

Sophia Bennett

Author visits
2015-2016



Bringing reading and writing to life

Drawing on my passion for books and my experience of being discovered as a writer, my author visits are designed to inspire students to keep reading for pleasure, and to develop their own creative potential.

This is a guide to what I do and how a visit can work.



Inspiring students

Reading for pleasure, writing as a career

I write realistic, accessible stories about teens reaching for their dreams and overcoming big obstacles in the process. Their story reflects mine in becoming a writer. After 10 years of trying, I won the Times/ Chicken House Children's Fiction competition in 2009 and since then my books have been published around the world.

I visit schools across the country to share the importance of reading for pleasure, the reality of life as a writer, and what it takes to succeed in a creative career.

I regularly speak to big groups and inspire them with the fun of what I do, as well as the hard work behind it

My talk covers the following topics, among others:

- **My story: finding success through persistence and hard work**
- Where my artistic inspiration comes from
- **Being creative as a career**
- How a writer works, and how a book is made

Workshops

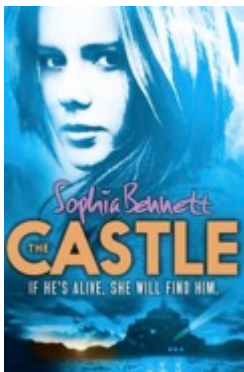
These are a sample of some of the workshops I offer, based on themes and issues in my books



Creative writing with English/PSHE

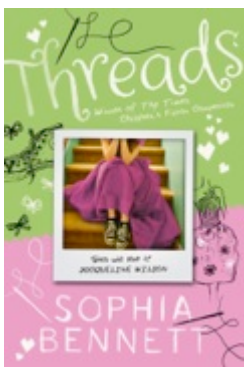
KS3 Students create pieces inspired by body issues and cyberbullying, based on characters and themes in *You Don't Know Me*. They explore the issues through fiction, experimenting with alternative points of view.

KS2/3 Character and setting. Inspired by the rich and poor children in *The Castle*, and the Dante-esque layers of the castle itself, we work on planning and starting stories with contrasting characters and locations with metaphorical significance.



Illustration/Cover design with Art

KS2/3 'You don't judge a book by its cover' – except, everyone does, and cover designs are very important in the publishing industry. This workshop, with readings, encourages students to think about genre and imagery, and to create their own covers and illustrations.



Unleash your creativity with Textiles

KS3 Inspired by the characters in *Threads*, who create a collection and put on their own fashion show, I work with the Textiles department to bring budding designers' ideas to life.



Make a magazine

This workshop is designed to kick-start creativity, so students work on writing their own articles for a magazine. Fiction, non-fiction, poetry, investigation, campaigning ... What inspires you, who is your audience, and how will it all fit together? On paper, or on the web, it's easier than you think. This session can be followed up in class or in a club, to create a publication they can be proud of.

What a school visit involves

The day can be tailored to suit the school. I work in close partnership with librarians, department heads and Gifted & Talented co-ordinators to arrange a mix of events.



Events

Up to 4 events per day, usually a mixture of talks and workshops (see next page), plus a signing session and chat in the library at lunchtime.

Group size

From 4 to 400+. Talks can be big or small. Creative writing workshops work better with smaller groups.

Year groups

Typically KS3, but I talk to all year groups from Y5 to Y13. Content varies from the fun of storytelling to how to consider career in the arts.

Girls, boys or both?

I regularly talk to all-girls and mixed groups. If talking to all girls, I focus more on the content of my books. For mixed groups, I focus on the craft of writing more generally. Although many boys dislike the act of writing, they can be brilliant storytellers and it's great to inspire them.

Bookselling and signing

Selling and signing books on the day is useful for several reasons:

- A chance to meet the students one to one in a relaxed environment
- A memento of the day
- Helps support local booksellers, on whom authors depend
- Gives readers who already have a book the opportunity to get it signed.

Fee

Full day: £400 + VAT and travel expenses

Local half-day visit in SW London (max 2 events): £250 + VAT and travel

Skype session: £150 + VAT

Some schools team up to share the cost, and this can work well.

“So far this morning we have both Jokebed and Liam come in and say they are continuing writing their stories at home and have been really inspired by you to become writers one day!”
(Bexleyheath)



“I have had really positive feedback from all the girls who thought you were rather wonderful and have had them queuing up to take out your books from the Library.”
(Hertfordshire)

Experience

Over several years of speaking as an author, I have spoken at the following festivals: Hay, Edinburgh, Cheltenham, Bath, Starlit, the Derbyshire Big Book Bash, Leipzig and Cologne.

My school visits have included, among many others, talks at Shoreham Academy, Welling School, St Paul's School for Girls, North London Collegiate School, Queen's College, King Edward VI High School for Girls, Streatham & Clapham High School, Cheltenham County High School for Girls, Harris Academy, St Mary's Shaftesbury and Alleyn's School.



What you can do

Each visit is different, and I'm happy to discuss how it can work best. Typically, the teacher or librarian organising my visit does the following:

Liaise with other staff to organise the schedule for the day. The hardest part!

Publicise the visit in the library, and possibly around the school and in newsletters, so the students know what to expect.

