**Panel Biographies**

**Lower-KS2**

**Louise Johns-Shepherd**

Before joining CLPE in 2013, Louise was the headteacher of two schools and worked in national education policy. She is the governor of a primary school, a trustee of a theatre and a director of Oscar's Book Prize as well as being on the Strategic Advisory Board of World Book Day and Love Reading. She judges for a range of book awards including the British Book Awards, Cheltenham Festival RTRP, Amnesty Honour Medal and the Brandford Boase.

**Ruth Ahmedzai Kemp**

Ruth Ahmedzai Kemp is a literary translator working from Arabic, German and Russian into English, with a particular interest in inclusive publishing for children and young adults. She writes about global literature for young people at Words Without Borders, World Literature Today, and World Kid Lit, and is a passionate advocate of exploring translated literature in schools and libraries especially during World Kid Lit Month in September.

**Rachel Boden**

Rachel Boden is Lead Children’s Books Promotion and Content Editor at BookTrust, responsible for highlighting the very best contemporary children’s books that will promote reading for pleasure. Prior to working at BookTrust, Rachel was a children’s books editor for 23 years.

**Jo Lee**

I am Assistant Head, class teacher and Reading for Pleasure Lead a school in Wiltshire. I am passionate about bring quality texts into my classroom and engaging children with wonderful stories that inspire and enthuse.

**Jon Ringer**

I teach at Sheepscombe Primary school near Stroud and have been involved in the RT=RP project since its beginnings. It is an involvement which has resulted in the creation of a vibrant, sustained reading culture in my setting: Sheepscombe children love reading. I have been fortunate to help launch the project in London and Birmingham as well as taking part in consultation sessions and the academic book online presentations. I was a panel member for UKS2 two years ago and am extremely excited to have been involved in the first LKS2 panel, an extension of the project which I hope and believe will further embed reading for pleasure and all the benefits that come from it in yet more classrooms and book groups across the country.

**Caroline Horn**

Caroline Horn has been writing about books and children's reading for over 20 years in her role as Children's News Editor for The Bookseller magazine, and now as the editor of ReadingZone.com. She launched the website with Arts Council funding to support all young readers discover the best new books and authors, and to help teachers and families to support reading for pleasure in schools and homes.

**Jake Hope**

Jake Hope was the Reading and Learning Development Manager for Lancashire Libraries, one of the largest library authorities in the UK. He has judged nearly every major children's book award in the UK, and has chaired numerous promotional selection panels. Alongside delivering training and public speaking on books and reading, Jake is an active reviewer, speaker and passionate advocate for libraries, books, and reading. Jake is past-chair of the Youth Libraries Group, and is the awards executive for the UK's oldest children's book awards the Yoto Carnegies.

**Upper-KS2**

**Louise Johns-Shepherd**

Before joining CLPE in 2013, Louise was the headteacher of two schools and worked in national education policy. She is the governor of a primary school, a trustee of a theatre and a director of Oscar's Book Prize as well as being on the Strategic Advisory Board of World Book Day and Love Reading. She judges for a range of book awards including the British Book Awards, Cheltenham Festival RTRP, Amnesty Honour Medal and the Brandford Boase.

**Claire Storey**

Claire Storey is a translator specialising in books for young readers. She is co-editor of the blog at World Kid Lit, an online platform that discusses books from around the world, particularly in English translation.

**Amy McKay**

Amy is a knowledgeable, innovative, and enthusiastic school librarian, living and working in Cumbria. Amy is a past UK School Librarian of the Year. With over 18 years’ experience in school libraries and over a decade as the Yoto Carnegies National Coordinator she has a vast knowledge of children’s literature. She is a familiar face at festivals and has judged numerous book awards, including the Blue Peter Book Awards and the Nibbies.

**Rachel Clarke**

Rachel Clarke is an independent Primary English consultant with almost 30 years’ experience in Primary Education, she has held the positions of: SENCO, English Subject Leader, Deputy Headteacher and local authority Literacy Adviser. She enjoys supporting schools to use high quality children's books to teach reading and writing. When she's not working with schools, you'll find her reading in her garden or at a bookshop buying more books to add to her collection.

