

Book reviews

Moran, Katy Bloodline Walker 9781406309386 £6.99

Set in warring and bleak Britain, Bloodline follows the quest of Essa, a young teenager striving to protect his village from marauding Mercian tribes. Essa embarks on a journey which is as much a personal one as it is a physical challenge, as he tries to unravel the secrecy surrounding his true family and past life.

In her first novel, Katy Moran vividly brings to life the times and places she describes and the reader can almost see and hear the sights and sounds along the way. The characterisation is excellent and you really care about what Essa and his companions are going through.

Violent and cruel at times, but that's the reality of life in the Dark ages. This is a great historical novel with a touch of fantasy thrown in for good measure. **KS3/4**

Nicholls, Sally Ways to live forever Walker 9781407105154 £4.99

First of all, don't be put off by the subject matter of this book! Sam records in his own matter of fact way, the last few months of his young life. There are the questions he needs to ask, but nobody wants to answer, but he also wants to find out what it's like to break a world record, see a ghost, watch as many horror films as possible and kiss a girl.

When he is unable to go to school, Sam spends his time compiling a book - this is no sentimental book of memories, but rather a quirky collection of facts, diagrams, experiences and down to earth philosophies of life.

For me the best thing about this book was the clues that the author drops along the way which give the reader insight into the effect that terminal illness has on the family and friends as well as Sam, without devoting pages of description to it.

I can't promise you that you won't be reading this without tears in your eyes at times, but what's wrong with that? You'll be glad you've read this excellent debut novel. **KS3**

Recommended websites

<http://alangibbons.net/?p=91>

this is Alan Gibbons' blog for proper funding for libraries both public and in schools.

Sign up if you agree.

<http://www.childrensbooksequels.co.uk/>

have you ever wondered "What comes next?" when you're reading a really good book?

Children's Book Sequels will help you discover the right order of any series from Harry Potter to A Series of Unfortunate Events, from Alex Rider to Vampirates.

www.the39clues.co.uk

based on the series of books of the same name this boy-friendly site encourages you to solve the clues.

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SLS
Devon's School Library Service

Newsletter



Who wants to be a millionaire



At Isca College we use the Accelerated Reader software from Renaissance Learning (Renlearn). It is a web-based reading scheme to encourage students of all levels to improve their reading. The scheme has a reading list of over 12,000 titles, each with a particular level, and a quiz to be completed online. Renlearn quizzes cover non-fiction, as well as fiction, offering a good range for the more reluctant boy readers. Book titles can also be suggested to add to the reading list.

Students are given a level on the results of a comprehension test and choose a book within that level. Books are labelled with coloured dots to make them easily identifiable, and shelved as usual in the library. As the student's reading improves, they progress through the levels.

Students have their own log in and password which enables them to take a quiz on any computer. They are keen to reach their targets and compete to read more than their friends. They are rewarded in school with house points and commendations.

We also have a 'Millionaires Club' for pupils who have read over a million words. Last year we organised a trip to see Richard III in Rougemont Gardens for our Millionaires.

The Renlearn reading scheme has had a very positive effect on the library, with a dramatic increase in borrowing of all library books. It has made the library a less intimidating place, especially for those students who considered themselves non-readers.

Zoe Woodman, Librarian, Isca College



Spring 2009



Devon
County Council

SLS going live!

Carolyn Kennett,

the project manager, is enthusiastically embracing the challenges presented by computerisation. We hope to achieve this with minimum disruption to schools particularly during the cataloguing stage. Once the service is established each school will be able to view its own use of SLS resources and search our catalogue online.



Please bear with us during the computerisation process. We will do our very best but there may be delays, early topic collections or adjustments to exchange schedules.

We hope you will be understanding in the short term in order to gain longer term benefits.



How will it affect you?

Topics

The topic box and its contents will be issued to individual teachers. A printed list of the contents will go out with every topic box making it much easier for you to find the exact books to return. If you are not sure which topic collections you have, or you lose the list, contact your local SLS centre and we can tell you what you have and when it is due back. You will still be able to renew topic boxes if you need them for longer.

With greater accuracy in recording loans we will improve the percentage of returns which means there will be more stock available.



Exchanges

Regardless of which computerised library system you have you will be able to save time cataloguing Devon SLS books by downloading the electronic records each time you do an exchange.



A great way to recycle computer equipment



IT Schools Africa is a registered charity working to transform IT education in Africa. We collect old computers, refurbish them and distribute them free to schools in Africa. By donating your surplus computers to us you will be helping improve the education of hundreds of thousands of African children.

To donate equipment please call Catherine Richardson or Tim Barnes on 01242 228800 or email info@itschoolsafrica.org

Free 'e'

Remember that E-resources are available free in Devon Public Libraries or online for registered library members. These include: British standards, useful for DT; Newsbank UK for newspaper archives; Encyclopaedia Britannica; the collection of Oxford Reference Online and Grove Art and Grove Music Online, amongst others. Torbay schools can access a similarly impressive range of free reference materials, so check out your public library website for further information.

Bookmarks

We've made a start and chosen some enticing new titles for the genre bookmarks. We're looking for snappy teen friendly titles – can your students help? The categories are: crime; fantasy; ghost and horror; girl stuff; history; it's for real; malebox; science fiction and spies and thrillers.

You can do it as a competition in school or use it as a book club idea.