

Daniel Blythe
Author in Schools
School Visit Information Pack



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Daniel Blythe: Author in Schools

I. Introduction

Doctor Who and Young Adult/children's writer with over 20 years' experience.

Former lecturer in Creative Writing at Sheffield Hallam University.

Long-standing member of the Society of Authors.

Former committee member of CWIG, the Children's Writers and Illustrators Group of the Society of Authors (April 2016 to October 2019).

Active campaigner for school libraries and reading for pleasure.

Experienced speaker in primary and secondary schools since 2007, offering inspirational talks, quizzes, writing workshops and book-signings.



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I'm a writer of books for children, young people and adults including some of the successful *Doctor Who* novels (BBC Books) and audio plays (Big Finish). My novel *Shadow Runners* has been sold all over the world including the USA, Germany and Brazil. *Emerald Greene and the Witch Stones* came out in 2015, with a sequel in 2017. I have also written eight short reluctant-reader novellas for Badger Learning, and a 500-page Young Adult science-fiction novel, the first in a trilogy, called *Exiles*.

I do a lot of visits with a **Doctor Who theme** – often staff and pupils will join in, with sonic screwdrivers, bow ties and long scarves seen in abundance! Since 1963, *Doctor Who* has captured the imagination of fans of all ages – a time-travelling hero in a Police Box, whose face and character may change but whose love of adventure and sense of justice remain the same.

Meanwhile, sci-fi and supernatural collide in my ***Shadow Runners* and *Emerald Greene* books**, set in a recognisable modern-day England, but one where dark forces gather around stone circles, misty lakes and ruined abbeys... Read them with the lights off at your peril! My latest novel ***Exiles*** is a dark, gritty mystery set in a juvenile penal colony light-years from Earth.



I give a **wide-ranging talk** about my writing life, combining pictures and words with sound and video, plus quizzes, workshops and a book-signing.

For an in-person author visit **please choose from the options below.**

- A: Presentation/Q&A session and informal chat/book-signing (£250)
- B: Presentation/Q&A, book-signing as above, plus team quiz (£300)
- C: Presentation/Q&A, signing & quiz as above, + 1 writing workshop (£400)
- D: Presentation/Q&A, signing & quiz as above + 2 writing workshops (£450)
- E: Presentation/Q&A & book-signing + 3 writing workshops (£500)

Small school discount: if your school is a small primary school (i.e. one with mixed Y3/4 or Y5/6 classes or similar), I will apply a discount of 10% on the fee.

Plus **travel expenses** (2nd-class rail and any taxi needed). Overnight hotel only for locations which cannot be done in one day from Sheffield, or for 2-day bookings.

Please note that, for a visit in person, I do not offer a full day of back-to-back writing workshops only, as I do not believe this is the best way for a school to make use of a visiting writer. The day should be a special event and memorable for all, and I try to reflect this in the range of activities offered.

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2. Sessions Offered

At least one to be the presentation, please.

Illustrated Presentation

1-hour multimedia presentation/Q&A: no limit on numbers.

Resources: Presentation on own laptop – will need to connect to school audio-visual system with VGA plug and sound cable. Held in hall, library or similar space.

A wide-ranging talk on my influences as a writer! It covers my childhood, first comics/stories, the history of *Doctor Who* and how it is bound up with my life, first success writing the *New Adventures* in the 1990s, how events inspired me (e.g. being a parent, travelling abroad), how to get published, how *Doctor Who* was relaunched for my children's generation, the story of *Shadow Runners* and a whole lot more. (Can be repeated more than once in the day to different groups if appropriate.)

Team Quiz

Numbers: 60-70 students in 10 teams of 6-7, approx. 45-50 minutes.

Resources: audio-visual as above. Author will bring answer sheets.

A quiz about the things which have influenced me as a writer – so it covers age-appropriate books, films, comics, aspects of popular culture, etc. Pupils work in teams, and there are prizes. Because of the difficulty of the questions, the quiz works best for Y6 and above.

