UK Version

Nelson Mandela ✽ Queen Rania
Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie ✽ Paulo Coelho
Devli Kumari
Dakota Blue Richards ✽ Michael Morpurgo
Rowan Williams ✽ Beverley Naidoo

Stories from people who believe in Education For All

This life-changing story book was created by the Global Campaign for Education. Compiling short stories from the world's influential figures, the book tells remarkable tales of education and the struggles of many to have the chance to learn. By reading this book and writing your name, you can help everyone have the chance of an education.

www.campaignforeducation.org/bigread

GLOBAL CAMPAIGN FOR
EDUCATION
www.campaignforeducation.org

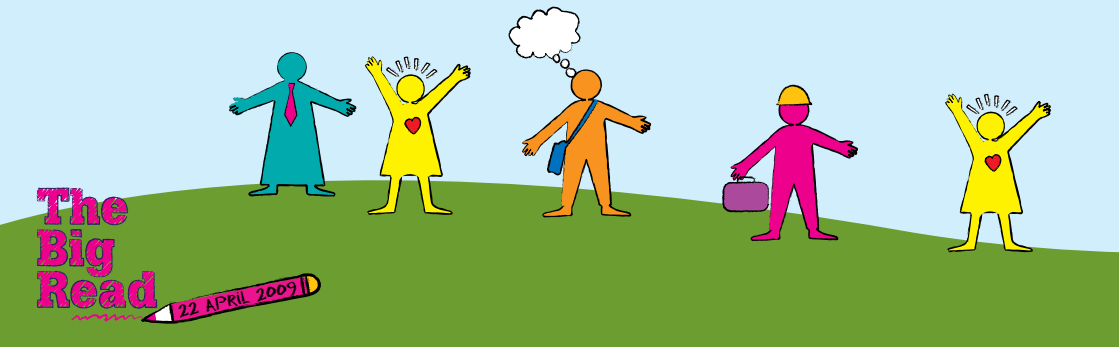
How you can be part of the Big Read in the UK:

1. Get registered and get your free pack at www.sendmyfriend.org
2. Read or listen to stories from this book
3. Ask your students to write their own stories, speeches or poems about education for all
4. Read your messages aloud at a Big Read event and send them to the Prime Minister

This book is being distributed through local, national and international campaigners in more than 100 countries. We want to make sure that as many people as possible take part in the global Big Read. Last year close to 9 million people took part in the Global Campaign for Education's World's Biggest Lesson and this year we're expecting more. You can help us spread the word if you tell your friends and colleagues!

This book can be read on line, or downloaded from the website, you can also sign up to receive updates and how the **Big Read** is going at: **www.sendmyfriend.org**

The **Big Read** events will climax on Wednesday 22nd April 2009 with special events happening all around the world.



Kailash Satyarthi

Dear Reader,

One in five people around the world cannot do what you are doing right now – reading.

Close to a billion illiterate people in the world are missing out on more than this great book. They are missing out on an education – and by doing so the world's poorest will stay poor, struggle to survive, look after their relatives, and battle to feed their families, let alone put their children through school.

It's a simple fact that can be fixed. Everyone can be given the chance of an education. Nearly every government has promised to provide its citizens with free and quality education by 2015. Education is not only a right, but it's also one of the cheapest investments that a government can make.

We're here to make sure that everyone gets an education.

We hope that you enjoy reading one or all of the excellent stories in this book. Whether it's Mandela's Speech about the importance of education in South Africa, or stories written specially by the award winning author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, or leading education advocate Queen Rania, there is something for everyone.

Once you've read a story please write your name at the back of this book, for the millions who cannot. In doing so you'll be joining the Global Campaign for Education in their demand that everyone is able to learn.

We will be delivering the list of names to national leaders and demanding that they put the policies and finances in place to enable everyone to have an education, to shape our present and future for generations to come.

Let us now make a journey towards 'Education For All' together.

Kailash

President of the Global Campaign for Education

Dakota Blue Richards

Dakota Blue Richards was born in London on 11th April 1994. In primary school she took weekend drama classes and enjoyed acting, but considered it a hobby and not a career choice.

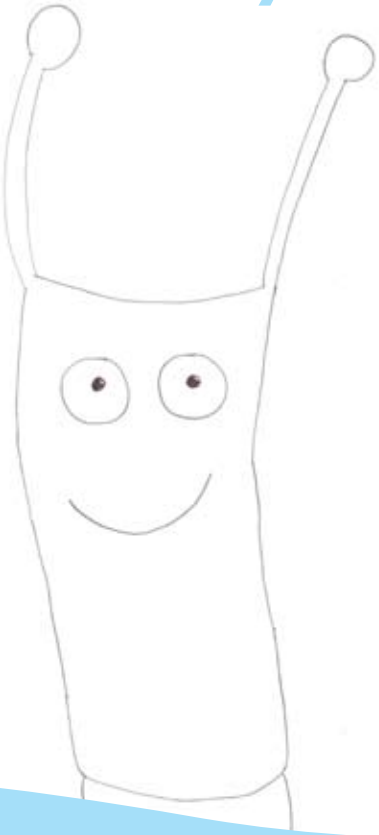
From an early age Dakota read Philip Pullman's "His Dark Materials" series, and she loved the books, particularly the character of the wild girl Lyra. When she heard that the books were being made into a movie, she jumped at the chance to audition, and won the role of Lyra Belacqua in The Golden Compass. Richards has been nominated for several awards including a Critic's Choice Award. She plans to continue acting, but would like to combine it with being a substitute teacher.

Ed and his friend Cassidy

written and illustrated by Dakota Blue Richards

Ed the Stick Insect is a very special Stick Insect. He is about as long as a small stick and as fat as a small stick, and… Ed can talk.

This is Ed ➔



Ed likes to watch the children through the school window and this is how he taught himself to read and write. Ed loves to read books and learn

things. His favourite book is The Hobbit by J.R.R. Tolkein.

Ed's greatest ambition is to go to school, but unfortunately, there aren't schools for Stick Insects. This is the story of how Ed achieved his dream.

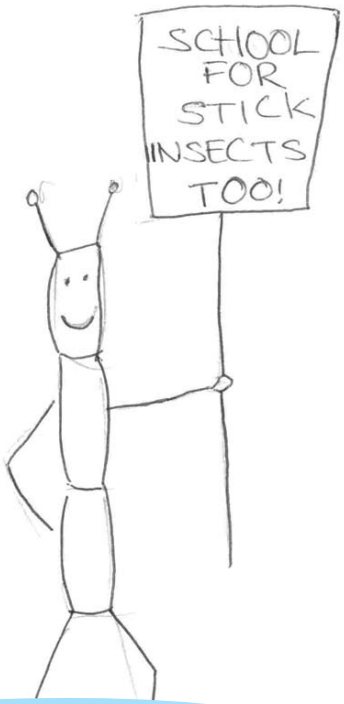
One day, Ed decided to start a protest, so he worked very hard and made a sign. Then he went to stand outside the school.

But nobody seemed to notice him. Some people nearly squished him. Ed decided it was no good protesting alone. So he made another sign advertising his campaign. It said:

STICK INSECTS SHOULD GO TO SCHOOL TOO!

