



Kingston young Cultural Creators boys project

A mystery adventure novel set in Ancient Egypt inspired Year 7 boys to acquire the learning, thinking and emotional skills they need for secondary school in a cross-curricular English, History and Art project set up by Young Cultural Creators. With the author, their teachers, the schools library service and the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, the boys planned and carried out their own projects, with enhancement from library and museum visits.

"This is the best project I have ever done so far because in primary school the teachers do all the work for you, they just make you act [the book out] but with this we can actually do it ourselves."

Year 7 pupil

The effects

Young Cultural Creators (YCC) inspires young people's reading and creativity, through a partnership involving schools and libraries working together with children's authors and artists and with museums, archives and galleries.

YCC runs in several regions, primarily in London through Museums, Libraries and Archives London and in Devon with funding from the Devon Extended Schools Partnership. This YCC cross-curricular project with Year 7 boys was generated by a mystery adventure novel set in Ancient Egypt, **Eye of the Moon** by Dianne Hofmeyr. The boys worked with the author, Kingston library service and The Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology to plan and execute projects generated by their response to the novel. The work supported English, Art and History, ICT and numeracy. There was also a strong focus on information and learning skills and self-directed study. The result is a model of cross-curricular teaching that has enhanced creativity, emotional literacy, independent learning, co-operation and engagement among boys adjusting to secondary school, plus increased literacy levels in 75 % of the group.

The experience

Mike Treacy, Senior Librarian Children's Services, Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames

We have been involved in several Young Cultural Creators projects through Museums, Libraries and Archives London. Taking part in a YCC project is intense but really rewarding and not as hard work as it appears at first sight. How it works is that the MLA offers the library service the chance to work with an author, artist or illustrator and a cultural institution. I say "ooh, yes please", and then approach a school. I like to choose schools which are challenging in some way as I'm keen for children to work with the local library service and to experience galleries, museums and so on, who might not have had the opportunity to do before. In the case of Coombe Boys' School I had done two projects with the teacher, Debbie Cottrell, when she was teaching at a primary school and I knew she would run with the project. The boys involved were all vulnerable students who were thought to be at risk of underachieving for various reasons. The book at the centre of the

project was **Eye of the Moon**, an adventure mystery set in Ancient Egypt. The novel by Dianne Hofmeyr has generated two plays, three board games and a mini-museum, all devised, planned and carried out by groups of Year 7 boys in work related to Art, English and History that would also develop the independent learning skills they need in adjusting to secondary school. For the second half of the autumn term the boys spent three lessons each week taken from English, Art and History on work related to **Eye of the Moon**. It was a demanding read for some of them, but they took parts of the book, read the sections jointly and followed up on the text with research into the history so that they could understand the context and meaning.

Dianne Hofmeyr joined the group for visits to New Malden Library, the public library closest to the school, and The Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, University College London. She will visit the school in spring 2008. The boys started by brainstorming about what had most helped them to enjoy learning at primary school. Their list included physical activity, trips, painting, modelling, board games and handling artefacts. They read a synopsis of *Eye of the Moon* and, in groups, created mind maps to show what kinds of work they could do related to the book and presented their ideas to the class.

Each group selected their favourite mini-project from their mind maps and created an action plan to put their ideas into practice. The groups also decided to do a shared art project on masks in spring 2008. At the Petrie, Dianne Hofmeyr read from *Eye of the Moon* and shared her research. The boys joined discussions with the curator, Celine West, handled artefacts, copied images from Egyptian stele and wall plaster and completed some planned work on Egyptian artefacts and culture. One or two boys said they would like to be archaeologists after this visit. They were inspired by the book and by meeting Dianne to develop their mini-projects and were introduced to a wide range of non-fiction texts to support their research. They used the ICT suite at New Malden Library to work on PowerPoint presentations and started to speak in a more focused way about their work.

Outcomes

The boys were overwhelmingly positive about the visits to the Petrie Museum and New Malden library. They understood and appreciated the interconnection of the project. Their behaviour, motivation, independence and collaborative skills have improved. This project started out as a literacy project but, because of the way it developed, the self-directed learning took in skills development in lots of areas

The project allowed the boys to take control of their learning, to engage with a text in a new and different way determined by their own imagination, to read both for enjoyment and for a real purpose, to engage meaningfully with writing and numeracy and to plan a project from start to finish.

Seventy-five per cent of the boys involved went up to level 3 to level 4 in literacy and they are among the group achieving the highest school attendance records. They are now engaged in learning and in reading and writing with purpose and are more emotionally literate, working well with others.

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Year 7 pupil

"The teacher helps you with research and doing stuff when you're stuck and it's better than a normal lesson and you get to do the stuff you wanted to do."

Year 7 pupil

"We get to think outside the box, to be in control."

Year 7 pupil

"The teacher got the book idea, but with this we get to, like, do it ourselves, it's all our own idea and it's much better!"

Year 7 pupil

Resources and staffing

The project was funded by MLA London. Kingston Libraries supplied 27 copies of **Eye of the Moon**. The senior children's services librarian attended all visits.

Partners

- Library Service, Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames
- The Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, University College London, curator Celine West
- Dianne Hofmeyr, author of Eye of the Moon
- Debbie Cottrell – transition co-coordinator and teacher, Coombe Boys' School
- Dionne King – teacher, Coombe Boys' School

Challenges/lessons learnt

The timescale meant that the senior children's librarian could not visit the school for the usual preparatory visit. Experience of similar projects has shown that as long there is confidence in the teacher and the project, most obstacles can be overcome.