Writing Workshops

Please choose one, two or three as appropriate.

Numbers: 25-30 per session.

Resources: Normal classroom board, writing materials etc.

Year groups and approximate timings given as a guideline.

1. *Doctor Who* – Script, Screen and Story: 90 minutes – Y6-Y11

Using a *Doctor Who* DVD and book extracts, we look at the differences between the way a story is told in a script, in the TV interpretation and in a book. Students are encouraged to come up with their own 'novelised' version of a 5-minute segment of recent *Doctor Who*. **Needs IT & audio.**

2. *Outrageous Openings*: 60-70 minutes – Y5, Y6, Y7, Y8, Y9

We talk about what makes a story opening great. How does an author hook the reader? What do you put in the opening paragraph? How do you show the reader what's happening, and how much do you give away? After looking at some examples from Jacqueline Wilson, Helen Cresswell, Charles Dickens and others, participants are encouraged to plan their own opening based on a picture (from a selection of over 100 atmospheric images I bring with me), and write an attention-grabbing opening which can be shared with the rest of the group.

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3. Charismatic Characters: 50-60 minutes – Y5, Y6, Y7, Y8, Y9

Who are the people we tell stories about? What makes them interesting? Together we talk about how to create inspiring characters a reader can believe in. Students plan their characters on a question-and-answer 'character map', inspired by a selection of over 100 fantastic faces in sci-fi, fantasy, spooky, futuristic, historical and everyday settings.

4. Spooky Stories: 60 minutes – Y5, Y6, Y7, Y8

Writing great ghost stories with lots of thrills and atmosphere! How to make your spooky stories tense, involving, strange and wonderful. Whether your story is full of warty witches, ghastly ghosts or dreadful demons, find out how to turn your ideas into some powerful, spine-tingling prose to chill the blood.

5. Wondrous Worlds: 60 minutes – Y5, Y6, Y7, Y8

Science-fiction and fantasy writing workshop. Create your own alien worlds and futuristic voyagers. Whether your characters have travelled in time, are escaping an exploding spaceship, are stranded on a swampy world or on a desert moon, bring them to life in an exciting story.

6. Daring Descriptions: 60 minutes – Y10/11

For a piece of descriptive writing. Getting on top of ideas like situation, active writing, showing emotion, using senses! Lots of ideas to take away and use, with the aim of building confidence in writing.

7. The Worlds of Doctor Who: 60 minutes – Y3/4

For the very youngest children I work with, I can offer a descriptive writing session based around *Doctor Who* monsters and planets. Structured writing workshop with a clear set of objectives. Rich description and wild imagination are called for!

Book-Signing

Numbers: as required (rough idea of numbers useful!)

The books I offer for sale are *Doctor Who*, *Shadow Runners*, *Emerald Greene*, and *Exiles*, as well as the Badger Learning books for reluctant readers, all sold at discounted price. I can provide a letter for parents outlining the books on offer plus age suitability, etc. I can sign these in person, **or if schools prefer, I can arrange for new, sealed boxes to be sent, and I can provide signed bookplates for students.**



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3. Virtual Visits

While the current Coronavirus situation remains constantly changing, authors obviously expect schools to keep a close eye on DFE advice and some schools will elect not to have outside visitors. However, in these circumstances, children and young people do not have to be deprived of the opportunities which author visits bring.



Because of the nature of an online Virtual Visit, I would not expect to replicate the structure of my in-person day visit to a school. I would spend one 50-minute session with a class or group. The sessions would each be made up of a number of short activities designed to keep students' attention over 50 minutes, combining a short talk, a Q&A session and workshop activities. These would be arranged in close communication with teachers beforehand, with worksheets and other resources (photos, etc.) sent on ahead of the visit by email or WeTransfer.

I can also give schools the option of buying an agreed number of signed books in, to avoid pupils having to bring cash and having it sent on to me – everything can be done in the one BACS payment. I will liaise with staff to agree appropriate titles. I can deliver an assembly of up to 30 minutes with Q&A, or a 50-minute session to a single class.