(If you need publicity materials, such as posters and postcards, please let me know and I will try and arrange for them to be delivered through my publisher, Chicken House.)

Make sure the IT is in place for my presentation, or let me know if this is a problem, so I can present in a different way.

Arrange for a local bookseller to come in, and/or organise pre-sales of books. Alternatively, I can bring a limited number of books to sign. If you haven't sold books at the school before, I can advise on ways to do it.

If there is a school magazine or blog, arrange for students to interview me. I'm quite friendly, and happy to answer whatever questions they'd like to ask.

Resources

Author visits are undoubtedly most successful when the students have had a chance to do a little preparation, such as read extracts from the books, look at the author's website and think of some questions in advance.

My website is a good place to start www.sophiabennett.com as it includes some sample chapters, brief descriptions of the books and my inspiration for writing them, links to various interviews I've done, and writing tips.

I can provide learning sheets for use in the classroom, covering character, setting and discussion points based on cultural and social issues in the books

Finally, if you'd like me to provide a list of books for parents to pre-order, or for students to buy on the day, then please ask.



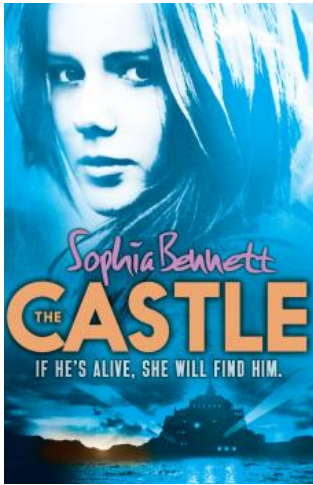
"Thank you so much for a fabulous day yesterday. When I asked the children you worked with for a few words to describe it to put in the newsletter they were unanimous; "awesome," "inspiring" and "she was so cool"! (Bishops Stortford)

"I would also like to say a huge thank you. All of the group were thoroughly engaged and have had genuine smiles on their faces when I have spoken to them about the experience today. I am sure they will be keen to send you some of their ideas that emerge from the 'Writers' Club' and so expect to hear from us soon." (Rickmansworth)



Reviews

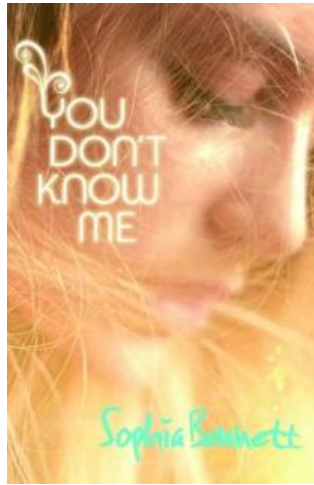
'Sophia Bennett is the queen of teen dreams' Amanda Craig, *The Times*



One of the best Young Adult books of 2014
Martin Chilton, The Telegraph

... a fast-paced and richly imagined adventure
Julia Eccleshare, Lovereading4kids

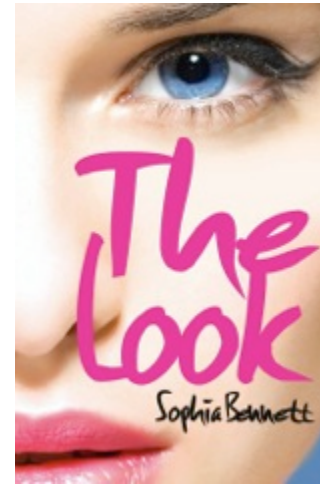
... one of the best thrillers for 12-plus I've read since Anthony Horowitz's Alex Rider series ... Outstanding
Amanda Craig, The New Statesman



"... one of the best YA contemporary stories I've read in years, exploring media manipulation, cyber-bullying, body image, romance, friendship, making choices, and doing it all with incredible heart and a wonderful cast of characters." *The Bookbag*

"I absolutely devoured it" *Choose YA Books*

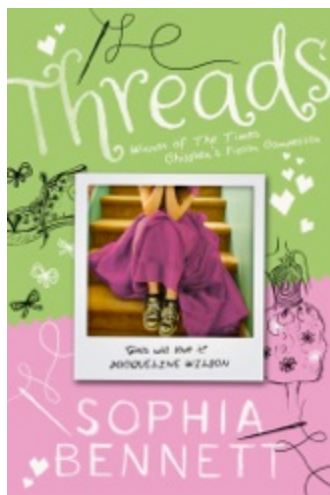
Shortlisted for the Booktrust's Best Book Awards, 2014



"blisteringly good" *Lovereading4kids*

"one word: BRILLIANT" *Cathy Cassidy*

A Daily Telegraph 'Top 10 YA book of 2012'



'A treat... elegant and funny and has real narrative verve.' – David Almond

'A vibrant and thought-provoking story for fashion-conscious girls of 11+. ...This is not just a great book, it's pure gold.' – Lovereading4kids

Winner of The Times/Chicken House Children's Fiction Award, 2009

Longlisted for the Branford Boase award



Contact me:
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Sophia Bennett



+The Threads Trilogy
The Look
You Don't Know Me
The Castle
Coming soon ... Love Song

Member of the Society of Authors, and CWISL: Children's Writers and Illustrators of South London

www.sophiabennett.com