

Barrington Stoke

Chatterbooks activity pack



Cracking reading – Barrington Stoke in partnership with The Reading Agency and Chatterbooks

About this pack

Here is a pack of reading ideas and activities for Chatterbooks children’s reading groups, brought to you by The Reading Agency and their Children’s Reading Partner, publisher **Barrington Stoke**. The pack is inspired by Barrington Stoke’s wonderful range of books which help emergent, reluctant and dyslexic readers unlock the power of reading.

All children will enjoy the books and activities here but we hope the pack ideas will be especially useful with children with reading difficulties.

Some Chatterbooks groups have a targeted membership of children with dyslexia – see page 5 for a case study of such a group in Edinburgh.

More often Chatterbooks groups are mixed ability groups and some of the activities here will work well where group cooperation, and doing activities in pairs or small groups, can encourage and build confidence, and make things like simple drama fun and not stressful.

The pack focuses on six titles for young people – all the titles have a reading age of 8+ and an interest age of 9+.

Chatterbooks [www.readinggroups.org/chatterbooks] is a reading group programme for children aged 4 to 14 years. It is coordinated by The Reading Agency and its patron is author Dame Jacqueline Wilson. Chatterbooks groups run in libraries and schools, supporting and inspiring children’s literacy development by encouraging them to have a really good time reading and talking about books.

The Reading Agency is an independent charity working to inspire more people to read more through programmes for adults, young people and Children – including the Summer Reading Challenge, and Chatterbooks. See www.readingagency.org.uk

Children’s Reading Partners is a national partnership of children’s publishers and libraries working together to bring reading promotions and author events to as many children and young people as possible.

Barrington Stoke is an independent publisher dedicated to attracting children into reading. Barrington Stoke books are edited and designed to minimise some of the obstacles that can stop struggling, reluctant or dyslexic readers really getting hooked by a book.

See www.barringtonstoke.co.uk



Contents

- Cracking reading with Barrington Stoke and Chatterbooks
- Edinburgh Libraries' 'Dyslexia Chatterbooks' group
- *The Rights of the Reader* – Daniel Pennac
- Author Tom Palmer – supporting Barrington Stoke, and Chatterbooks author of the month
- Barrington Stoke books – tasters from some recommended titles for children aged 8+, and a list of more books to enjoy
- [Barrington Stoke author posters to download](#)
- Discussion and activity ideas for your groups

Cracking reading with Barrington Stoke and Chatterbooks

Chatterbooks and Barrington Stoke both aim to inspire children's reading enjoyment – if young people enjoy reading and talking about what they're reading, their confidence and self-esteem will grow – which will help to lift barriers to reading.

Barrington Stoke offer a **valuable range of information and resources** to support parents, librarians and learning professionals in inspiring children's reading including

- a leaflet with guidance and advice on helping with reading problems
- downloadable author posters
- literacy resources linked with particular Barrington Stoke titles
- and a special **Librarians' Toolkit**

Have a look at Barrington Stoke's [free resources](#).

Issues and barriers to reading which children may be facing – and strategies and support which can help

Some children may struggle to see the text properly. Perceptual problems can mean the text seems to move about on the page. Eye-muscle control problems can make it very hard to focus on a line, read along and move down to the next without losing place.

These children can be helped by a variety of simple and inexpensive aids. Remind any child who uses a coloured acetate 'filter' or special glasses in school to bring these along and use them. Ideally keep a stock of filters yourself in case they forget - [see these overlays](#).

A simple ruler can help a reader follow the right line, and don't worry if they use their finger to keep their place. Pay attention to lighting as well - this will help all children.

Some children may appear able to read but fail to understand what they're reading (sometimes called 'barking at text'). It's quite possible that they could read the whole text solo, and still have no idea of what's going on.

You can really help these children by taking the text slowly. Read a section yourself while they listen, and ask them to make pictures in their head of what they're hearing, rather like a film - this is useful strategy for making meaning. Stop reading and discuss what might happen next in the story. Ask them to read a section to themselves, and remind them to make pictures in their heads as they read. Review what happened together - were your predictions correct? Continue to tackle the text in this way, ensuring that their own reading is supported by hearing sections read aloud, and backed up by discussion to consolidate meaning.