The 50-minute online session with a single class, via secure link over the interactive whiteboard of their classroom, English room or library, could consist of:

Introductory 15-minute Talk (some shared slides and video).

Q&A session (helpful to have pre-prepared questions so I can address pupils by name).

Writing Workshop Activity with tips (openings, characters, Doctor Who)

Sharing of work with author's comments.

Follow-up work – teachers can send me students' work after the session for comments.

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This one-hour session can be repeated **up to four times a day** with different classes or year groups.

If schools book me for several classes, this will help to create a 'buzz' of the author being in school. Some schools have computer information boards in Reception and around school, and my photograph and details can be displayed on these!

There will also be more work 'around' the visit than there would be for a visit in person, as more liaising and preparing will be needed – plus I can look at children's work and give individual written comments on it after the event. However, in practical terms, it involves less work in organisational terms, both for me and for the school, than an in-person visit.

The typical pattern of an entire Virtual Visit timeline might look like this:

6-8 WEEKS AHEAD: Liaison and planning with teachers, books ordered.

ON THE DAY:

KS2 example day



KS3 example day



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AFTER SCHOOL: Optional discussion/evaluation session with staff.

WITHIN 2-3 DAYS: Selection of children's writing posted or emailed to author.

WITHIN 4-5 DAYS: Comments returned to teachers by email.

WITHIN 1-2 WEEKS: Signed books and bookplates delivered to school.



Costs of a Virtual Visit to school:

30-minute assembly: £50

One 50-minute session: £80

Two 50-minute sessions: £150

Three 50-minute sessions: £220

Four 50-minute sessions: £300

Signed Books:

£70 +P&P for 10 copies

£130 +P&P for 20 copies

£190 +P&P for 30 copies.

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4. Testimonials and Press

"Daniel is both a Jack of all Trades and a Master of them too! Fiction, non-fiction, children, young adult, adult, teaching, writing... there is nothing he has not done and nothing he cannot do, from KS3 Creative Writing Workshops to his ever-popular Doctor Who talk... We are so thrilled to have him as our first ever Patron of Reading and cannot recommend him highly enough."

Danum Academy, Doncaster

"We had a super day with Daniel. The activities were well suited to the age group of the children who were motivated and supported to describe their characters in detail. Daniel's talk was highly enlightening and really inspired the pupils to believe that they too could follow in Daniel's footsteps and be real authors."

Wainwright Primary Academy, Mansfield

"Dan's creative writing workshops were first class and had the students engaged for the whole time. He spent time with individual students, encouraging their thinking and writing. Dan came to work with KS3 and I definitely want to book him again in the future."

Bishop Vesey Grammar School, Sutton Coldfield

*"Daniel Blythe's visit to our school has been described by the students involved as **one of the best school events ever**. Throughout the event, Daniel was extremely accommodating, professional and enthusiastic. Our students really enjoyed the opportunity to share their own passions and spend time with a versatile writer. The staff thoroughly enjoyed it too. I would highly recommend him for any school event that will appeal to all students, readers and non-readers alike."*

Great Barr School, Birmingham

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I've visited over 400 primary and secondary schools since 2007, and I believe what I do is very valuable. I'm passionate about getting children and young people reading and writing, and in 2014/15 I was Patron of Reading for a secondary school in Doncaster. I've also appeared at numerous book events all over the country, including the Hay Festival, the Leeds Literature Festival, the Wessex Children's Book Festival, *Off the Page* in Stirling and *Off the Shelf* in Sheffield (seven times).

Teachers, pupils and librarians have described my sessions as 'inspiring' and 'enthalling', and I try to make my sessions as inclusive as possible. Staff have found them especially useful for the More Able & Talented/G&T students, for encouraging reluctant readers, and for providing a sense of inspiration, positive identity and community for sci-fi/fantasy/comic fans in school. The day is most suitable for pupils in **Key Stages 2 and 3** (workshops adapted according to age) and I have worked most often with Years 5, 6, 7 and 8. Testimonials from teachers and librarians can be seen above.

