

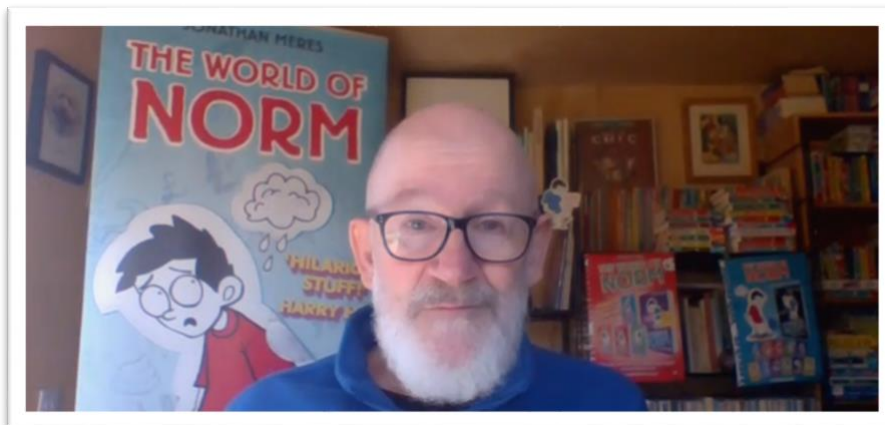


Stockbridge Primary School held our third annual BookFest in March 2022, bringing our school community together to celebrate stories. Our virtual author and illustrator visits, thanks to our Parent Council, were among the highlights of this year's BookFest.

# Jonathan Meres

Although he lives almost within shouting distance of the school, author Jonathan Meres paid a virtual visit to P5A, P5B and P6. Jonathan has written over 30 books for children and is best known for the award-winning *The World of Norm* series, which has sold nearly one million copies in the UK alone.

Jonathan quickly debunked the rumour that he'd been raised by zebras in the Belgian rainforest. (He actually grew up in Nottingham.) He also explained that he hadn't always wanted to be an author.



In fact, when he was at school, his dream was to join the merchant navy, which he ended up doing for several years. He's also tried his hand at acting, driving an ice-cream van and performing stand-up comedy, among other things.

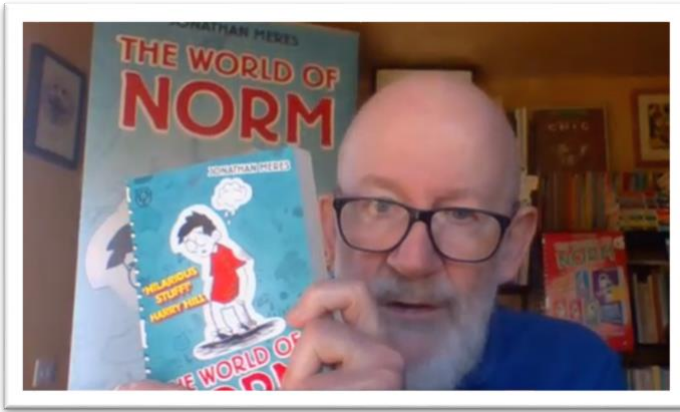
*"He was really funny. Tons of people were laughing their heads off." (P6)*

Jonathan emphasised that everyone should believe they're capable of being an author. "People think to become an author you must be incredibly intelligent. I am not particularly intelligent, I don't have an IQ of five million," he said. He also shared some tips for creative writing: "If in doubt, write what you know. Take a scenario and make it funny, exaggerate it, embellish it."

*"We have learned that you don't have to be a genius to be an author." (P5)*

*"It was awesome to hear about his books." (P5)*





Jonathan explained that *The World of Norm* books had been inspired by his three sons. He wanted to write about characters his readers could relate to; normal people doing normal stuff, and things that could actually happen in real life. He said that he'd chosen the name Norm deliberately, because as well as being short for "Norman", it's short for "Normal".

*"It was interesting to see him talk about his books."* (P5)

Jonathan described the act of creating his characters as "almost like stepping out of your own shoes and stepping into someone else's shoes." For anyone out there who's interested in reading the books, Jonathan said that although they're a series (there are 12 books in total), each book is a standalone story, so they can be read in any order. In fact, he thinks they get funnier as the series goes on.

*"Norm is an interesting book about everyday things you do".* (P5)



Jonathan then demonstrated to his audience why he'd once hoped to make it as a rockstar, picking up his guitar to sing the hilarious opening lines to the first two Norm books.

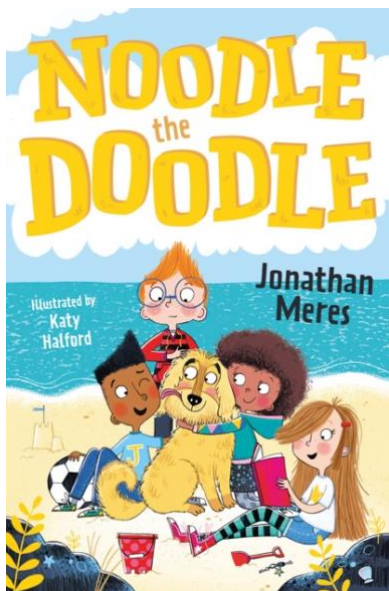
*"The songs he sang were really funny as well."* (P6)

He invited the children to sing along to the chorus and wave their arms in the air, making him feel "like Ed Sheeran's grandad."

