



***Launching National Non-Fiction Day  
4<sup>th</sup> November 2010  
A Celebration of Children's Non-Fiction***

Facts are around us all the time. They amuse us, educate us and inspire us. They inspire us to do things, to know more and to challenge ourselves to be better.

Some facts seem silly, *an average chocolate bar has 8 insects' legs in it*, and some life changing and yet they mean something different to each person.

From a young age we take an interest in facts. For some it might be sports stats and for others it could be historical. This love of information carries on into our adulthood. I have many friends who 'collect' facts like you would Royal Dalton or antiques. They are always ready to regale me with a new titbit or factoid but its so much more than just a piece of information. It's a conversation point, something that highlights a want, a thirst for knowledge. Fundamentally, it's trying to gain a better understanding of the world and trying to improve yourself through knowledge. And as we all know knowledge equals power.

That power of knowledge is no more prevalent than in a school where children and young people are just beginning their 'journeys' in life, information is of so much importance. It lays the foundations for learning and understanding and is the key to education and success. It is the backbone, the scaffolding and any other cliché you wish to throw in. More importantly it's the reason why non-fiction books are fundamental.

Non-fiction in many ways has always been seen as the poor relation to fiction. Even the name suggests this, reminding us that real life books are not made up like fiction books are. I've always felt that maybe it should actually be the other way around. We should remember that fiction books are made up and not real that fiction is non-real books and non-fiction are real-fact books.

As any Librarian who is worth their salt knows neither fiction nor non-fiction is more important than the other and the whole ethos of a library is full

representation without discrimination. Yet it seems there is much more glamour with fiction. There are numerous fiction awards with fiction being acclaimed (quite rightly so) for their abilities. Yet, where are the celebrations for fact books, for the information authors? It could be, some people would say, that non-fiction, information books are there to inform, to educate, rather than to be read for pleasure.

When you think of non-fiction does your mind immediately head towards text books and those boring school days with hours spent copying out information that was both boring and uninspiring? If so, this is a view that couldn't be further from the truth with today's information books. They are fun, exciting, inspiring, daring, original, loved and certainly not boring. They embrace the love of information and present it in such a way that anyone who reads them with an old view of non-fiction immediately has their opinions revolutionised. They have as much lure to them as fiction books do and working in an environment where this can be seen first hand you start to appreciate them all the more.

Our school like so many others has a hardcore readership of solely information books. They are both boys and girls and not age specific. They are a mixture of all abilities and break all the supposed rules of readership. One high ability reader Laura (14) is a regular reader of information books. Many a conversation I've had with her about the reasons she reads so many non-fiction books and her answers always come back to the fact that for her, non-fiction has everything she wants in a book. Like fiction it has different genres, its completely varied and it's not about learning or education. For her it's about reading it for enjoyment, for pleasure. Something some people only believe is done through fiction. So, the question is, if non-fiction is just as good as fiction then why don't we celebrate its importance?

Well, the answer is we do. At least we do from this very moment in time. The Federation of Children's Book Groups is proud to be able to say that along with National Share A Story Month and The Red House Children's Book Award, National Non-Fiction Day is now part of our calendar of events. Working closely with Scholastic and other book publishers National Non-Fiction Day will take place each first Thursday in November. This years date will be 4<sup>th</sup> November and around the country we will be celebrating non-fiction in many different ways. We are encouraging book groups, schools, libraries and individuals to take part in activities however big or small. We are looking at ways in which we can change people's perceptions of non-fiction and with a big launch happening in Whitley in Reading we are hoping to get a large amount of press coverage.

It's not just the Federation that is extremely excited about this but non-fiction authors are also queuing up to shout about the virtues of such a day. Popular author of Non-Fiction Kjartan Poskitt has said: ***'It's about time! Nearly all the big book events and awards treat novels and biographies as being glamorous and exciting , while factual books are sidelined as being mundane. Anything that kills off this stereotyping has to be good news!'***

We hope that by celebrating Non-Fiction we can really show not just the range of great information there are out there and how great the authors of them are but also highlight how important these books are to the children that read them and love them.

Long live Non-Fiction!

Adam Lancaster, Federation of Children's Book Groups