Some photos and press cuttings from my events:



Dalek invasion as Doctor Who writer helps Doncaster youngsters



Dr Who writer Dan Blythe and Dalek collector Rob Hull visit Danum Academy Upper School as part of World Book Day with, of course, a Dalek. Pictured with students from Danum Academy and Kingfisher Primary



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BOOKWORMS: Daniel Blythe with Toll Bar Primary School pupils, clockwise from left, are Flynn Wallace, Holly Harvey, Alicia Wilson, all aged ten, and Nathan Crosby, nine.

Time lord author drops in on youngsters

DOCTOR Who author Daniel Blythe had a rare travel experience of his own when he went back to school to work with budding bookworms.

The writer used more conventional transport rather than his character's trusty trefle to speak to hundreds of pupils at Toll Bar Primary School and The Armthorpe School about writing and sign copies of his books.

He also told story secrets about the first three episodes of the hit television show where Miss Tardis takes over the waste hole and steps into the doctor's boots.

Top television is the author of ten books including Doctor Who: Autonomy.

His visit was held as part of a series of reading-related sessions in the run-up to the final of the annual Doncaster Book Award.

The scheme encourages children to read books, write reviews and vote for their own all-favourite. The winning author is then awarded a special ceremony.

Hundreds of pupils from schools across the borough have taken part in the book awards which has seen seven children's books shortlisted for the top prize.

The winner will be announced on March 28 at the final ceremony which will be held at the Doncaster Racecourse.



SO PHIE Booth, Callum Peel, Rebecca Kennedy, Sue Ford, Angela Alsina and Ellie Thompson help Daniel Blythe to open the library.

Star author in town

MEDEN School's new library has been officially opened by Dr Who novel author Daniel Blythe. Throughout the day he ran workshops with students, signed books and answered questions from budding writers.

Daniel, who said the students were enthusiastic, added: "They have been extremely receptive, asking lots of questions and were very lively and interested in what I had to say."

"They were keen to participate and are a credit to the school."

"This is a lovely library with great shelving and lighting, which does make such a difference. It now feels like the heart of the school."

"It's important pupils have a place they can come to that feels like a safe haven, somewhere that is friendly and welcoming. This is just that."

The library, used since the school opened more than 50 years ago, has had a major overhaul. Work began last summer, replacing the carpet, fitting new shelving, furniture and lighting, installing air conditioning, and expanding the area to include an unused classroom.

(Continued on page 2)



AUTHOR VISIT: DANIEL BLYTHE

This year, author Daniel Blythe visited the school. Our exhilarating day started with an assembly, where Daniel introduced himself and what inspired him to become a published author. Even Daniel himself was surprised as to how popular his books are - he never thought he'd have a book published! He talked about how, when he was young, he would simultaneously entertain himself on the swing while arranging his next story in his calm and collected mind.

Daniel informed us that when he was a young lad, he adored watching Dr Who with Tom Baker (his mother was troubled by this, and thought it was much too grisly and gruesome for a boy as young as him!). Eventually, they agreed that he would only watch Dr Who when accompanied by his

dad 'for parental supervision'. These minor events (and his addiction to reading, writing and drawing) led to a much greater potential as Daniel surpassed everyone's expectations with his remarkable talents.

My class were fortunate enough to spend our English lesson with Daniel. He educated us on how to start a juicy story and how to describe a person effectively, with the aim that one of us might, some day, top Daniel's successes! During lunch, Daniel signed copies of his books which included Autonomy, Shadow Runners and Emerald Greene. Within 30 minutes he was sold out, but I managed to grab the last copy of Emerald Greene.

We had a great day with this wonderful author and I was sad when it had to end!

Raiyan Khalid, Y7



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5. Books Available

Books can be sent in advance with signed bookplates if preferred.

