read a line and leave a space so that you can say the line after me.

The Slime Takeover

Slipping, shimmering, stinking slime.

Sloppy cerise or shades of scarlet sublime.

It sticks and sucks and spits and spools.

Snaking slime slumping several school walls.

The slime swells and stretches and starts to sprout.

Sliming several school halls as students scream and shout.

Scary slime subsume schools.

Say a slew of scandal sheets.

Their swan song headline.

As the slime swallows scores of the city's streets.

How did you do? Does your mouth and jaw and tongue all feel quite warm and ready to perform? I hope so. That's the great thing about tongue twisters. So, next time you have to read something out loud, it might be in class. It might be just to your friends and family. Have a go at doing a tongue twister first. Maybe one of mine.? Or maybe you'll make up one of your own tongue twisters. A great way to write a tongue twister is to use alliteration. That's simply where we use lots of words that start with the same letter. So, I used lots of words, starting with S for the slime poem. Lots of words, starting with R for the robots one and lots of words, starting with the letter T for the Try poem. Another great thing you can do with poetry is to write riddles.

I love riddles. Riddles are lovely, tricksy little games, word games. I'm sure you've had a go at trying some riddles out on your friends before. So, I'm going to read you a riddle and I want to see if you can guess what it is I'm talking about.

Now, the first riddle is called Behind You. So, there's a bit of a clue in the title. Let's see if you can guess.

I'm always behind you, very rarely in front. Except when I go travelling, I eat your lunch before you do. I've seen all your books. Whatever you give me, I'll make sure no one else will take a look.

Try talking to the person with you. See if you can guess what it is. I'll tell you at the end but I'm going to read you another riddle. I want to see if you can guess this one. It's called Below You. There's another hint in that title: Below You.

I often stink, but have a soul (sort of) I keep you knotted so you never trip. When you run, I help you get a grip.

Can you guess? Try talking to the person next to you. See if you can guess what it is. Remember, the title was Below You so there's a bit of a clue there. And then the last riddle is called Near You. Another clue: Near You. Let's see if you can guess this one.

I'm clear when I'm empty. See-through when I'm full, my insides taste of nothing. Yet you want me. Need me. I'm full of leaks and gulps. My brothers choke the oceans.

Did you get that one? So, that one has a bit of a clue, especially at the end. My brother's choke the oceans. That was a water bottle. I'm clear when I'm empty. Did you get that?

Below You, that was the second poem I read. That was trainers. There was a bit of a clue, especially the first line. I often stink, but have a soul (sort of). There, I was referring to the sole of your shoe.

And what about the first riddle I read: Behind You? I'm always behind you. Very rarely in front. Except when I go travelling. Did you guess what that might be? It was a backpack. If you got any of those right. Give yourselves a pat on the back. So all those poems were from my poetry collection: Poems Aloud and that's illustrated by the wonderful Daniel Gray-Barnett.

It's been so wonderful talking to you today on this National Poetry Day about libraries and poems. Remember to check out your library next time you get a chance and to take out some amazing poetry books. It's been so much fun joining you for the Reading is Magic Festival. Bye-bye.

**Karim Zeroual**

Thanks, Joseph. That was great. How about making up your own poem? Could be about your pet, a friend, nature, magic, or maybe even a poem about me. We'd love to see them so make sure your teacher or grown up visits the Reading is Magic Festival website to find out how you can send us a photo of your poem. You can find a link in the description for this podcast. They might just end up on the website's Young Creators Gallery. How cool would that be? Don't forget to check out all the other podcasts and events taking place as part of Reading his Magic.

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