You can also use this approach with a group of mixed ability – it will build listening skills and invite discussion by everyone.

Some children may struggle to read the text on any level. They may struggle to recognise letter shapes. They may have poor letter/sound correspondences and find it difficult to 'decode' words. They may have poor working memory and recognise fewer words by sight.

Don't be afraid to take it very slowly with these children - covering even one short chapter in a session might be enough. Read the text aloud yourself, or ask for volunteers among the most confident readers in the group. Keep the pace slow and clear and put in lots of expression. Stop occasionally and ask the group to read the next word. If a child is reading aloud and stumbles over a word, supply it yourself straight away. That way they can keep the flow of meaning - they'll lose it if they have to stop while they work the word out.

Remember that dyslexia is primarily a processing problem and working memory is an issue. At the start of every session, always recap what you have read and done previously - children are unlikely to remember for themselves.

How Chatterbooks can help to lift barriers to reading

- Chatterbooks is all about **young people's involvement**– it's *their* group, their choices and ideas, their guidelines about how the group works. This brings empowerment and confidence.
- It offers opportunities for young people to contribute to the design, lighting and layout of their library. They can bring ideas for stock and create displays – and thus **have a say in the library meeting their needs – and feel comfortable in the library space.**
- Chatterbooks involves and **endorses all reading choices and formats** – all kinds of books, on any subject, at any level, and for every taste - plus comics, magazines, and stories and information accessed digitally, and via audio, and video. Children can choose the formats which work for them – and at the same time feel able to try new reading experiences without being pressurised.
- Chatterbooks encourages children to talk about the books they've read, and say what they think about them – and so they steadily **develop confidence in expressing their opinions.**
- Chatterbooks is also about **listening, and being listened to** – learning to listen and respond assertively to each other, and further gaining confidence through knowing that people are respecting and taking account of their opinions.
- Chatterbooks sessions also include **the pleasure of being read aloud to** – this might be fellow members introducing a book, or the group leader reading a story or a taster chapter

- There is also, if they wish, the opportunity to read aloud themselves, to share a story or a review with the group. Chatterbooks provides a supportive environment for this and again helps to build confidence
- In Chatterbooks there is often the chance for **children of different ages and abilities to work together cooperatively, supporting and encouraging each other**. This works well with activities like simple drama, role play, and making videos – and also offers opportunities for children to buddy with and mentor each other.
- Children want to read what their friends are enjoying – Chatterbooks encourages **peer recommendations** through discussion in the group, and with other groups online, and by using the Chatterbooks Bookbite review slips, and the Chatterbooks scrapbook.
- Chatterbooks members’ reviews of books are also great for keeping library staff and publishers in touch with what children are enjoying reading – and not enjoying! One way children can do this is by reading and reviewing the books on the [Reading Groups website](#). (There is also **the opportunity for young people to contribute to the reviewing of Barrington Stoke titles** – see page 13 in this pack.)
- Most of all, Chatterbooks is about **having FUN reading and talking about books!** – and the more young people get to enjoy this, the more confident they will become about their reading.

Edinburgh Libraries: ‘Dylexia Chatterbooks’ group

Here’s a description from [Edinburgh Libraries of their Chatterbooks group](#) which is run especially for children with dyslexia.

Wendy Pearson, who runs the group, says:

It’s so rewarding for all of us to see children blossoming... Some of the group definitely improve their reading abilities and broaden their reading habits. Others gain in confidence and self-respect. What more can you ask for?

To find out more about running a Chatterbooks group specifically for children with dyslexia contact wendy.pearson@edinburgh.gov.uk

Tom Palmer

Author Tom Palmer supports Dyslexia Awareness, and is one of the many well-known authors who write for Barrington Stoke. [Have a look at his blog](#).

The Rights of the Reader

This is a book by Daniel Pennac which is all about reading for pleasure – and the power of reading for pleasure.