DOCTOR WHO: AUTONOMY Time Lord traveller The Doctor (David Tennant) must discover the truth about Level Zero of entertainment-city Hyperville and defeat the Autons. He has the help of two children, apprentice businesswoman Kate, a moody footballer and a vain pop star. But when the new substance Plastinol can imitate anything, who can he trust? Official BBC Doctor Who Book. (Age 8-adult – readers from Y3 upwards. **£5.00**)

SHADOW RUNNERS Miranda May's moved to the Town at the End of the World, and in the misty harbours and hollows, something evil is gathering. Can the bunch of misfits from school really be investigators of the supernatural? And what is Miranda's real story? (Age 11-16 – readers from Y6 to Y11. **£5.00**)

EMERALD GREENE AND THE WITCH STONES (Emerald #1) Jess and Richie's mysterious new friend Emerald Greene is the only one who knows what's going on when Professor Ulverston digs up a Viking tomb inside a stone circle. Has the Professor brought an ancient curse on the land? (Age 9-13 – readers from Y4 to Y9. **£6.00**)

EMERALD GREENE: INSTRUMENTS OF DARKNESS (Emerald #2) Why are terrifying horsemen patrolling the streets of Little Brockley? What is the Whispering Tree? And what is antiques dealer Mr Bidmead's secret? Jess and Richie uncover deadly deeds and haunted dreams – but where is Emerald? (Age 11-15 – readers Y6 to Y10. **£6.00**)

EXILES On the prison colony world The Edge, space castaway Beth Kane must fight to be trusted and to survive. Fifty young prisoners have made a life there, but sabotage, storms, intrigue and murder threaten to destroy the colony for ever. Who is telling the truth? And can Beth really be trusted? (Age 13+. **NB: strong language and violence. £9.00**)



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I have also written several books for Badger Learning aimed at ‘reluctant’ teen readers (with content appropriate for age 11+ but with reading levels at age 8-9). These are shorter books – novella length – all sold for £5.00 (discounted from normal price of £6.99). I usually bring just a few of these books in.

NEW DAWN Eden is drawn into her father’s secret research project, which turns out to have far-reaching consequences for the future of Earth – and an alternate Earth which has suffered a terrible tragedy.

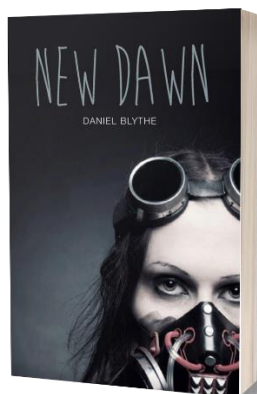
FASCINATION Media boss Magnus Gold comes into Maya’s life, promising to make the girl from the Greenwell Heights estate a star. But her friend Alfie doesn’t trust Gold. Nothing lasts for ever – especially fame.

I SPY When Taz moves into hi-tech Avalon Tower with her mother, she finds the futuristic skyscraper creepy. Then she meets Luke in his luxury apartment on the top floor – and things get very strange indeed. What is Luke’s agenda? Is Taz’s mother telling her everything? And in the age of Big Brother, who is watching whom?

KILL ORDER 2238: Station Zero on the Galactic Rim. Caleb is a hired assassin with a strange secret. When a job goes wrong, he needs the help of lawyer Jandri Jax – but who is telling the truth, and who will pay a deadly price?

HOPE AND TRUTH Sam is living in terrifying times. Armed police on the streets, rumours of war, people going missing. And Hope is living in her city under the ground, her religious cult having saved the world – or did they?

KISS THE SKY Joel and his older sister Elise live in a remote cottage on the Yorkshire moors. Joel has his studies, Elise has her job, and birdwatching gives Joel meaning in his life. When a new friend, Grace, enters their lives, everything’s turned upside down and old rules have to be broken. Will things ever be the same again?



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EXILES: out now

Daniel Blythe's new novel EXILES is a gritty, futuristic mystery story set on a desolate prison world, and was published in Autumn 2019 as a paperback and e-book.

Please note: parent/teacher guidance is advised as *Exiles* contains some strong issues, language and violent scenes and as such is recommended **only for readers 13 and over**.