MEETING - HERE FOUR O' CLOCK TODAY

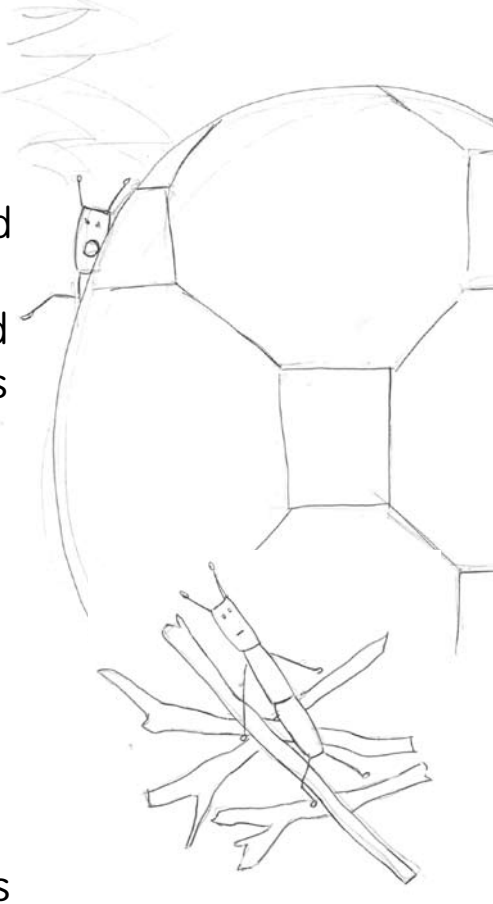
Ed waited but nobody arrived, and



just when he was about to go home, he heard a voice behind him. "Hello" said the boy. "Are you here for the meeting?" said Ed (hopefully). "Yes. My name is Cassidy" smiled the boy.

From that moment on, Ed and Cassidy became the best of friends. They had a lot of fun together. They played football in the park. They played 'fetch' with the dog (although this game made Ed a bit nervous). They played hide and seek (this was Ed's favourite).

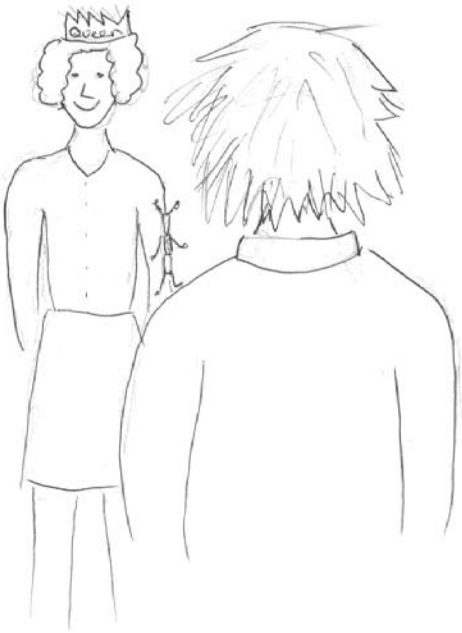
Ed and Cassidy read books together…and of course, they protested outside the school together. But the teacher always made Cassidy come inside and he was forced to leave Ed protesting alone.

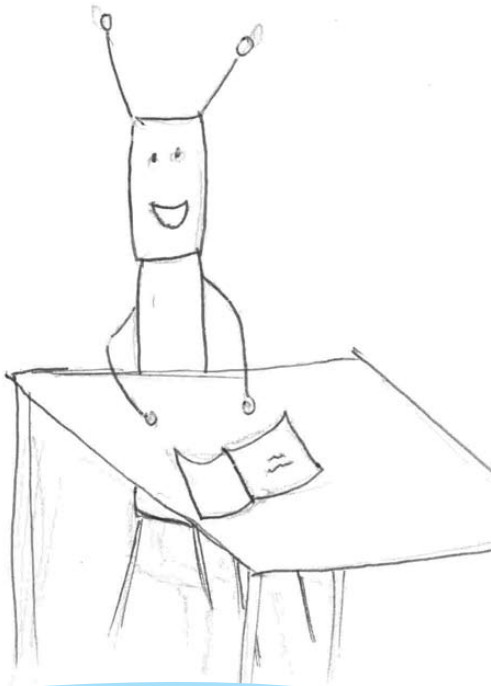


Finally, Ed and Cassidy decided that protesting outside the school was not enough. So they went to see the Queen.

"I completely agree" said the Queen, "Everyone should be allowed to go to school". So she talked to some very important people and made some very important arrangements. Now Ed goes to school every day, and learns lots of new things.

Although the most important thing that Ed has learned is that if we work together we can change the world. The only problem Ed has now is that the teacher doesn't believe him when he tells her the dog ate his homework!





Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie was born in Nigeria. She is the author of two novels, *Purple Hibiscus*, which won the Commonwealth Writers Prize and the Hurston/ Wright Legacy Award, and *Half of a Yellow Sun*, which was nominated for the National Book Critics Circle Award and won the 2007 Orange Prize. Chimamanda's fiction has been published in *Granta* and *The New Yorker*. She was a 2005/2006 Hodder fellow at Princeton University and holds a master's degree in African Studies from Yale University.

"CHINASA"

By Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

I think it happened in January. I think it was January because the soil was parched and the dry Harmattan winds had coated my skin and the house and the trees with yellow dust. But I'm not sure. I know it was in 1968 but it could have been December or February; I was never sure of dates during the war. I am sure, though, that it happened in the morning – the sun was still pleasant, the kind that they say forms vitamin D on the skin. When I heard the sounds – Boom! Boom! – I was sitting on the verandah of the house I shared with two families, re-reading my worn copy of Camara Laye's THE AFRICAN CHILD. The owner of the house was a man who had known my father before the war and, when I arrived after my hometown fell, carrying my battered suitcase, and with nowhere else to go, he gave me a room for free because he said my father had been very good to him. The other women in the house gossiped about me, that I used to go to the room of the house owner at night, that it was the reason I did not pay rent. I was with one of those gossiping women outside that morning. She was sitting on the cracked stone steps, nursing her baby. I watched her for a while, her breast looked like a limp orange that had been sucked of all its juices and I wondered if the baby was getting anything at all.

When we heard the booming, she immediately gathered her baby up and ran into the house to fetch her other children. Boom! It was like the rumblings of thunder, the kind that spread itself across the sky, the kind that heralded a thunderstorm. For a moment I stood there and imagined that it was really the thunder. I imagined that I was back in my father's house before the war, in the yard, under the cashew tree,

waiting for the rain. My father's yard was full of fruit trees that I liked to climb even though my father teased me and said it was not proper for a young woman, that maybe some of the men who wanted to bring him wine would change their minds when they heard I behaved like a boy. But my father never made me stop. They say he spoiled me, that I was his favorite and even now some of our relatives say the reason I am still unmarried is because of my father.