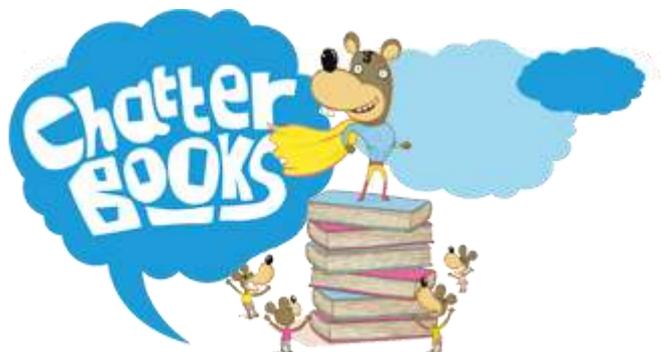
At the start of the book he says *'You can't make someone read. Just like you can't make them fall in love, or dream.'*

He writes about what helps us learn to read – and what gets in the way – and he emphasises our right to read anything, anywhere, at any time, so long as we are enjoying ourselves.

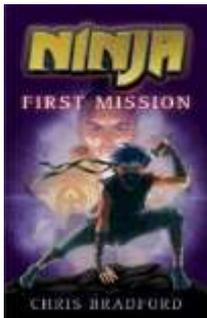
He lists ten 'Rights of the Reader' – any one of these can open doors for young people feeling challenged by reading:

- The right not to read
- The right to skip
- The right not to finish a book
- The right to read it again
- The right to read anything
- The right to mistake a book for real life
- The right to read anywhere
- The right to dip in
- The right to read out loud
- The right to be quiet

Daniel Pennac *The Rights of the Reader* Walker Books 978-1406300918



About the books (RA = Reading Age; IA = Interest Age)



Chris Bradford *Ninja First Mission* 978-1842999394

Taka is desperate to prove that he has what it takes to become a ninja. He has failed the Grandmaster's test twice already. But when the clan's scrolls are stolen by an enemy samurai he has a chance to prove himself. A gripping adventure from the author of the hugely popular *Young Samurai* books. RA8IA9+

About the author:

Chris Bradford is a professional musician and songwriter. He began Judo at age 7, and has since trained in a variety of martial arts, including samurai swordmanship, and has earned his black belt in Kyo Shin Tai-jutsu, the secret fighting art of the ninja. His *Young Samurai* books are hugely popular and have been shortlisted for a number of awards. He lives in a small village in West Sussex.

A Taste: *Outside, a full moon has risen over the castle. Its pale light shines through a small window and onto the cruel face of Lord Oda. Lord Oda is the sworn enemy of the ninja. My task is to stop him destroying our clan.*

Now is the time.

I push softly at the loose floorboard above me and climb out of my hiding place. Using my ninja stealth skills, I cross the room without a sound. In the darkness I'm almost invisible. My black clothes and my hood turn me into a shadow. Only my eyes show.



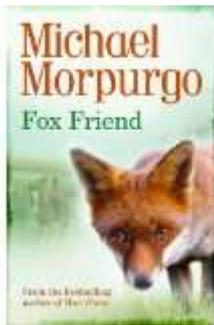
Annie Dalton *Cherry Green Story Queen* 978-1781122006

Mia, Juno, Kyle and Billy all long for a different life. They're stuck in a foster home and feel like they're in the wrong story. But when the mysterious Cherry turns up with her crazy patchwork bag and magic book, she opens up a whole new world to them. Will they all get a happy ending after all? A clever modern day version of the Arabian Nights stories. RA8IA9+

About the author:

Annie Dalton was inspired to write by a father who told fantastic stories, often casting Annie as the main character. She has been nominated for the Carnegie Medal twice and her titles for Barrington Stoke have sold over 35,000 copies. She lives in Norfolk.

A Taste: *Cherry was waiting now with her book on her knee. Her eyes had a faraway look, and the fairytale shimmer that Mia had noticed, suddenly seemed brighter. When she looked at Cherry now, Mia totally believed that her great, great, great auntie had been a storyteller princess. Cherry opened the book and for a puzzling moment Mia was looking at empty pages. Then a printed title appeared – The Boy who Talked to Birds. And then the blank pages filled with words. Mia felt tiny prickles of excitement as Cherry read, 'Once upon a time.'*



Michael Morpurgo *Fox Friend*

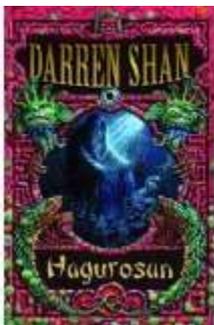
978-1781120866 RA8IA9+

From the multi award-winning and bestselling author, a brand new edition of the moving story of a girl who tries to nurse an injured fox cub back to health. Clare has lived her whole life on a farm, but she's never seen a fox - until she finds a tiny, injured cub who's lost his mum. Clare cares for him herself, but has to keep him hidden from her father, who thinks foxes are vermin. Can she keep the cub safe?

