



# NewsWeb Crawler

December 2023 Issue



## HARRY POTTER IN THE CLASSROOM

By Lulette Ng (SPCS), Matthis Cheung (DBS), Rowan Leong (Westwind Elementary School)

Have you heard of the name “Harry Potter”? Even if you have not read any of the books or seen any of the movies, you are more than likely to have at least heard of the name before.

But do you think the book has a place in reading lessons as a guided reading core-text? To answer this, let’s start by finding out more about the books first.

### **The birth of the boy wizard**

The household name, “Harry Potter” started off as a series of books written by J.K. Rowling. The idea for the first book in the series, “Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone”, just popped up in her head when her train from Manchester to London was delayed in 1990.

When the book was finally completed, Rowling sent it to 12 different publishers. The manuscript was sadly rejected by 12 of the said publishers. Her fate made a turn for the better when the then eight-year-old Alice Newton to oka shine to the book. Alice Newton was the daughter of the Chief Executive of Bloomsbury Publishing. With the seal of approval of this eight-year-old, the multi-million dollars franchise of Harry Potter was born in 1997.

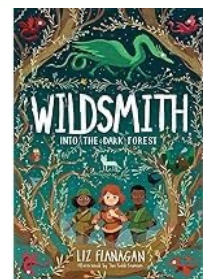
### **What should we learn in our reading lessons?**

People say that reading is good and we should all read. But why should we read in class? What purpose do our reading lessons serve?

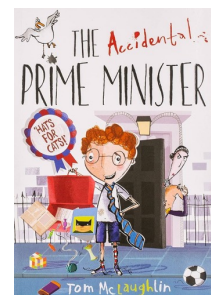
If you ask a child, they will probably tell you that reading classes are there to encourage reading, help you learn some new words, to learn a moral, to learn to concentrate... The list goes on rather endlessly.

But what if you ask a teacher? We asked MissyMissy from Spiderweb Learning the same question: What should we learn in our reading lessons?

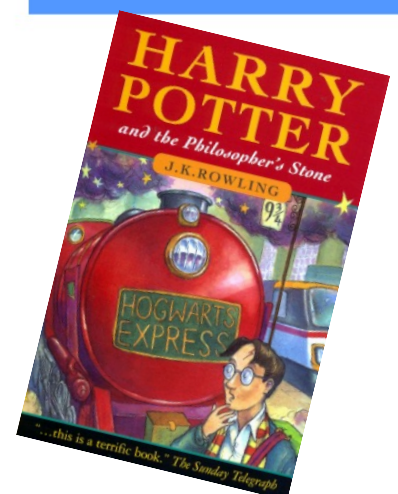
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Writing with the *Wildsmith*  
Author, Liz Flanagan (p.3)



Laughing with  
Tom McLaughlin (p.4)





# HARRY POTTER IN THE CLASSROOM

*"Many people see reading lessons as a time to teach students a language, but it is so much more than that. Reading lessons are there to help students develop a more structured perspective on whatever they may come into contact with in life, and that includes language and other things."*

*"With that goal in mind, I usually pick books written in rich text that offer wider-curriculum opportunities. I also try to pick a mixture of classic and contemporary ones to keep my students' reading repertoire balanced."*

## **Letting the wizard work his magic in reading lessons?**

Then, will Harry Potter make a great core-text?

*"Well, probably a No from me. Mainly because it is just too well-known. I want my students to read widely, I do not want to just reinforce their choices by picking something they already know. Plus there are prediction questions in class. If they have read the book already, those will become retrieval questions. So, it's not going to work."*

The above is MissyMissy's opinion, but what about the children. Don't they have a say in this?

Yes, of course they do. So, let's see what children think about this.

## **Children have a say too!**

To research on students' opinions on Harry Potter and reading class materials, an online survey was carried out among students of Spiderweb Learning. A total of 27 students responded to the survey, with age ranging from 6 years old to over 11 years old.

All respondents have heard of the movies, but 7.7% of the respondents have never heard of the Harry Potter books. But only 51.9% of the respondents have actually read at least one of the Harry Potter books. So, maybe the books are not as popular as one may have imagined?

## **Prior knowledge of the book**

Interestingly, 48.1 % of respondents already know the story but still want to read it in class. Only 11.1% of respondents think that prior knowledge of the books will put them off having the series in their reading lessons. With another 25.9% of respondents saying that they have not read the books before and would like to have it in their reading lessons, a staggering 74% of respondents are in favour of reading it in class. So,

maybe students do not mind not having to predict what will happen next in the story?



## **Is it still relevant to us?**

Harry Potter has been here for 25 years now. That makes us wonder if it is still relevant. Think about how our society has changed. Now we have mobile phones, electric cars and so much more now. In "Harry Potter in the Chamber of Secrets", when Harry was locked in by a boulder, modern day readers may wonder why didn't he just call the teachers on his phone to save himself and Ron.