Anyway, on that Harmattan morning, the sound grew louder. The women were running out with their children. I wanted to run with them, but my legs would not move. It was not the first time I had heard the sounds, of course, this was two years into the war and my parents had already died in a refugee camp in Uke and my aunt had died in Okija and my grandparents and cousins had died in Abagana when Nkwo market was bombed, a bombing that also blew off the roof of my father's house and one that I barely survived. So, by that morning, that dusty Harmattan morning, I had heard the sounds before.

Boom! I felt a slight quiver on the ground I was standing on. Still, I could not get myself to run. The sound was so loud it made my head throb and I felt as if somebody was blowing hot custard into my ears. Then I saw huge holes explode on the ground next to me. I saw smoke and flying bits of wood and glass and metal. I saw dust rise. I don't remember much else. Something inside me was so tired that for a few minutes, I wished that the bombs had brought me rest. I don't know the details of what I did – if I sat down, if I ducked into the farm, if I slumped to the ground. But when the bombing finally stopped, I walked down the street to the crowd gathered around the wounded, and found myself drawn to a body on the ground. A girl, perhaps fifteen years old. Her arms were a mass of bloody flesh. It was the wrong time for humor but looking at her with mangled arms, she looked like a caterpillar. Why did I take that girl into my room? I don't know. There had been many bombings before that – we were in Umuahia and we got the most bombing because we were the capital. And even though I helped to clean the wounded, I had never taken anyone into my room. But I took this girl into my room. Her name was Chinasa.

I nursed Chinasa for weeks. The owner of the house made her crutches from old wood and even the gossiping women brought her small gifts of ukpaka or roast yam. She was thin, small for her age, as most children were during the war, but she had a way of looking at you straight in the eye, in a forthright but not impolite way, that made her seem much older than she was. She pretended she was not in pain when

I cleaned her wounds with home made gin, but I saw the tears in her eyes and I, too, fought tears because this girl on the cusp of womanhood had, because of the war, grown up too quickly. She thanked me often, too often. She said she could not wait to be well enough to help me with the cooking and cleaning. In the evenings, after I had fed her some pap, I would sit next to her and read to her. Her arms were still and bandaged but she had the most expressive face and in the flickering naked light of the kerosene lamp, she would laugh, smile, sneer, as I read to her. I had lost many of my things, running from town to town, but I had always brought some of my books and reading those books to her brought me a new kind of joy because I saw them freshly, through Chinasa's eyes. She began to ask questions, to challenge what some of the characters did in the stories. She asked questions about the war. She asked me questions about myself.

I told her about my parents who had been determined that I would be educated, and who had sent me to a Teachers Training College. I told her how much I had enjoyed my job as a teacher in Enugu before the war started and how sad I was when our school was closed down to become a refugee camp. She looked at me with a great intensity as I spoke. Later, as she was teaching me how to play nchokolo one evening, asking me to move some stones between boxes drawn on the ground, she asked whether I might teach her how to read. I was startled. It did not occur to me that she could not read. Now that I think of it, I should not have been so presumptuous. Her personal story was familiar: her parents were farmers from Agulu who had scraped to send her two brothers to the mission school but kept her at home. Perhaps it was her brightness, her alertness, the great intelligence about the way she watched everything, that had made me forget the reality of where she came from.

We began lessons that night. She knew the alphabet because she had looked at some of her brother's books, and I was not surprised by how quickly she learned, how hard she worked. By the time we heard, some months later, the rumor that our generals were about to surrender, Chinasa was reading to me from her favorite book THE AFRICAN CHILD.

On the day the war ended, Chinasa and I joined the gossipy women and other neighbors down the street. We cried and sang and laughed and danced. For those women crying, theirs were tears of exhaustion and uncertainty and relief. As were mine. But, also, I was crying because I wanted to take Chinasa back with me to my home, or whatever remained of my home in Enugu; I wanted her to become

the daughter I would never have, to share my life now emptied of loved ones. But she hugged me and refused. She wanted to go and find which of her relatives had survived. I gave her my address in Enugu and the name of the school where I hoped to go back to my teaching. I gave her much of the little money I had. "I will come and see you soon," she said. She was looking at me with tearful gratitude, and I held her close to me and felt a keen sense of future sadness. She would find her relatives and her life would intervene in this well-meant promise. I knew that she would not come back.

It is now 2008 and yesterday morning, a morning not dissimilar to that one forty years ago, I opened the Guardian newspaper in the living room of my house in Enugu. I had just returned from my morning walk – my friends say that my daily walk is the reason I do not look like a woman in her seventies – and was filled with the optimism that comes with the briskness, the raised heartbeat of walking. I had followed the recent national news about the government appointing new ministers, but only vaguely because after watching this country careen from one inept leadership to another, I no longer find much to be passionate about. I opened the paper to read that an education minister had been appointed, a woman, and she had just given her first interview. I was mildly pleased: we needed more women in government and Nigerians had seen how well the last female minister did in the ministry of finance. Then the face of the new minister, in a black and white photograph that took up half a page, struck me as familiar. I stared at it and before I read the name, I knew it was Chinasa. The cheeks had filled out, of course, and the face had lost the awkwardness of youth but little else had changed.

I read the interview quickly, my hands a little shaky. She had been sent abroad shortly after the war, with one of the many international agencies that helped young people who had been affected by war. She had been awarded many scholarships. She was married with three children. She was a professor of literature. My hands began to shake furiously when I read about the beginning of her love for books: 'I had a fairy godmother during the war,' was all that she said.

I looked at her face for a long time, imagining the life she has had, playing with the idea of contacting her, realizing that I had never before in my life felt quite so proud, before I closed the newspaper and put it away.

Queen Rania of Jordan

Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah of Jordan is an international advocate for universal education. Convinced that education is the key to breaking the cycle of poverty, Her Majesty campaigns for more investment in girls' education. She focuses much of her energy on creating opportunities and encouraging innovative public/private partnerships to increase access to, and quality of, schools. In March 2008, Queen Rania launched her "Madrasati" (My School in Arabic) initiative to renovate at least 500 of Jordan's most dilapidated public schools, to make sure that all young Jordanians have access to bright, safe, well-equipped classrooms and playgrounds.

Maha of the Mountains

A Short Story by Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah

(This story is set in the Middle East.)

The boys threw stones at her, shouting and jeering. "*Ya a'lylet al a'dab!* You have no morals!"

Just a few more steps and she would be home. "*Ma btistahi!* You have no shame!"

Maha struggled to hold back the tears from insults that stung more than stones. At last! Her family's small clay house. Gratefully, she closed the door behind her. Outside, the boys kept up their taunts. "Maha, ha ha! Girls don't belong in school!" One threw a heavy rock, hard, against the door. They all cheered loudly and ran.

Maha sighed. It wasn't even her first day. Imagine when she had her books. Imagine when she actually left the village to walk to school for the first time.

"They'll be waiting for me. They'll throw more stones and Allah knows what else. But going to school is *my* decision. And I won't let them scare me."

Maha flopped on her bed and drew a deep breath. At least today was Friday. No need to sew or sell embroidery. She curled up and tried to rest.

The last few months had been exhausting. Fights with her father. Ridicule from her brothers. Now the other village boys had joined in. It seemed everyone was against her.