About the author:

Originally a primary school teacher, Michael Morpurgo struggled to find books to excite and inspire his class. His solution was simple - he began writing them himself. Since then he has become one of Britain's best known and most prolific children's writers, a former Children's Laureate who has won countless prestigious awards including the Carnegie Medal and the Whitbread prize. He lives in Iddesleigh, Devon, with his wife, Clare.

A Taste: *In her heart of hearts Clare knew Larry was strong enough now to be on his own. For some time now she'd been weaning him off milk. She'd been bringing him less milk, but more solid food instead. Every day now he'd eat meat. He loved meat. Clare gave him any meat she could find, mostly dry meat, but dead mice and a dead bird once. Larry was no longer a cub. He was growing into a fox. His ears no longer looked too big for him. His nose had grown more pointed. His coat had lost its grey. He was big and brown now. His tail was long and bushy. Larry was becoming a fox, a proper fox.*



Darren Shan *Hagurosan* **978-1781122068**

When Hagurosan is told to take an offering to the shrine, he reluctantly begins his trek up the mountain. But when he gets hungry and eats the cake meant for the spirits, things take a turn that no one could have expected. Now Hagurosan must face the consequences of his actions. A terrific adventure from a master of fantasy. RA8 IA9+

About the author:

Darren Shan Is Irish – he was born in London, moved to Limerick in Ireland when he was 6, and has lived there ever since. He always wanted to be a writer, bought his first typewriter when he was 14, and set up as a full-time writer at the age of 23. He writes for both adults and children – Cirque du Freak was his first children's book, published in 2000 to rave reviews, and a movie version out in 2009.

He still lives in Limerick, and has a flat in London for high-speed living when he feels the need!

A Taste: *Hagurosan bowed low to the statue, turned and walked towards the exit. But again, he stopped short. There was another coin! It lay in almost the same place, and looked very much like the first coin. Hagurosan felt faint. To find two silver coins in the same day was like something from a dream.*

As Hagurosan picked up the coin, doubt entered his mind. Was this a gift from the spirits? Was it a reward for giving the other coin to them? Or was it just good luck? If it was luck, then he should give this coin to the spirits as well. He still felt guilty about the cake. If he took this coin, the guilt would grow inside him and eat him away, just as he had eaten the cake.



Andy Stanton *Sterling and the Canary*

978-1842999059 RA8IA9+

Sterling Thaxton is in love. In love with Lizzie Harris - the beautiful new girl. Her hair is the colour of magic. Her nose is as sweet as music. Her arms are as slender as rainbows. Problem is, she's not interested. Luckily a small yellow canary turns up with some excellent advice. Hilarious comedy from the top selling author of the Mr Gum books.

About the author:

Andy Stanton studied English at Oxford but they kicked him out. He has since worked as a stand-up comedian, a film script reader, a cartoonist, an NHS lackey. His Mr Gum Books for Egmont have won widespread acclaim and numerous awards including the Blue Peter Award and the Red House Award. He lives in North London.

A Taste: *'...I bet all the girls are in love with you, aren't they?' said Lizzie.*

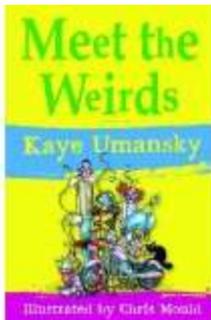
'Oh, yes', said Sterling. 'They are.'

'Well, not me,' said Lizzie. 'I don't care how good-looking you are or how good at sports you are or how many girls are in love with you. The only thing I care about is maths.'

'But I'm rubbish at maths,' said Sterling. 'Every time I look at my sums I get so confused I want to scream.'

'Well! Don't bother talking to me then,' said Lizzie. With a flick of her long brown hair she turned and walked away.