But not all things have a time stamp on it; things like friendship and loyalty transcend the passage of time. And friendship and loyalty are featured prominently in the series, adding a timeless element to the books.

While 59.3% of respondents are surprised by how long the books have been around, 62.9% of them still want to read it.

The passage of time does not seem to lessen its magical appeal to students.

## **So what's the verdict?**

When people think of what you can learn while reading books, they think about improving their language skill, understanding the world they live in, broadening their knowledge on different topics, or just for fun. Harry Potter may not bring all of that to the table, it still can broaden our knowledge on different topics, help us improve our language skills and entertain us,

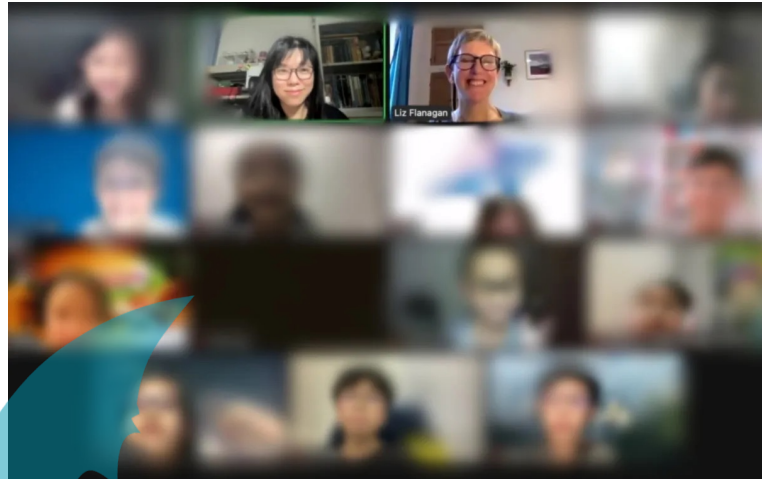
# WRITING WITH THE “WILDSMITH” AUTHOR, LIZ FLANAGAN

By Sia Kwok, KCCIS



Every now and then, students of Spiderweb Learning get to meet up with different authors online. This semester, both L2 and L4-5 students got the chance to attend a writing workshop led by Liz Flanagan, the author of the popular *Wildsmith* series, *Legends of the Sky* series and the Carnegie Medal nominated *Eden Summer*.

Liz Flanagan, the award winning author of the book series, *Wildsmith* and *Legends of the Sky*, led two writing workshops for students at Spiderweb Learning in October and November. During the workshops, Level 2 students learned how to form a storyline and Levels 4 and 5 students learned how to use figurative writing techniques to enrich their writing.



During the workshop, Liz Flanagan described writing as something similar to painting pictures with words. “Painting is infinite, and so is writing,” she said. Colours are an important tool in painting; they are an equally effective tool in writing. Liz uses a lot of colour-themed similes to bring her description of setting and characters to life. “Similes can create various atmospheres and inspire a whole range of feelings,” Liz said.

Both the *Wildsmith* and *Legends of the Sky* series are fantasy. Liz’s interest in writing fantasy has a rather deep reason. “Fantasy features far-fetched worlds that let you explore the real world in disguise. It is easier and safer to bring up important real life issues in the story.”

Liz Flanagan thinks that inspiration for writing can be found in our everyday life. She gets her inspiration from her daily life, as well as books or films she has read or watched before. She “borrows a bit from everything and mixes it up into a new story.”

Apart from being a published author, she also supervises Creative Writing dissertations at York St. John University. She says doing both teaching and writing “is quite a good balance”. Doing author visits allows her to find out about young people’s tastes in books. She says writing suits more of her introvert side, because “it’s a solitary job”, while teaching suits more of her extrovert side as it involves talking with people.

Liz’s workshops received raving reviews from students. “I learned so much today,” seems to be the most popular feedback from students.





# Laughing with Tom McLaughlin

By Jovie Tang, Logos Academy

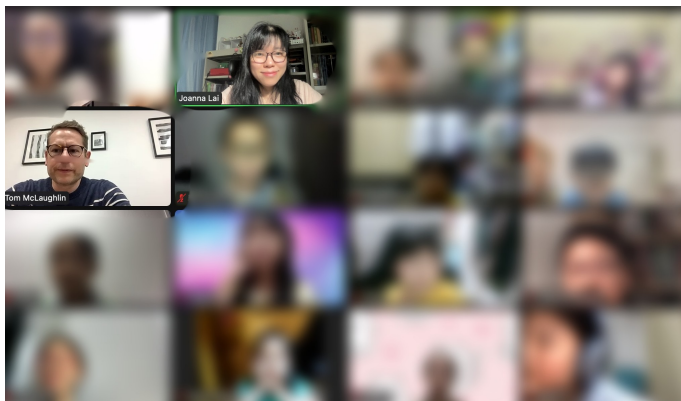
This semester, Level 3 students of Spiderweb Learning are reading *The Accidental Prime Minister* written by the bestselling author, Tom McLaughlin. The highlight of the course for Level 3 students was definitely the chance to meet Tom McLaughlin on Zoom!