Except for Mama. Thank God for Mama and her reassuring hugs. Mama had never been to school herself, but she had supported Maha, insisting to Baba that even a daughter deserved the chance to learn.

"Maha, why do you never stop?" her father had barked over dinner. "Why all of

this nonsense of going to school? You know we can't afford it."

"Yes, but Baba…"

"Well, then why won't you stop? We wasted so much money on your brothers. Only one of seven stayed in school. One! We could have bought more meat. Or a better plough. Or fixed the water tap."

"But, Baba," she'd begged, "I can work at night. I'll still sell my embroidery. And just think, when I can read I can earn more money! I'll help take care of the family. Please, Baba. I promise, I promise."

Maha's father had closed his eyes, suddenly looking tired. His gaunt face was long and somber beneath his graying hair.

"Alright, Maha," he'd said with a sigh. "But you *have* to pay your own way. I can't give you any money for books…"

Maha had flown across the table to throw her thin arms around him. "Thank you, Baba." She buried her face in his neck. "Thank you so much. I promise I'll make you proud."

"That's enough," he'd said gruffly. But even so, he'd held her tightly too.

Word that Maha was going to school had spread quickly in their small village. It wasn't long before the whispering started behind her back. People pointed, stared, and sneered. One old man spat in her path. "Maha, ha ha!" the village boys jeered. "Girls don't belong in school."

The night before her first day of school, Maha helped her mother chop okra for dinner. "Mama, I don't understand," she said sadly. "Is it wrong to go to school?"

Mama gently took Maha's hand. "It's not you, *hyati*, my life. It's just… well… people just don't think it's right for a girl to go to school."

Maha frowned. "Why not?"

"They think girls should help at home, not bother with school. You know I never learned to read. And neither did your aunts or your grandmothers."

"But, Mama, that doesn't make any sense. Why should that stop *me* from learning?"

Maha's mother shifted.

"Well, people also think," she let go of Maha's hand, "…they think it is a dishonor for a girl to walk alone. It's dangerous, you *know* that. Who knows what could happen? School's an hour away."

Mama's face clouded with worry.

"But, Mama, I'll be careful. You know I will. I don't care what they say. I can't wait to go to school. I can't wait to read and write. I want to be a teacher. And someday, Mama, I'll teach you to read as well! Tell me, what do you think of that?"

Mama's eyes suddenly sparkled with tears. "I think we'd better finish dinner first." She held out her arms. "Now give me a hug, *habibet ghalbi*, love of my heart."

The seasons passed. Summer cracked the earth; passing rain healed the scars. Cold evenings returned to the highlands. A new school year was days away.

And Maha learned. She kept a diary. She read the newspaper headlines to her father. She taught her little sister how to count all her fingers and toes. Her eyes often hurt after many hours of schoolwork, homework, and sewing. But the harder she worked, the stronger she felt. The more she learned, the more she wanted to know.

Still, it wasn't easy. She dreaded the walk, which began at 6 a.m. The journey took an hour or more. Not one part of the barren desert road was paved. By the time she reached school, her aching feet were caked with dust. And that wasn't even the worst of it.

On her first day, no one she'd passed had said a word. Now, the insults were relentless. Villagers tried to shame her. "How can you do this to your family? School is no place for a girl!" The spiteful taunts echoed in her ears -- "Maha, ha ha! Girls don't belong in school!" – long after she was safely back home.

Maha sat on her bed, pulled her blanket around her shoulders, and tried to focus on her book.

Suddenly, the door slammed shut with a bang. It was her father, and he was angry.

Her mother rushed past. "What's the matter, *habibi*?"

Baba stamped his feet in fury. "What's the matter? What's the matter? *She's* the matter!" he roared, pointing a shaking finger at Maha as she emerged from her bedroom, book still in hand.

"I can't walk ten feet in this village without somebody making some rude remark about my daughter and the disgrace she's bringing on this family. The women are talking. The men are talking. The village elders are talking. They came to me today to say they don't approve of Maha going to school alone. Like I don't know! They've been saying nothing else since all this school foolishness began. She brings shame on the entire village, they say! We can't live with that kind of disgrace. No one does business with me anymore. It's like we're outcasts in our own community."

His voice dropped. "Maha, I know what I said, but you can't go to school anymore."

"But, Baba!"

He had tried to hold her back before when the villagers complained. Some mornings he would say she should stay home that day, and she would agree a busy herself in the kitchen, only to run over the hill to school after Baba left for wo But this time, she knew it was different.

"No, Maha!" Baba's dark eyes flashed. "Girls do *not* belong in school. That's my final word." He slapped his hand on the table. "Now, where is my dinner?"

Maha's life returned to what it once was.

Boys still pointed at Maha; their sniggers hung in the air. Maha pretended

she couldn't hear. In truth, she barely cared. Her world felt as though it had been reduced to the scraps of fabric she embroidered with beads. She sold what she could to other women in the village. Her stitches hemmed the hours.

Salaam aleikum.

Wa aleikumu salaam.

"May I ask, is this where Maha lives? Do you have a daughter called Maha?" Neither Maha, who had come out to see who it was, nor her father, who had answered the door, knew what to make of the tall woman before them.

As was customary, Baba invited her in and gestured toward the worn floor cushions. Mama offered her sweet tea.

They could see years of learning in the woman's eyes and hear the sound of the city in her voice.

"I have come from the capital city. I have come to see Maha."

"See *me*?" Maha stepped forward. "Why do you want to see me? How do you even know who I am?"

"What a pleasure to finally meet you, Maha. I've heard so much about you. I've been told you were one of the brightest students Al Isra school ever had." The woman held out a small cloth bag. "And I've brought this for you.

"Go ahead, take it!" She pressed the bag into Maha's surprised hands.

Maha wasn't used to such attention. The village children scarcely spoke to her now. Tentatively, she reached into the bag. There was something hard and smooth at the bottom. Her fingers traced the edges, feeling for clues.

It was a pen. Her first.

"Il hamdallah." She cradled the pen in her palms, glanced at her father, then shyly at the lady. "Are you sure this is for me?"

"Yes, you'll need it," the woman smiled.

"But, why?"

"I've been looking for you for months, Maha of the Mountains! After all, how could I not? A little girl from a tiny village way up in the highlands, walking to school all by herself? Oh yes, Maha, your name is well known, even in the capital city!"

Maha's face flushed.

"No, don't be embarrassed. Your name is known for all the best reasons. Maha of the Mountains, your name stands for courage, determination, and success! We heard how you walked miles each day, enduring so much disapproval, and how you managed to work at night, and still be the best in your class. Your teacher was so proud of your progress. She thought you had so much potential. When you stopped coming, she asked everyone where you were; she looked everywhere to find you. Her search, your story, reached us in the city."

"Really?" said Maha.

"Yes. It even reached our organization. We work with mothers and girls. We give them small loans, help them start businesses… whatever it is they need. And Maha, we think that what you need is help getting to school."

"*How* will you help?" Maha's mother asked, her hand protectively on her daughter's shoulder.

"Well, if you agree, each and every morning, one of us will be at your door to take Maha to school. And every afternoon one of us will be at her school to accompany Maha home." She turned back to Maha. "You'll be safe. No one will talk." She smiled, "How does that sound?"