*"He can play the guitar and sing at the same time."* (P5)

*"He tried to be a rockstar!"* (P5)





After that rockin' interlude, it was time for a Q&A. The children asked loads of great questions, including "If you were a character from one of your Norm books, who would you be?" (Norm); "If you could live in a book, which book would you choose?" (*The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* by Alexander McCall Smith); and "What was your favourite book when you were younger?" (*Charlotte's Web*).

Jonathan also mentioned that he'd learned to read by reading comics. Asked to describe his job in three words, he went for "making stuff up".

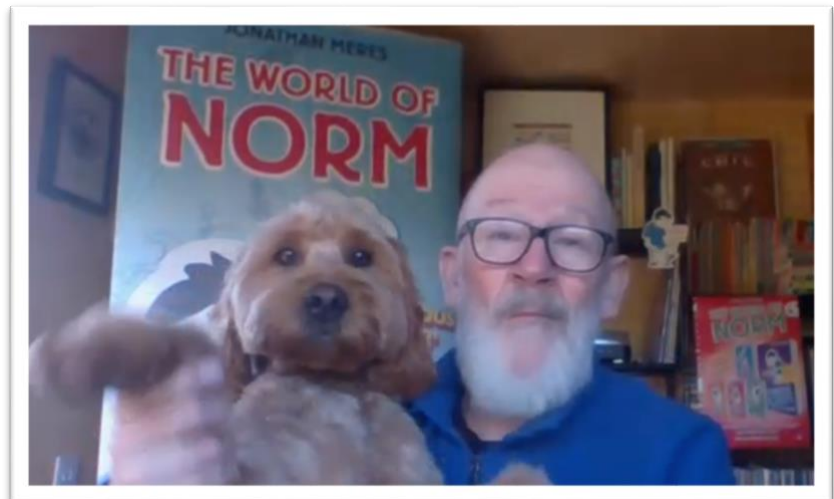
*"I want to get the books."* (P6)

*"He makes funny books and he is a funny man."* (P5)

Jonathan closed the event with a final Norm-inspired song, before his adorable dog Pablo joined him to wave goodbye. It was a fitting ending to a laugh-filled and inspiring event. Thank you, Jonathan!

*"He has a so cute dog."* (P5)

*"Pablo is cute! Everybody loved him."* (P6)



Thanks to the Parent Council, three copies each of *The World of Norm: May Contain Nuts* and *Noodle the Doodle* will be gifted to the school for the P5 and P6 class libraries.



## Stockbridge Primary School BookFest

Stockbridge Primary School's annual BookFest is packed with diverse and innovative ways to celebrate reading – whatever the circumstances!



After two years of the covid pandemic, and against a distressing global backdrop, BookFest brought brightness in dark times. It added excitement and sparkle, lifted spirits and celebrated our international community. BookFest encouraged children to share experiences, to learn and understand more about other countries and other children's heritage, and to revel in our school's diversity as a source of strength. We aimed once again to bring some literary magic to children living through unprecedented times.

BookFest 2022 was a hybrid festival, but we seized the chance to turn the limitations of pandemic restrictions into opportunities. BookFest reached out to authors and illustrators across the UK, with virtual events enabling connections we could never hope to make in person. And just as this year's BookFest drew to a close came a glimmer of hope for the future, as we were able to invite our first illustrators and authors to the school in person.



This year's BookFest was underpinned by our longstanding aim of ensuring that every child can see themselves in a book. We drew upon the school's theme for the year of Diversity and Inclusion, with events championing neurodiversity and dyslexia, celebrations of our multitude of languages, and, as always, a focus not just on the written word but on telling stories through images. We're committed to making sure that not only can every child recognise themselves in book characters and in book illustrations, but that they also see themselves in the authors and illustrators we bring to BookFest.



## Thank You...

- ... to Jonathan Meres and Pablo
- ... to Stockbridge Primary Parent Council for funding
- ... to our local independent children's bookshop, Ginger and Pickles
- ... to Ms Fraser, Miss Leyland, Ms Turek, and to Mrs Ashbrook
- ... to our BookFest volunteer organising team: Meredith, Hazel and Jenny

### Stockbridge Primary School

Stockbridge Primary School is a City of Edinburgh non-denominational local authority school and nursery, with approximately 270 pupils aged 3 to 12 years. Stockbridge Primary's Parent Council works in partnership with staff both to fundraise for the school and to deliver events and resources that enrich pupils' experience and the school environment. BookFest is organised by members of the Stockbridge Primary teaching staff, parent volunteers and members of the Parent Council.