

The Danum Read Aloud Competition

Choose one of the book openings from this doc and practise it, ready to perform to an audience.

A different sort of Normal

Abigail Balfe

This is a book for everyone

So that definitely means you

No, not the person behind you on the bus. Or the child to the left of you in the playgrounds. Or that loud neighbour you can hear shouting at their dog for the twenty-second time today.

Although, actually – yes, it is. But right now You are the person I'm interested in talking with. And I'm very glad you are here. Thank you.

Now let me ask you this:

Have you ever felt as though you are different from other people?

Perhaps you feel like you don't fit in

Oh, you have? Well, same. See, we have something in common already.

In fact, I'd challenge you to find just one person who feels happy and confident ALL the time. Because (spoiler alert) that's not really how growing up works. Actually, that's not how life works. And it would probably be a bit boring if it was!

Can you see me

Libby Scott and Rebecca Westcott

Look up. Go on, do it now. Stretch back your neck and stare up, as far back as you can. And then a little bit more. That's where you're going to have to look if you want to find Tally Olivia Adams. Up where the sky begins. Up where the only rule is gravity. Up where the world seems small and not so important. Up where the possibilities are endless.

It is the final days of summer kind of afternoon. Fluffy white clouds are scudding across the pale blue sky and the air has a hint of something fresh, something new. A normal day on a normal street in the back garden of normal house belonging to a completely normal family. Read that last sentence again, out loud to yourself. It's funny how if you say it enough times, the word normal sounds anything but.

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone (chapter 1)

By J.K.Rowling

CHAPTER ONE THE BOY WHO LIVED

Mr. and Mrs. Dursley, of number four, Privet Drive, were proud to say that they were perfectly normal, thank you very much. They were the last people you'd expect to be involved in anything strange or mysterious, because they just didn't hold with such nonsense. Mr. Dursley was the director of a firm called Grunnings, which made drills. He was a big, beefy man with hardly any neck, although he did have a very large moustache. Mrs. Dursley was thin and blonde and had nearly twice the usual amount of neck, which came in very useful as she spent so much of her time craning over garden fences, spying on the neighbours. The Dursleys had a small son called Dudley and in their opinion there was no finer boy anywhere. The Dursleys had everything they wanted, but they also had a secret, and their greatest fear was that somebody would discover it. They didn't think they could bear it if anyone found out about the Potters. Mrs. Potter was Mrs. Dursley's sister, but they hadn't met for several years; in fact, Mrs. Dursley pretended she didn't have a sister, because her sister and her good-for-nothing husband were as unDursleyish as it was possible to be. The Dursleys shuddered to think what the neighbours would say if the Potters arrived in the street. The Dursleys knew that the Potters had a small son, too, but they had never even seen him. This boy was another good reason for keeping the Potters away; they didn't want Dudley mixing with a child like that!

Holes

Louis Sachar

There is no lake at Camp Green Lake. There once was a very large lake here, the largest lake in Texas. That was over a hundred years ago. Now it is just a dry, flat wasteland.

There used to be a town of Green Lake as well. The town shrivelled and dried up along with the lake, and the people who lived there.

During the summer the daytime temperature hovers around ninety-five degrees in the shade—if you can find any shade. There's not much shade in a big dry lake.

The only trees are two old oaks on the eastern edge of the "lake." A hammock is stretched between the two trees, and a log cabin stands behind that.

The campers are forbidden to lie in the hammock. It belongs to the Warden. The Warden owns the shade.

Out on the lake, rattlesnakes and scorpions find shade under rocks and in the holes dug by the campers.

Here's a good rule to remember about rattlesnakes and scorpions: If you don't bother them, they won't bother you.

Usually.

Being bitten by a scorpion or even a rattlesnake is not the worst thing that can happen to you. You won't die.

Usually.

Sometimes a camper will try to be bitten by a scorpion, or even a small rattlesnake. Then he will get to spend a day or two recovering in his tent, instead of having to dig a hole out on the lake.

But you don't want to be bitten by a yellow-spotted lizard. That's the worst thing that can happen to you. You will die a slow and painful death.

Always.

If you get bitten by a yellow-spotted lizard, you might as well go into the shade of the oak trees and lie in the hammock.

There is nothing anyone can do to you anymore.

Little Badman

Humza Arshad

Chapter One

A Bee Named Mustafa

You've probably heard of me right? Little Badman. No? Oh. Well...Doesn't matter. You will do one day. I'm gonna be big. And not like my Uncle Abdul, who ate his own bodyweight in samosas and ended up in hospital. The good kind of big. Rich, famous and respected. Like Jay-Z, or that old white man from KFC.

I was always destined to be big. Even when I was born my mum said it was like trying to fit a nappy on a dishwasher. I call it big boned. Whatever. Point is, I'm a big fish in a small pond. Like a shark in a fish bowl, or a pit bull in a hamster cage. Sooner or later, I'm gonna explode out of there and the world is gonna know my name. Humza Khan. But you can call me Little Badman.