Maha couldn't quite believe her ears. The city was so far away. For the lady to come to her village would take hours, and then the walk as well. Maha's mouth widened, but her eyes softened. She clutched her new pen to her chest.

"Are you sure? Really? Every day?"

"Of course I'm sure! Girls have just as much right to education as anyone else. Why should boys be the only ones in school? School is good for *everyone*. Once you've been to school you can help support your family; you can help your village grow strong. But going to school also gives you a voice! An opinion that people will listen to."

The woman looked her in the eye. "Would you like that? Would you like some company on your way to school?"

Maha raised her gaze to her father, who was staring out the window in silence. "It is for Baba to decide. If Baba gives permission, I will go."

At first, her father did not speak.

Then, slowly, thoughtfully, he turned. "No one can tell me that I do not love my daughter as much as my sons. Yes, my Maha can go back to school. If she is safe, then she can go."

There was a sound at the door. Maha's father got up and opened it to find his doorway filled with all the young girls of the village.

"Really? She gets to go to school?" squeaked one.

An older girl stepped forward. "We're sorry. We didn't mean to listen, but we saw that other lady arrive in the village. She asked all over for Maha and we were curious." She poked her toe in the dirt. "But is it true? Will Maha go to school?"

With a raised eyebrow, he replied, "Yes, she will."

The girls gave a deafening cheer and the boys watching nearby stood shocked. After shouting a few congratulations through the door to Maha, they each ran off back to their own parents.

The next day, Maha stepped outside with her bag and new pen to see that her companions to school had multiplied. It was no longer just the kind and generous lady from the city. Other girls had persuaded their fathers to let them go to school, as well.

Maha couldn't help it when a smile crept across her face.

While the boys had stuck their tongues out at her, the girls had watched with envy as Maha walked to school on her first day a year ago. From that moment, they had all wanted in secret to go, too.

Only when the lady from the city promised to accompany Maha were they brave enough to ask their families.

Three days later, as she hurriedly ate bread and *foul* before heading off to school, a swell of noise caught her attention.

She opened the door. A crowd larger than her entire village was waiting outside. There were cars, lights, cables, cameras, and a sea of faces she'd never seen before. Suddenly, they all turned their heads and lenses at Maha!

She froze to the spot as the kind lady from the city rushed over. "Maha, Maha, can you believe it? Maha, have you heard?" She hadn't. "Maha, they heard about you. Your story made its way to some really important people! Then, the Minister of Education was told. And now…"

The lady had to catch her breath from the excitement of the news.

"And now… the President is here!"

Maha blushed as the cameras whirred and lights flashed. "I told you your name has travelled far and wide," whispered the lady in her ear.

Before she could work out what the lady had said, a man's hand had reached out to her.

"So you're Maha of the Mountains? You're the little girl who fought to go to school? Who inspired a village?" He didn't wait for an answer.

"Maha, your courage and determination have impressed me greatly, and I want you to help me get more girls into school."

He crouched down.

"Will you help me?"

Maha looked at the girls around her who had heard the question. Their eyes were wide as plates and their heads were nodding wildly. Microphones recorded the deafening silence as they waited for her decision.

In a little voice, she said, "Yes, of course."

The girls screamed with delight.

"I don't want to make you late for class, Maha. How about I give you and your friends a ride to school? We can talk on the way there."

Maha beamed. School bag in hand, her mother kissed her gently on the forehead.

The President waved to everyone as the cameras captured the girls climbing into the cars. As they pulled away, the hills rang with the cheer, "Maha, hur-*rah*! Girls belong in school!"

The End

Devli Kumari

Devli has become the voice of children deprived of education due to poverty, exploitation or slavery.

Three generations of her family had been slaves in the stone quarries of Haryana, India, living and dying without ever seeing the outside world until she and 112 others were rescued in 2004.

Devli is now 11 and lives in Jodhpur with her family. She recently represented deprived children at the launch of 'Education for All: Class of 2015' at the United Nations in New York. She silenced the gathering of some of the world's most powerful people when she told them how she had managed to get 15 children from her village to attend school and threw out a challenge:

"If I, as a girl, could enroll 15, is it not possible for all the world leaders to enroll all children into schools?"

As a result the leaders pledged resources to ensure that the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) in education is achieved and to help educate over 15 million children around the world.

I am Devli. I was born in a stone quarry in Haryana. My parents were also born there. Our entire family worked in the stone quarry as we were bonded labourers. It was only when we were rescued by Bachpan Bachao Andolan that we understood what it means to be free.

I started working at the age of 5. I used to break bigger rocks into smaller ones. My sisters and I used to load rocks into trucks along with everyone else. We had never seen a banana or any fruit. When we were first given a banana after being rescued, we ate it without peeling it off. We had never seen paper and didn't know anything beyond the stone quarry and the work there.

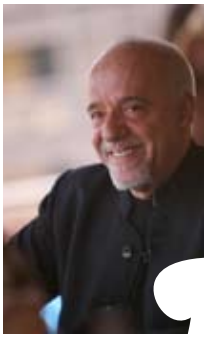
After rescue we were given homes in Jodhpur, our native place, in a colony, where I stay now. I went to Balika Ashram, a centre of BBA in Delhi where I learnt how to read, write, I also received training in how to use computers. After staying there for a year, I went back to my parents and now study in the school in my village.

I also enrolled 15 children into school in my village. I am now in class 5. I like going to school, studying Hindi and English and playing with my friends. I want to be a teacher when I grow up.

Devli's story in her own words (translated by Sandya Ch)

Paulo Coelho

The Brazilian author was born in 1947 in the city of Rio de Janeiro. Before dedicating his life completely to literature, he worked as a theatre director and actor, lyricist and journalist. His novel, *The Alchemist* published in 1988 became one of the best selling Brazilian books of all time. He has subsequently published a string of bestsellers and sold more than 100 million books. His work has been translated into 67 languages.
In 1999 France's government awarded him with its most prestigious title "Chevalier de l'Order National de la Legion d'Honneur". Since September 2007 the author is also Messenger of Peace for the United Nations.



The story of the pencil

By Paulo Coelho (Translated by James Mulholland)

The little boy was watching his grandfather writing a letter. At a certain moment he asked:

"Are you writing a story that happened to us? And is it by any chance a story about me?"

The grandfather stopped writing, smiled and said to his grandson:

"I'm writing about you, that's true. But the pencil I am using is more important than the words I am writing. I hope you are like it when you grow up."

The boy looked at the pencil with curiosity, but did not see anything special about it.

"But it's just like all the other pencils I have ever seen in my life!"

"It all depends on how you look at things.

There are five qualities in it that if you can manage to keep in yourself will make you a person always at peace with the world."

"The first quality: you can do great things but you must never forget that there is a hand that guides our steps. This hand we call God, and He must always guide it according to His will."

"The second quality: from time to time I need to stop what I am writing and use a sharpener. This makes the pencil suffer a little, but in the end it becomes sharper. So, learn how to bear some pains, because they will make you a better person."

