



Editorial 246

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Welcome to 2021

Editorial 246

Hello and welcome to the first issue of **Books for Keeps** in 2021. It's become something of a custom for us to open the January issue with a feature in which we ask leading figures to suggest what will be the talking points for the year ahead. We haven't done that this time. After the year we've just had, making predictions of any kind seems a mug's game. Instead, we've made a list of positives, things we can be thankful for and celebrate both now and in the months ahead.

So here are the BfK **Reasons to Be Cheerful** 2021:

Children reading more and enjoyed reading more during lockdown

According to a survey by the National Literacy Trust, children's enjoyment of reading increased during lockdown (from 47.8% pre lockdown to 55.9% post-lockdown), having reached a 15-year low before lockdown.

More than a quarter (27.6%) of children and young people said they were enjoying reading more during lockdown and a third (34.5%) of children and young people said they were reading more during lockdown.

Value of reading recognised

It was recognised that reading provided a refuge in this difficult time, supporting children's mental wellbeing

3 in 5 (59.3%) children and young people told the NLT during lockdown that reading made them feel better with 3 in 10 (31.6%) saying that reading helps them when they feel sad because they cannot see their family and friends.

CLPE's Reflecting Realities report

Data collected over the last three years in [CLPE's Reflecting Reality](#) [2] report shows a steady year on year increase in the number for children's books featuring ethnic minority characters. 10% of the children's books published in 2019 featured ethnic minority characters, compared to 7% in 2018 and 4% in 2017. It is important to remember that these figures still illustrate the significant extent of under-representation of ethnic minority characters in children's literature - in the whole of the last three years only 7% of the entire industry output featured ethnic minority characters while 33.5% of children in our schools are from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic background ? but at least it's an upward trend and 2021 is promising more good news of this kind.

The [Booktrust Interim Report](#) [3] published on the same day as the **CLPE** report notes insights into the makeup of children's literature creators and comments on trends of contributions from UK authors of colour to the publishing

landscape. We have a wealth of tremendous UK talent from icons like Malorie Blackman, Sita Brahmachari, Jamila Gavin, Catherine Johnson, Patrice Lawrence, Alex Wheatle, Verna Wilkins, Ken Wilson Max and Benjamin Zephaniah to the stars of recent times Dapo Adeola, Sufiya Ahmed, Joseph Coelho, Sharna Jackson, Savita Kalhan, Irfan Masters, Zanib Main, Poonam Mistry, Onjali Q Rauf, SF Said, Holly Sterling, Chitra Soundar and many more.

Independent bookshops thriving

More than three-quarters of independent booksellers responding to **The Bookseller's** 2020 Christmas trading survey saw a rise in business year-on-year for the festive period. Meanwhile, a separate survey conducted by the **Booksellers Association** found 57.7% of booksellers it polled reported that trading was up compared with Christmas 2019?that survey also found participating bookshops earned an average fee of £1,647 through [Bookshop.org](https://uk.bookshop.org/) [4] over Christmas 2020.

Books for Keeps ? still here!

Our 40th anniversary year didn't go quite the way we'd planned, but we are still here and almost ready to launch our new website. We managed to publish our regular six issues plus a Poetry special and are excited for the year ahead. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to our fundraising to date ? we are still looking [for another £4,000](#) [5] and if you can't make a donation, please help spread the word.

Happy new year to all our readers and thank you for your support.

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[2] <https://clpe.org.uk/publications-and-bookpacks/reflecting-realities>

[3] <https://www.booktrust.org.uk/what-we-do/programmes-and-campaigns/booktrust-represents/representation-of-people-of-colour-among-childrens-book-authors-and-illustrators/>

[4] <https://uk.bookshop.org/>

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