My path to greatness wasn't always clear. Even a ninja-rapper-gangster like me has to start somewhere. And I started in the hood. Proper gangland territory: The Little Meadows Primary School, Eggington. To say there was a lot of gun crime would be an understatement. There was loads. Just not in Eggington. Mostly in America, I think. Still, I reckon it shaped me into the twelve year old I am today.

But nothing, and I mean nothing, shaped me as much as my final year in primary school. I don't know if you've ever seen any war movies, about Vietnam or Iraq or the Galactic Empire, but none of that compares to what I went through in my final year at school. To call myself the greatest hero the world has ever known would be arrogant, so I won't do that. I'll leave you to form your own opinion once you get to the end of my tale.

And, like so many of history's greatest conflicts, it all began with something so small. In my case it was a bee called Mustafa....

Malmander

Thomas Taylor

You've probably been to eerie-on sea without even knowing it, When you came, it would have been summer. There would have been ice cream and deckchairs and a seagull that pinched your chips. You probably poked about in the rockpools with your mum, while your dad found that funny shell. Remember? And I bet when you git into the car to drive home, you looked at the words cheerie-on-sea written in lightbulb letters over the pier – and got ready to forget all about your day at the seaside.

It's that kind of place.

In the summer.

But you should try being here when the first winter storms blow in, when the letters 'C' and 'H' blow off the pier, as they always do in November. When sea mist drifts up the streets like vast ghostly tentacles, and saltwater spray rattles the windows of the Grand Nautilus Hotel. Few people visit Eerie-on-sea then. Even the locals keeps off the beach when darkness falls and wind howls around Maw Rocks and the wreck of the battleship *Leviathan*, where even now some swear they have the unctuous malamander creep.

Rooftoppers

Katherine Rundell

CHAPTER ONE

On the morning of its first birthday, a baby was found floating in a cello case in the middle of the English Channel.

It was the only living thing for miles. Just the baby, and some dining-room chairs, and the tip of a ship disappearing into the ocean. There had been music in the dining hall, and it was music so loud and so good that nobody had noticed the water flooding in over the carpet. The violins went on sawing for some time after the screaming had begun. Sometimes the shriek of a passenger would duet with a high C.

The baby was found wrapped for warmth in the musical score of a Beethoven symphony. It had drifted almost a mile from the ship, and was the last to be rescued. The man who lifted it into the rescue boat was a fellow passenger, and a scholar. It is a scholar's job to notice things. He noticed that it was a girl, with hair the colour of lightning, and the smile of a shy person.

Think of night-time with a speaking voice. Or think how moonlight might talk, or think of ink, if ink had vocal cords. Give those things a narrow aristocratic face with hooked eyebrows, and long arms and legs, and that is what the baby saw as she was lifted out of her cello case and up into safety. His name was Charles Maxim, and he determined, as he held her in his large hands — at arm's length, as he would a leaky flowerpot — that he would keep her.

The Bolds

Julian Clary

Chapter 1

Telling lies is NEVER a good idea. I once told my friends that I was a sausage roll. I really, definitely was, I said. When they finally believed me, they squirted me with tomato ketchup and bit me on the leg.

‘Stop it!’ I had to shout in the end. ‘I’m not a sausage roll- I am a *human being!*’

That taught me a lesson, I can tell you. I don’t tell lies any more. EVER.

So believe me when I say that the story I am going to tell you is ABSOLUTELY TRUE. It’s important that you understand this, because it is quite an extraordinary story. And funny peculiar. **Very funny** peculiar, in fact.

But true. **Every word.**

The first thing you need to understand before I begin this story is that for some reason human beings have grown rather full of themselves over the years. They now suppose that they are cleverer than all other living creatures.

This is a mistake. Just because humans can read and write and use knives and forks and computers, they think they are better than other animals. **How Stupid!**

The Book That No one Wanted To Read

By Richard Ayode

INTRODUCTION

IN WHICH I (A BOOK) ASK SEVERAL
IMPORTANT QUESTIONS, SUCCESSFULLY
ANSWER THEM, AND GENERALLY GET
THINGS OFF TO A SUPERB START

What is it that makes you want to read a book?

They say you should never judge a book by its cover. But how else can you decide whether you might like it?

You can't read a book to work out whether you want to read that book because, by that stage, you will have already read it.

That's why us books always try to make our covers look fun. But we know (from bitter experience) that even if we adorn ourselves with a majestic sparkly unicorn or a magical fearsome dragon, the battle is far from won.

How can we forget the times we've been hurled across the room; left under whiffy pant piles; or worse, shelved, forever collecting dust? What's so bad about being on a dusty shelf? you might say. But you've never been a book. I have a very bad dust allergy and no nose. Where are those sneezes going?

Oh yes.

I'm a book. Hello.