"The third quality: the pencil always lets you use an eraser to rub out what was wrong. Understand that correcting something that we have done is not necessarily bad, but rather something important to keep us on the path of justice."

"The fourth quality: what really matters in the pencil is not the wood or its outer shape but rather the lead that is inside it. So, always take care of what happens inside you."

"Lastly, the pencil's fifth quality: it always leaves a mark. In the same way, know that everything you do in life will leave traces, and try to be aware of each and every action."

Michael Morpurgo

Born in 1943 in St Albans, Hertfordshire, Michael was evacuated to Cumberland during the last years of the war, later moving to Essex. After university and a brief spell in the army, Michael worked as a teacher for ten years, before leaving to set up 'Farms for City Children' with his wife Clare. The charity, which now runs three farms, aims to provide children from inner city areas with experience of the countryside. In 1999 the couple were awarded MBEs in recognition of their services to youth. Michael now lives on a farm in Devon, and in his own words, describes himself as "oldish, married with three children, and a grandfather six times over."

Michael Morpurgo is one of the greatest storytellers for children writing today and has written over one hundred books, including The Wreck of the Zanzibar, The Butterfly Lion, Kensuke's Kingdom and Private Peaceful, all of which have won major literary awards including the Smarties Book Prize, the Whitbread Award, the Writer's Guild Award and the Children's Book Award. From 2003-2005, Michael was the Children's Laureate, a role designed to reward a lifetime's contribution to children's literature and to highlight the importance of children's books. In 2006, he was also awarded an OBE, in recognition of his services to literature.

I Believe in Unicorns

by Michael Morpurgo (short-story version)

My name is Tomas Porec. I was seven years old when I first met the unicorn lady. I believed in unicorns then. I am nearly twenty now and because of her I still believe in unicorns.

My little town, hidden deep in its own valley, was an ordinary place, pretty enough but ordinary. I know that now. But when I was seven it was a place of magic and wonder to me. It was my place, my home. I knew every cobbled alleyway, every lamp post in every street. I fished in the stream below the church, tobogganed the slopes in winter, swam in the lake in the summer. On Sundays my mother and father would take me on walks or on picnics, and I'd roll down the hills, over and over, and end up lying there on my back, giddy with joy, the world spinning above me.

I never did like school though. It wasn't the school's fault, nor the

teachers'. I just wanted to be outside all the time. I longed always to be running free up in the hills. As soon as school was over, it was back home for some bread and honey – my father kept his own bees on the hillside – then off out to play. But one afternoon my mother had other ideas. She had to do some shopping in town, she said, and wanted me to go with her.

"I hate shopping," I told her.

"I know that, dear," she said. "That's why I'm taking you to the library. It'll be interesting. Something different. You can listen to stories for an hour or so. It'll be good for you. There's a new librarian lady and she tells stories after school to any children who want to listen. Everyone says she's brilliant."

"But I don't want to listen," I protested.

My mother simply ignored all my pleas, took me firmly by the hand and led me to the town square. She walked me up the steps into the library. "Be good," she said, and she was gone.

I could see there was an excited huddle of children gathered in one corner. Some of them were from my school, but they all looked a lot younger than me. Some of them were infants! I certainly did not want to be with them. I was just about to turn and walk away in disgust when I noticed they were all jostling each other, as if they were desperate to get a better look at something. Since I couldn't see what it was, I went a little closer. Suddenly they were all sitting down and hushed, and there in the corner I saw a unicorn. He was lying absolutely still, his feet tucked neatly under him. I could see now that he was made of carved wood and painted white, but he was so lifelike that if he'd got up and trotted off I wouldn't have been at all surprised.

Beside the unicorn and just as motionless, just as neat, stood a lady with a smiling face, a bright flowery scarf around her shoulders. When her eyes found mine, her smile beckoned me to join them. Moments later I found myself sitting on the floor with the others, watching and waiting. When she sat down slowly on the unicorn and folded her hands in her lap I could feel expectation all around me.

"The unicorn story!" cried a little girl. "Tell us the unicorn story. Please."

She talked so softly that I had to lean forward to hear her. But I wanted to hear her, everyone did, because every word she

spoke was meant and felt, and sounded true. The story was about how the last two magic unicorns alive on earth had arrived just too late to get on Noah's ark with all the other animals. So they were left stranded on a mountain top in the driving rain, watching the ark sail away over the great flood into the distance. The waters rose and rose around them until their hooves were covered, then their legs, then their backs, and so they had to swim. They swam and they swam, for hours, for days, for weeks, for years. They swam for so long, they swam so far, that in the end they turned into whales. This way they could swim easily. This way they could dive down to the bottom of the sea. But they never lost their magical powers and they still kept their wonderful horns, which is why there are to this day whales with unicorn's horns. They're called narwhals. And sometimes, when they've had enough of the sea and want to see children again, they swim up onto the beaches and find their legs and become unicorns again, magical unicorns.

After she had finished no one spoke. It was as if we were all waking up from some dream we didn't want to leave. There were more stories, and poems too. Some she read from books, some she made up herself or knew by heart.

Then a hand went up. It was a small boy from my school, Milos with the sticky-up hair. "Can I tell a story, miss?" he asked. So sitting on the unicorn he told us his story.

One after another after that they wanted their turn on the magical unicorn. I longed to have a go myself, but I didn't dare. I was frightened of making a fool of myself, I think.

The hour flew by.

"What was it like?" my mother asked me on the way home.

"All right, I suppose," I told her. But at school the next day I told all my friends what it was really like, all about the unicorn lady – everyone called her that – and her amazing stories and the fantastic magical storytelling power of the unicorn.

They came along with me to the library that afternoon. Day after day as word spread, the little group in the corner grew until there was a whole crowd of us. We would rush to the library now to get there first, to find a place close to the unicorn, close to the unicorn lady. Every story she told us held us entranced. She never told us to sit still. She didn't have to. Each day I wanted so much to sit on the unicorn and tell a story, but still I could never quite

summon up the courage.

One afternoon the unicorn lady took out from her bag a rather old and damaged-looking book, all charred at the edges. It was, she told us, her very own copy of The Little Match Girl by Hans Christian Andersen. I was sitting that day very close to the unicorn lady's feet, looking up at the book. "Why's it been burnt?" I asked her.

"This is the most precious book I have, Tomas," she said. "I'll tell you why. When I was very little I lived in another country. There were wicked people in my town who were frightened of the magic of stories and of the power of books, because stories make you think and dream; books make you want to ask questions. And they didn't want that. I was there with my father watching them burn a great pile of books, when suddenly my father ran forward and plucked a book out of the fire. The soldiers beat him with sticks, but he held on to the book and wouldn't let go of it. It was this book. It's my favourite book in all the world. Tomas, would you like to come and sit on the unicorn and read it to us?"

I had never been any good at reading out loud. I would always stutter over my consonants, worry over long words. But now, sitting on the magic unicorn, I heard my voice strong and loud. It was like singing a song. The words danced on the air and everyone listened. That same day I took home my first book from the library, Aesop's Fables, because the unicorn lady had read them to us and I'd loved them. I read them aloud to my mother that night, the first time I'd ever read to her, and I could see she was amazed. I loved amazing my mother.