**Andrea Reece**

Andrea Reece has spent almost her entire working life in children’s books, first as publisher, latterly as consultant, project manager and reviewer. She has reviewed for Lovereading4Kids since 2015, is editor of children’s books review journal Books for Keeps and administrator of the Klaus Flugge Prize and Branford Boase Award. She has judged children’s prizes including the Costa Children’s Book Award and Alligator’s Mouth Award.

**Ameena Gamiet**

Ameena Gamiet is the Head of English and MFL at a middle school in Berkshire and has worked as a primary school teacher and English Subject Lead for several years.

She is currently a part time PhD candidate; her research focuses on pedagogies to aid teachers in using texts featuring Muslim protagonists for the benefit of all pupils in a diverse classroom. Ameena is passionate about incorporating texts with characters from marginalised backgrounds into the English curriculum, encouraging inclusivity and offering a view of the world through texts that depict the ‘multicultural’ demographic of many schools in the UK.

Ameena lives with her two teenage daughters in South Bucks, where there never seems to be enough space for their combined and ever-growing book collection!

**Francesca Sciarrillo**

Hello, I’m Francesca: Children’s Books and Reading Promotion Officer for the Books Council of Wales. My role enables me to share my passion for literature in the hope of inspiring children and young people across Wales to discover and develop a lifelong love of reading and books. Without a doubt, I’m happiest when I have a book in my hand – I would be lost without my bookshelves and library card! This is one of the main reasons why I feel so strongly about encouraging children and people of all ages to visit their local bookshop or library to discover the magical worlds that exist between the covers.

**Matthew Human**

Having come into teaching later in life, I have now been teaching Upper-KS2 for almost twenty years both in the UK and USA and been part of RT=RP for the last six. Currently I teach in a state school in Cheltenham where the importance of reading has been shared not only with the students but also with the teachers and parents. Along with my love of travelling, reading has been an important way in which I share ideas with pupils and being on this year’s panel gave me the opportunity to experience texts I would have missed out on and meet inspirational, like-minded professionals who assisted with the choosing of the final five books.

**KS3**

**Aaishah Rauf**

I have been a teacher of English at ks3-5 for five years. I am the founder of a diversity working party at my school, exploring research, methods and resources to widen the representation within our subject and in students’ reading. I’ve worked with several organisations with this goal in mind, including NATE, Penguin And TES. I have also recently been a teacher judge for the UKLA book awards, and won the UKLA Diversity and Inclusion Award in 2022. I love to read widely and am incredibly excited and honoured to be part of the festival panel.

**Kate Oliver**

Kate Oliver taught for 14 years in Inner London in various roles. She now works as an education consultant for The English and Media Centre, specialising in KS3 and KS4. She has a particular interest in the wider implications of the subject such as getting students reading for pleasure and runs EMC’s RTRP group.

**Phil Smith**

I have been an English teacher for fourteen years, working in comprehensive, grammar, private and international settings during that time. I am currently Associate Senior Leader for English and Drama at Denmark Road High School. The RTRP programme has been far and away the best CPD I have experienced, focussed as it is on reading for pleasure and designed to grow teachers' knowledge and understanding of YA fiction. It has been an absolute joy to read the books for the panel this year.

**Stella Hine**

Stella Hine is currently Site Librarian at Brinsbury College, part of the Chichester College Group (FE) and a recent judge on the Yoto Carnegies and the Jericho Prize. Having started working life as a librarian with a focus on education, Stella was a teacher (EY to KS3) for over twenty years before taking up her current position. She is passionate about reading, books, young people and the power of reading to transform lives.

**Daniel Hahn**

Daniel Hahn is a writer, editor and translator with about a hundred books to his name. His books include *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature*, and translations of many books for children and teenagers.

**Dawn Woods**

Dawn Woods has worked in school libraries all her career, in School Library Services and now at the School Library Association. As well as advocating for information literacy for children of all ages, reading for pleasure has always been part of a book-filled life as trying to remain abreast of current titles is a still a work in progress (and always will be).

**Dr Karen Sands O’Connor**

Karen Sands-O'Connor is the British Academy Global Professor of Children's Literature at Newcastle University, where she researches Black British children's literature. She has worked with CLPE, CILIP, and the British Library on issues of diversity, and she recently helped organise the UK's first exhibition about children's literature and Black Britain, 'Listen to This Story!'.

**Francesca Sciarrillo**

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