And Sterling was left standing there, broken-hearted in the rain. I forgot to mention it was raining, but it was. It always rains when you get your heart broken. That's just the law.



Kaye Umansky *Meet the Weirds* **978-1781120743**

The Weird family move in next door and Pinchton Primm is fascinated by their very unconventional way of life! Meet the Weird family - Mrs Weird is a stunt woman, Mr Weird is a mad scientist who has an unfortunate habit of blowing up houses. There are the children who run wild with their black cat, Ginger... When they move next door to the Primms, who like nothing more than to be neat and tidy, things look like they might get a little messy! First in a series of riotous comedies. RA8IA9+

About the author:

Kaye Umansky was born in Devon. She trained as a teacher in London and taught music, drama and creative writing for many years before becoming a full-time writer. She's won many awards including the Nottinghamshire Book Award, the Times Educational Supplement Junior Music Book Award, and the Stockton Book of the Year. Kaye currently lives in North London.

A Taste: *Pinchton was relieved to see that the hole in the hedge was quite small. If he stuck a couple of gnomes in front, maybe his mother wouldn't notice it.*

'Are you coming or what?' hissed Ott.

Pinchton took off his blazer and placed it neatly on the grass. He bent down and wriggled through the hole. The Weird girl was waiting for him. Fruit hat. Orange curtain. Yellow wellies. Hmmm.

More books by these authors – plus more great titles from Barrington Stoke

Chris Bradford	<i>Ninja 2: Death Touch</i> RA8IA8+	Barrington Stoke	978-1781122105
Chris Bradford	<i>Gamer</i> RA8 IATeen	Barrington Stoke	978-1781121382
Chris Bradford	<i>Young Samurai: The Ring of Fire</i>	Puffin	978-0141339719
Annie Dalton	<i>The Cosmic Collection</i> (<i>Angels Unlimited series</i>)	HarperCollins	978-0007166459
Annie Dalton	<i>Zack Black and the Magic Dads</i> RA8IA8+	Barrington Stoke	978-1842993842
Michael Morpurgo	<i>Born to Run</i>	HarperCollins	978-0007230594
Michael Morpurgo	<i>War Horse</i>	Egmont	978-1405226660
Michael Morpurgo	<i>Why the Whales Came</i>	Egmont	978-1405229258
Darren Shan	<i>Cirque du Freak</i>	HarperCollins	978-0006754169
Darren Shan	<i>Cirque du Freak: Sons of Destiny</i> (<i>The Manga</i>)	Yen Press	978-0316182836
Andy Stanton	<i>Mr Gum and the Secret Hideout</i>	Jelly Pie	978-1405253277
Andy Stanton	<i>The Story of Matthew Buzzington</i> RA8IA12+	Barrington Stoke	978-1781120354
Kaye Umansky	<i>Pongwiffy: a Witch of Dirty Habits</i>	Bloomsbury	978-0747596929
Kaye Umansky	<i>The Queen's Tale</i> RA8IA12+	Barrington Stoke	978-1781122020
Kaye Umansky	<i>The Wickedest Witch in the World</i> RA8IA12+	Barrington Stoke	978-1781122013
Malorie Blackman	<i>Hostage</i> RA7IA8+	Barrington Stoke	978-1781122495

Kevin Crossley-Holland	<i>Thor and the Master of Magic</i> RA8/A12+	Barrington Stoke	978-1781122211
Cornelia Funke	<i>Young Werewolf</i>	Barrington Stoke	978-1781122686
Tom Palmer	<i>Secret F.C.</i> RA8/A8+	Barrington Stoke	978-1781122419

For younger children look out for Barrington Stoke’s Little Gems series – books from big name authors which aim to set emergent readers on the path to reading independence

Ideas for your Chatterbooks sessions

Here are some discussion, activity and writing ideas for your Chatterbooks group, to encourage and involve everyone in reading for pleasure.

You can also get downloadable resources for *Fox Friend*, *Ninja*, and *Sterling and the Canary*, when you visit www.barringtonstoke.co.uk

General activities

The Point

In small groups, onto flip chart paper, or white board, ask children to make a list of **everything** they have read that day... .. ALL reading... ANY reading... - eg books, newspapers, texts, roadsigns, emails – anything!