Then one summer morning, early, war came to our valley and shattered our lives. Before that morning I knew little of war. I knew some of the men had gone to fight, but I wasn't sure what for. I had seen on television tanks shooting at houses and soldiers with guns running through the trees, but my mother always told me it was far away and I wasn't to worry.

I remember the moment. I was outside. My mother had sent me out to open up the hens and feed them, when I looked up and saw a single plane come flying in low over the town. I watched as it circled once and came again. That was when the bombs began to fall, far away at first, then closer, closer. We were all running then, running up into the woods. I was first frightened to cry. My father cried. I'd never seen him cry before, but it was from anger as much as fear.

Hidden high in the woods we could see the tanks and the soldiers all over the town, blasting and shooting as they went. A few hours later, after they had gone, we could hardly see the town any more for the smoke. We waited until we were quite sure they had all gone, and then we ran back home. We were luckier than many. Our house had not been damaged. It was soon obvious that the centre of town had been hardest hit. Everyone seemed to be making their way there. I ran on ahead hoping and praying that the library had not been bombed, that the unicorn lady and the unicorn were safe.

As I came into the square I saw smoke rising from the roof of the library and flames licking out of the upper windows. We all saw the unicorn lady at the same moment. She was coming out of the library carrying the unicorn, staggering under its weight. I ran up the steps to help her. She smiled me her thanks as I took my share of the weight. Her eyes were red from the smoke. Between us we set the unicorn down at the foot of the steps, and she sat down exhausted, racked with a fit of coughing. My mother fetched her a glass of water. It must have helped because the coughing stopped, and all at once she was up on her feet, leaning on my shoulder for support.

"The books," she breathed. "The books."

When she began to walk back up the steps I followed her without thinking.

"No, Tomas," she said. "You stay here and look after the unicorn." Then she was running up the steps into the library, only to reappear moments later, her arms piled high with books. That was the moment the rescue began. People seemed suddenly to surge past me up the steps, and into the library, my mother and father amongst them.

It wasn't long before a whole system was set up. We children made two chains across the square from the library to the café opposite, and the books everyone rescued went from hand to hand, ending up in stacks on the floor of the café. The fire was burning ever more fiercely, the flames crackling, smoke billowing now from the roof. No fire engines came – we found out later the fire station had been hit. Still the books came out. Still the fire burned and more and more people came to help, until the café was filled with books and we had to use the grocer's shop next door.

The moment came when there were suddenly no more

books to pass along and we all wondered why. Then we saw everyone coming out of the library, and last of all the unicorn lady, helped by my father. They came slowly down the steps together, their faces smudged and blackened. The unicorn lady sat down heavily on the unicorn and looked up at the burning building. We children all gathered around her as if waiting for a story.

"We did it, children," she said. "We saved all we could, didn't we? I'm sitting on the unicorn so any story I tell is true because we believe it can be true. We shall build our library up again just as it was. Meanwhile we shall look after the books. Every family can take home all the books they can manage and care for them. And when in one year or two or three we have our new library, then we shall all bring back our books, and we shall carry the magic unicorn inside and we shall all tell our stories again. All we have to do is make this story come true."

So it happened, just as the unicorn lady said it would. Like so many families in the town we took home a wheelbarrow full of books and looked after them. Sure enough the library was rebuilt just the same as the old one, only by now everyone called it the Unicorn, and we all brought our books back just as the unicorn lady had told it in her story.

The day the library opened, because I had helped carry the unicorn out, I got to carry him back up the steps with the unicorn lady, and the whole town was there cheering and clapping, the flags flying, the band playing. It was the proudest and happiest day of my life.

Now, all these years later, we have peace in our valley. The unicorn lady is still the town librarian, still reading her stories to the children after school. As for me, I'm a writer now, a weaver of tales. And if from time to time I lose the thread of my story, all I have to do is go and sit on the magic unicorn and my story flows again. So believe me, I believe in unicorns. I believe in them absolutely.

The End

Thanks to Walker Books for this contribution

Beverley Naidoo

Beverley Naidoo was born in South Africa and began writing in exile in England while a teacher. Her first children's book, Journey to Jo'burg, was banned in South Africa until 1991 but it was an eye-opener for thousands of readers worldwide. Her characters in Chain of Fire, No Turning Back and Out of Bounds face challenges in real situations that she describes as 'more dangerous than any fantasy'.

She has won many awards for her writing, including the Carnegie Medal for The Other Side of Truth about two refugee children smuggled to London who also feature in Web of Lies. Her latest novel Burn My Heart, set in 1950s Kenya, is about friendship, loyalty and betrayal, and her most recent stories are mermaid legends in Call of the Deep. Having had books previously banned in her birth country, she was delighted to be the South African nominee for the Hans Christian Andersen Award in 2008. Beverley is online at www.beverleynaidoo.com

Locking up Freedom

Beverley Naidoo

Believe it or not, the library at my school was kept locked! I have no memory of going inside and choosing a book for myself. What's more, when I asked our vice-principal to sign a form so that I could join the Johannesburg city library, she refused. I can still hear her voice with her Irish lilt…

'And what would you be wanting to read more books for, Beverley? Have you not got enough with your text books already?'

I was puzzled at the time, but later I realised that the nuns who taught me felt that it was their duty to control the books we read. In class, when we read a story, a poem, a novel or a play by Shakespeare, we

were told what the author meant. Our teachers told us to write down what they said and learn it. To them, teaching included teaching us what to think. At least I was lucky to have some books at home that I would read for pleasure. I would lose myself in them and my imagination would roam.

This was all a long time ago – more than 50 years – but the idea of keeping young people away from books and controlling their ideas still angers me. You see, I was brought up in apartheid South Africa. I was a white child in a whites-only school and none of my teachers encouraged me to ask questions, let alone question the racism all around us. It's a bit like we children were little donkeys with blinkers who had to follow instructions from teachers and adults who also wore blinkers.

After I left school, I was very fortunate to make friends at university with people who helped me tear away the blinkers. For the first time, I began to read books that invited me to see the world around me in new ways. I began to realise that for black South Africans the country was like a vast prison and I began to ask the questions that I'd never asked before. What I saw, with my own eyes, was shocking, but at least I was now beginning to choose my own journey. That led to me being locked up in jail for eight weeks in solitary confinement, with no charges. I was still a 'small fish' in the resistance to apartheid, but my brother and his

friends who challenged the system were locked up for years. Reading and discussing books was important to them because books allowed their minds to travel outside the prison walls. Books helped them keep their minds free!

I started writing when I was living in exile in England and had two children. Their father and I weren't allowed to return to South Africa where we had both been born. That made us refugees from our home country and I wanted to find a way for our children, and others, to imagine what apartheid was like. If I could tell them a gripping story, they might want to know more…

That was the beginning of Journey to Jo'burg, my first book for young people. Once it was published, it quickly travelled around the world in many different languages. I began to receive hundreds of letters from readers telling me their thoughts and asking me questions. But there were no letters from South Africa because the apartheid rulers banned the book until the year after Nelson Mandela was released from jail. Someone could be put in prison or made to pay a fine if they were found with it.