Tom McLaughlin is no stranger to children in Hong Kong. His bestselling *The Accidental Series* of books are a huge hit among children here.

After studying illustration at Falmouth College of Arts, Tom got his first job as a political cartoonist at the Western Morning News, where he spent ten years thinking of funny jokes of silly politicians. Finding the funny side in politics was thus nothing new to Tom when he started writing *The Accidental Prime Minister*. He talked about how the idea for the book came about.

“I thought about Prime Ministers and politicians. Then, I thought wouldn’t it be cool to have a kid in charge of the whole country? And that’s how the idea came.”

Writing hadn’t always been easy for Tom as he had dyslexia. “When I was younger in school, I was very nervous. I always make spelling mistakes and was afraid to read in front of the school.” He spent his free time at school doodling. One day, his classmate had a look at his drawings and praised him. That gave him the idea that maybe he could make a career out of his interest in drawing.



During the Zoom author visit, Tom talked about how to transform simple shapes to animals.

“When I visit schools, I always draw a circle, square and triangle, then I transform the circle to a lion, the square to an elephant and the triangle to a bird.”

And of course, he showed us how to do it in our Zoom session as well. He even drew Joe – the main character in *The Accidental Prime Minister* live on Zoom! Look!

The students all had such a great time at the session. *The Accidental Prime Minister Returns* is going to be the next read for a lot of the students.



A drawing of Joe Perkins by Tom McLaughlin, 7/11/2023



# BOOK REVIEWS

Editor's  
Choice

## **Background and Synopsis**

It is a collection of witty exchanges between Michael Rosen and his cats. With Rosen's sense of humour, this book is bound to make you laugh.

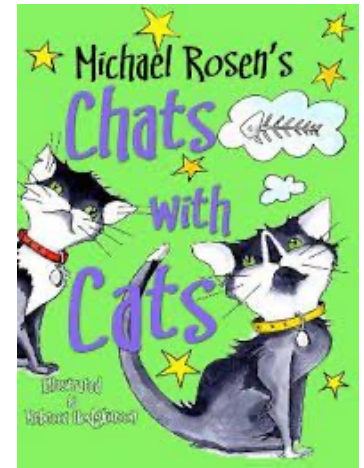
## **What I like about it**

I adore Michael Rosen's works and cats, so a book written by him featuring cats is bound to be a hit for me. The book is also beautifully illustrated in full colour.

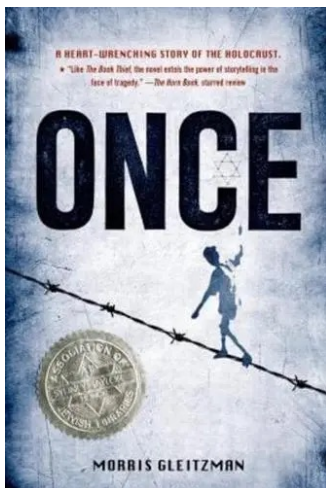
## **Recommendation**

This is a great book for anyone that loves cats.

*Joanna Lai, Editor*



**Chats With Cats**  
Michael Rosen



**Once**  
Morris Gleitzman

## **Background and Synopsis**

The story took place in 1940s. Felix was just an ordinary Jewish boy left in the orphanage by his parents who were bookshop owners. His life in the orphanage was pleasant. However, he was determined to find out what had happened to his parents and why they left him alone in the first place. So, one day, he escaped from the orphanage.

## **What I like about it**

This book is written in the perspective of a naive kid, Felix. The innocence of a child provides a sharp contrast to the harsh reality of the 1940s. Set in the 1940s, it offers us

a glimpse of the harsh life faced by the Jews under the Nazi regime.

## **Recommendation**

This is a perfect novel for you to read in your leisure time if you are into historical fiction. If you are easily scared, then this one might not be for you as there is a fair amount of gore and blood in the book. If you enjoy this one, be sure to check out the other books in the series.

*Abby Shi, Good Hope School*



# Letter To The Editor

Dear editor,

The article “Hottest Summer On Record” really inspired me to do more to save our planet.

Last summer was the hottest summer on record; it even beat 2016’s record. There have been many natural disasters due to climate change. The number of natural disasters per year has increased significantly in recent years.

People are more likely to get sunburnt due to the hot weather. The climate change doesn’t just effect us but also animals. The

ice in Antarctica is melting like crazy, soon the polar bears and all the other Arctic animals will have nowhere to live.

It is paramount that we take actions now to save our planet. Everyone needs to do more to save the planet. For example, we can set the temperature of our air-conditioner to 25 degree Celsius, try and use fewer plastic bags, etc.. We may not be able to revert climate change, but at least we can slow down its progress.

Your sincerely,  
Jovie Tang  
Logos Academy



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## My School Life In A Photo



*Your Headmaster is watching you!*