Next to each example they record, ask them to write down or draw what they learnt, what they were able to do, how they felt BECAUSE OF READING IT.

Everyone will have an example to offer

ALL reading is acknowledged and celebrated

This provides peer-to-peer advocacy of the positive point of reading – and makes the point that even when we think we don’t read, or use reading, in fact we do – and it is valid and useful in our lives.

Words, lovely words!

- What are your favourite words? Ones which have a special sound? Ones which make you think of something you really like? Get a special notebook and use it to collect your favourite words. Then have a go at using them! – talking to people, or writing a poem, or in a short story.

exquisite!

TRUNDLE

starlight

cat

discombobulate!

Judging a book by its cover – and how about what's inside?

- Get together a collection of books that you think your group might like to read. Look at each one and talk about how the cover grabs you. Read out the blurb – does this fit with the cover? Does this make you want to read the book? And talk more generally about what sort of cover attracts you to a book – do you like black and shiny? Pink? Pictures of the characters? What puts you off? Talk as well about taking risks - a 'boring' book might turn out to be great.
- Talk as well about the inside of a book – what attracts, and what puts people off. Large or small print? Illustrations? Lots of space around the text? Look at some Barrington Stoke books and compare them with other books – notice the tinted paper and clear type face.

Talking with authors and publishers

- Talk direct with authors and publishers – when you like a book, or have a question about one, email them and let them know. Look out for author web chats – have a look at Puffin Books [Virtually Live](#), which is a series of free interactive webcasts from Puffin's bestselling authors. You can also find a list of previous webcasts which you can watch on-demand, as well as details of forthcoming webcasts.
- And watch and listen to authors talking about their writing on the [Summer Reading Challenge website](#) – and on the [Barrington Stoke site](#). You'll also often find authors' videos on their own websites.

Reading book reviews – and being book reviewers

- Get books from publishers to read, discuss, and review together – then send them your thoughts, ideas and opinions
- Barrington Stoke would love to involve children who find reading challenging, as reviewers for new Barrington Stoke titles – their **‘Young Editors’** manuscript review scheme gives young people access, pre-publication, to texts in dyslexia-friendly layout – see the [Barrington Stoke website](#).
- There are several online book review websites - here’s a really good one called Booka Uhu’s Book Nook where all reviews can also be accessed as [audio files](#). Here’s what she says about her site *‘Most of the books I review I’ve sourced myself. If you’d like me to review a particular book though, you can find me on Twitter or leave a comment on a post to get in contact. ... Each book is put into an age category. If you look along the right hand side, you’ll find a list of the tags I’ve given to various book reviews too. I’m hoping that eventually no matter what topic you’re covering at school or have a hankering for, you’ll be able to find a tag for it on here’*
Also see [The Guardian](#), [Love Reading 4 Kids](#) and [Reading Zone](#).
- As well as, or instead of writing your reviews, you could use audio or video – flip cameras and phones are really easy to use; you could also do this for recording other material such as stories. Then send in your stories and reviews to be uploaded on the Chatterbooks and Summer Reading Challenge web pages!

Writing your own stories

- It’s great to get together with other people in your Chatterbooks group to co-write a story: you can bounce ideas off each other and come up with ideas together. Someone can get the ideas down and then you can shape up the story together – maybe someone does a storyboard, with a separate picture for each main event in the story.
- Another good way of shaping up a story is to put your story ideas on post-it notes, and then move them round to make a story – different stories will show up, and different outcomes, and you can decide in your group which is the best

one to go for. Story-creating like this is often much more liberating than making a list or a mind-map of what happens

- Once you're writing the story together it's much easier to do this on a computer – then you can still change things round, use spell-check, and carry on sharing with each other what you've written and decide together how to fit it together

As well as books

- As you see in the 'Point' activity above – anything and everything you read has got a point, and very often is all about pleasure and enjoyment. And that anything and everything can be in any format – whatever works best for you, in whatever situation. If you find reading difficult, you're likely to welcome books like Barrington Stoke's, written by top-notch writers, with absorbing stories and clear language and type-face and a manageable visual span.
- And you can now get stories on e-readers, though you need to be careful that the font and brightness of the page are helpful to an individual child's needs, and not distracting or confusing. The built-in dictionary means that a child can look up the meaning of words much more easily and their peers are unaware of their 'lack of knowledge'. And as the reading matter on the e-readers is not obvious to others, the reader can read at their own pace, in a style that is best suited to their needs and so any pressure from peers can be lifted. NB

Celebration and special events

- Enjoy and celebrate your reading achievements. You can get [special certificates](#) to record Chatterbooks participation, and it's great to have parties to celebrate birthdays, end of term, and reading events like Roald Dahl Day.
- Invite authors, illustrators, storytellers and other artists to your group – get everyone involved and playing a part in the invitation, planning and running of special events.