I suppose you might think it's weird that a book is saying "Hello". Well, why shouldn't a book say "hello"? We're not animals. Although (oddly) you seem very happy to read about animals saying "hello" and doing all sorts of other things that don't seem too realistic, like tigers sitting at tables eating iced buns and not biting your head off!

Here's a tip. If you see a tiger in your house, get out of your house. If you want to make friends with an animal, at least pick one that doesn't eat people!

The Boy in The Tower

By Polly Ho-Yen

Chapter One

When you wish that a Saturday was actually a Monday, you know there is something seriously wrong.

I look at the ceiling. At the spot of flaky paint and the stain that looks like a wobbly circle, and at the swaying, wispy spider's web, and I think of all those cold, grey Mondays when I had to make myself get up for school. I would have to force my legs off the mattress and I'd dress in a daze, unwilling to believe it was time to be upright again.

I wish I could wake up to another Monday like that.

Those days are gone now that the Bluchers are here.

When they first arrived, they came quietly and stealthily, as if they tiptoed silently into the world when we were all looking the other way. I guess I was one of the first people to see them. It's not something I'm proud of.

you know the kind of terrible destruction that just one clump of Bluchers can cause, you wouldn't want to have been there first either.

I think the reason I knew about them before most other people was because I used to spend a lot of my time sitting on my windowsill, looking down over the world. I could see everything from there: the miniature-looking roads, the roofs of the buildings, the broccoli-tops of the trees. And then, of course, the Bluchers themselves and the devastation that followed in their path.

The view has changed so much now that sometimes I wonder if I just made up everything that came before. I have to make myself remember what I used to see: the shops and the bustle, the cars and the people, the red-brick walls of my school and the grey patch of the playground.

Some people say you shouldn't live in the past. But I can't stop putting things into two boxes in my head: Before and After. And it's much easier to think about the Before things.

Before, if there was a day when I didn't go into school because I was ill or Mum wasn't well, I used to sit on my windowsill and watch the other children coming out to play. Everyone would rush out of the tiny black door so fast that I wouldn't be able to tell one little coloured ant from another.

I could always recognize Gaia in the crowd, though. She wore this bright pink coat that stood out a mile. I would see her walking along the edge of the playground. Never in the middle, never in a group. Always walking round and round by herself. Walking in circles.

But like I said, this was all before.

I don't see any other children any more. I don't know where Gaia is...

The Creakers

By Tom Fletcher

The Night it all Began

The sun disappeared behind the pointed silhouettes of the rooftops of Whiffington Town, like a hungry black dog swallowing a ball of flames.

A thick, eerie darkness fell like no other night Whiffington had ever known. The moon itself barely had enough courage to peek round the clouds, as though it knew that tonight something strange was going to happen.

Mothers and fathers throughout Whiffington tucked their children into bed, unaware that this would be the last bedtime story, the last goodnight kiss, the last time they'd switch off the light!

Midnight.

One o'clock.

Two o'clock.

Three o'clock.

CREAK

A strange noise broke the silence.

It came from inside one of the houses. With the whole town fast asleep, who could possibly have made that

sound?

Or perhaps not who but WHAT?

CREAK!

There it was again. This time from another house.

Creak!

Creak!

CREEAAK

The sound of creaky wooden floorboards echoed around the hallways of every home in Whiffington.

Something was inside.

Something was creaking about.

Something not human.

There were no screams. There were no nightmares. The children slept peacefully, wonderfully unaware that the world around them had changed. It had all happened silently, as if by some strange sort of dark magic, and they wouldn't know anything about it until they woke up the next morning, on the day it all began.

The Iron Man

Ted Hughes

Chapter 1 The Coming of the Iron Man

The Iron Man came to the top of the cliff.

How far had he walked? Nobody knows. Where had he come from? Nobody knows. How was he made? Nobody knows.

Taller than a house, the Iron Man stood at the top of the cliff, on the very brink of darkness.

The wind sang through his iron fingers. His great iron head, shaped like a dustbin but as big as a bedroom, slowly turned to the right, slowly turned to the left. His iron ears turned, this way, that way. He was hearing the sea. His eyes like headlamps, glowed white, then red, then infra-red, searching the sea. Never before had the Iron Man seen the sea.

He swayed in the strong wind that pressed against his back. He swayed forward, on the brink of the high cliff.

And his right foot, his enormous iron right foot, lifted- up, out, into space, and the Iron Man stepped forwards, off the cliff, into nothingness.

CRRRAAASSSSSSH!

Down the cliff the Iron Man came toppling, head over heels.

CRASH!

CRASH!

CRASH!

CRASH!

From rock to rock, snag to snag, tumbling slowly. And as he crashed and crashed and crashed

His iron legs fell off.

His iron arms broke off, and the hands broke off the arms.

His great iron ears fell off and his eyes fell out.

His great iron head fell off.

All the separate pieces tumbled, scattered, crashing, bumping, clanging down to the rocky beach far below. A few rocks tumbled with him.

Then

Silence.