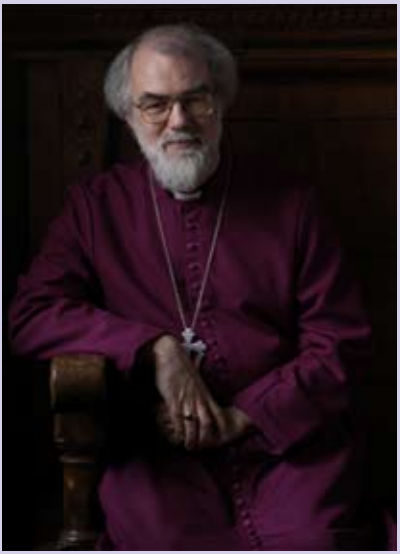
Not having books is not always about lack of money but about what we value. Books are 'mind food'! One of our most important freedoms is surely to read, imagine, think and ask our own questions about the world.

A few years ago I wrote this poem. It arose from thinking about Journey to Jo'burg. It's also about much more, but that I leave to you.

They tried to lock up freedom

They seized the book
Ripped out its spine
Flung it in the fire
    Pages fluttered through smoke
They grabbed the pages
Scratched out lines
Crushed them in their fists
    Words squeezed through knuckles
They twisted the words
Tore out sound
Swallowed them in their silence
    The heart of the book cried out
        The pages grew wings
            The words breathed Freedom

Archbishop of Canterbury: Rowan Williams



Rowan Douglas Williams was born in Swansea, south Wales, and was educated at Dynevor School in Swansea and Christ's College Cambridge where he studied theology. He studied for his doctorate at Wadham College Oxford, taking his DPhil in 1975. From 1977, he spent nine years in academic and parish work in Cambridge before returning to Oxford.

In 1991 Professor Williams accepted election and consecration as bishop of Monmouth and in 1999 he was elected Archbishop of Wales. Thus it was that, in July 2002, with eleven years experience as a diocesan bishop and three as a leading primate in the Communion, Archbishop Williams was confirmed on 2 December 2002 as the 104th bishop of the See of Canterbury.

Dr Williams is acknowledged internationally as an outstanding theological writer, scholar and teacher. His interests include music, fiction and languages. Dr Williams is married to Jane Paul, a lecturer in theology, whom he met while living and working in Cambridge. They have a daughter and a son.

Arabic Class in the Refugee Camp (Islamabad, 2006)

One by one, the marks join up:
easing their way through the broken soil,
the green strands bend, twine,
dip and curl and cast off little drops
of rain. Nine months ago,
the soil broke up, shouting,
crushing its fist on houses, lives,
crops and futures, opening its wordless mouth
to say No. And the green strands
stubbornly grow back. The broken bits
of a lost harvest still let
the precious wires push through
to bind the pain, to join with knots and curls
the small hurt worlds of each
small life, to say another no: no,
you are not abandoned. The rope of words
is handed on, let down from a sky
broken by God's voice, curling and wrapping
each small life into the lines of grace,
the new world of the text that maps
our losses and our longings, so
that we can read humanity again
in one another's eyes, and hear
that the broken soil is not all, after all,
as the signs join up.

Nelson Mandela

Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela was born in Mvezo village in the former Transkei in 1918. After finishing school he went to university and studied law. He joined the African National Congress in 1942 and devoted himself to the struggle against apartheid. In 1952 Mandela travelled the country organising non-violent resistance to discriminatory legislation. This included the 1952 Defiance Campaign, resistance to forced removals and to the introduction of Bantu Education in 1953. He advised community activists to "make every home, every shack or rickety structure a centre of learning". He was banned more than once, arrested and charged several times, and in 1964 was sentenced to life imprisonment for his efforts to end apartheid. He became one of the world's most famous political prisoners. After 27 years in prison, Mandela was released and helped steer South Africa through its peaceful transition to democracy. In 1993 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, and became the first democratically elected president of South Africa in 1994. He retired from public life in 1999. He remains South Africa's best-loved hero.

Extracted from Nelson Mandela's speech at the launch of the National Campaign for Learning and Teaching in 1997

"Our country is well endowed with natural resources. But our most valued treasure is our people, especially the youth. It is our human resources that enable us to reap the benefits of all our other assets.

Our fight against poverty, crime, and all the maladies of our society requires us to invest in the development of our human resources. …

At the forefront of this effort is education and training. We are obliged to make it possible for everyone to develop their potential to the full; to provide opportunities for everyone to learn and nurture their talents. We have a duty to create a conducive environment; and to provide the necessary tools and the mechanisms to support people in their endeavours to better themselves. …

The potential to be reclaimed is immense. The millions of our adults who never had the chance to learn to read and write; the hundreds of thousands of our youth displaced from education without any meaningful skills; the nation's workers who must ensure that our country embraces the world's new technologies – we can tap this power to build a better life by using every opportunity to ensure that our nation learns.

Our message to teachers on this occasion is this: let your watchword be unqualified commitment to the interests of those whose education has been entrusted to you.

Amongst other things, this means meticulous punctuality; thorough preparation for every lesson; dedication to ensuring that every student learns something from each lesson. It involves keeping abreast of developments in your subject areas and working co-operatively with both colleagues and management to ensure that our schools truly educate the nation. In short it means upholding the highest standards so that dignity is fully restored to the teaching profession. On your shoulders lies an enormous responsibility. If you fail our children you fail our country.

To students, this campaign is a call to make learning your main, if not your only, priority. For you too, punctuality, attendance and diligence in study must be the order of the day. Active participation in lessons and inquisitive probing to aid your own learning, respect for fellow students and for teachers; and a resolve never to use drugs or take dangerous weapons to school – all these and many more, make up the fabric of the culture of learning. …

To parents, we say today that taking an interest in your children's education is as important as their own efforts and those of teachers. You can help educate the nation by participating in the activities of schools and protecting them from vandals; by supporting them, by working with teachers and students; and by constant guidance which ensures that your children always attend school and do their school work…

We can no longer afford to sit by while some schools are turned into havens of drug abuse, violence or vandalising of valuable property. We can no longer sit and watch while any of our country's children are held back in the mire of ignorance and lack of skills. … Let us join hands, and work to make our schools work for us.

I thank you."

GLOBAL CAMPAIGN FOR
EDUCATION
www.campaignforeducation.org

About the Global Campaign for Education:

The Global Campaign for Education is made up of organisations and individuals who believe that every person should have a good quality, free, public education.

Every year we organise an Action Week in April, in which millions of people get involved in over 100 countries, to make sure that their governments are keeping their promises on ensuring everyone has an education.

The campaign started in 1999 and since then has mobilised pressure on governments to stick to the 'Education for All' goals. There has been progress – 40 million more children have since been able to start school.

But there are still 75 million children out of school, and 774 million adults who cannot read.

That's why the Global Campaign for Education's Action Week is focusing on the **Big Read** from during 20th – 26th April 2009.

Take part in the **Big Read** and help everyone have the chance of an education.