Activity and discussion ideas inspired by some Barrington Stoke titles

- for your group to enjoy in collaboration

Cherry Green, Story Queen – Annie Dalton

'Once upon a time'

Cherry says that her many-times-great aunt told stories to save herself from being killed by a crazy king: each night she told him a story, stopping at the best part at dawn so that he was keen to hear how it ended and spared her life each day – till he fell in love with her and they lived happily ever after.....

These stories are actually the *Arabian Tales of a Thousand and One Nights*, and Cherry's great aunt was the princess Scheherezade. The stories she told included *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*, *Aladdin*, and *Sinbad the Sailor*.

Have a special storytelling time within your Chatterbooks session and read one of these stories to the group.

Talk about the stories which each of you like best, and love to hear again and again.

A magic book

Cherry reads her stories from a magic book which has an old leather cover and seems to have no words written within it. When she opens the book a tiny crack, a warm breeze springs up – with the smell of sunshine, roses and foreign spices.

Imagine you have a magic book:

What would your book look like on the outside, what kind of cover? How big?

What stories would you have inside it?

And what smells, sounds and feelings would swirl out of it when you open it?

Are stories useful?

Talk in your group about the power of stories – any books you have read which have really affected you and stayed in your mind.

Has anyone specially identified with one of the characters and felt that they were part of the story? Or got that feeling of recognition when you meet a character in a book who thinks or does the same things as you?

Make a list of all the books that you talk about so that you can share across the group. You might use this template to write about them:

The book which really got to me.....

Title:

Author:

The character I most identify with:

What is he/she like?

Why do I identify with them?

What happens to them in the story

How I feel at the end of the story

Hagurosan – Darren Shan

- At the start of each chapter in this book there is a short verse with a saying to reflect on. Talk about how these sayings fit into the story.
Here is the saying for the first chapter: ***No path is ordinary, All are magical, Winding their ways to wonders.*** In small groups, make up a story about a magic path and where it leads to.
- Hagurosan wants to help children in need. Discuss in your group ways in which we might help.
Have a look at the [UN Convention of the Rights of the Child](#) - on a flip chart write up the **five rights for children** and talk about what these rights mean.
- The gods force Hagurosan to make a choice: what does he decide to do? What is the result of this choice? Would you have done the same thing? Talk about this in your group – and on a flip chart make lists of the reasons for and against each choice

Meet the Weirds – Kaye Umansky

Favourite characters in the book

Who is your favourite out of these five characters? - Pinchton, Ott, Gran, Oliver, Mrs Weird. Talk about all these characters in your group and vote for your favourite character. Ask everyone to say who is their favourite and give a reason why they chose that character.

Special things about your family

Each of the above characters has at least one particular characteristic – eg. Oliver takes his homework really really seriously!

Describe your family – what special thing is there about each person? You can use the table below for this:

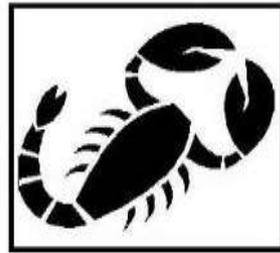
Your family and/or friends – the special things about them!

Name.....	Their special thing.....	One word to describe this person

Star Signs

Gran says that Pinchton is typical of his star sign Taurus: *'solid, sensible, can be stubborn'*.

Make a chart for your group - find out everybody's star sign, and the characteristics for that sign. Do you all match your star signs?



Appearances can be deceptive

Talk about what you think this story about the Weird Family is saying to us about how people look, and how they really are when you get to know them?

Think about the saying 'There's more to people than meets the eye.'