Escaping from disaster on board the colony ship Arcadia, 15-year-old ChapterSister Bethany Aurelia Kane, believer in the Great Power, makes landfall on a windswept world known as The Edge – a planet light years from civilisation. Battered and shaken, Beth soon finds she is not alone.

The Edge is a penal colony where, under the leadership of Zachary Tal, fifty juvenile criminals and reprobates have pulled together a kind of society. They are living and working together in Town, a converted scientific base in the shadow of their crashed spaceship. They have crops, fresh water and electrical power – and are assisted by a contingent of mechanised Drones... Storms, power failure and illness are just a few of the challenges the teenage exiles battle. As Beth accustoms herself to her new life on The Edge, she has to overcome her fears, learn new skills and earn the respect of the others.

But when a terrible, violent event shatters the colony's existence, it seems nothing will ever be the same. Who among them is a killer? And just how isolated are they really? As the clock ticks towards a final revelation, Beth needs all her new skills and resourcefulness to stop The Edge from plunging into anarchy. And she has her own secret too – one which will prove decisive in the battle for survival...

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COMING SOON

VOYAGERS, the sequel to **EXILES**

The great colony ship Arcadia has been in flight for almost its full lifetime of twenty Earth years, and is approaching its destination of Celestia – having picked up some extra passengers from the prison world of The Edge two years earlier. And as the Exiles are to discover, not everything on the ship, or on Celestia, is quite as it seems. Elder Alpha, leader of the triumvirate of Elders, is dying – and passes on a terrible burden to Beth. And down on Celestia, an ancient Technomancer contemplates the new arrivals with her own deadly intent. What horrors are hidden in the virtual world of the Sim? What is the treasure of the Northlands? And will a shameful secret Beth hides be the salvation of humanity?...

Coming in 2021 from Big Finish Productions:

***The Day Before They Came* (60-minute Doctor Who audio play, as part of the *Eleventh Doctor Chronicles* box set).**



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6. Guidelines and Important Notes

Photographs: I am always very happy to be photographed, either in the workshop or talk or before/after, for the school website, newsletter, etc. Don't feel you have to ask special permission. Authors are very used to this!

Payment: Fee is payable after invoice, by cheque or BACS. If paying by BACS, I do ask for a remittance on PDF or similar so that my accountant has a document to refer to. This is vitally important for my tax declaration. My invoice includes my tax reference and NI number. If any other details are needed, finance office should let me know in good time – otherwise I will assume all is in place for being paid on the day. Please note any requests to fill in extra 'verification of self-employment' forms and the like will incur an extra £50 admin charge. This is not usually necessary.

Tax: I am registered for tax self-assessment and considered SELF-EMPLOYED under IR35 legislation. Tax should not be deducted at source.

Insurance: I am covered for full Public Liability Insurance up to £5m through the Society of Authors.

Travel to school: I travel by train and, if needed, a taxi from the station. I do not have a car and so will not need a space in the school car-park.

Identification: I will bring a photocopy of my passport photo page for identification at Reception.

DBS check: A DBS check **should not** be required for a one-day visit, as authors should not be left unsupervised with classes – indeed, we request that staff should always be present. I follow the Department for Education and Ofsted guidelines, which state that *a Disclosure and Barring Service (formerly CRB) check is only required when there is teaching, training or instruction of children, carried out by the same person frequently (once a week or more often), or on 4 or more days in a 30-day period, or overnight. It is not required for a one-off, supervised visit.*

Cancellation: If I need to cancel for illness or any other unavoidable reason (this has only happened twice in 400+ visits over 13 years!) I will liaise with staff to reschedule the visit for a later date and will reimburse any pre-paid expenses. If the school needs to cancel because of circumstances **beyond** its control, I will be happy to look at other dates, and if I have already paid travel or other expenses for the cancelled date(s), I would request that these be reimbursed. For cancellations **within** the school's control I would request to be reimbursed any incurred expenses, and to be paid in full if the event is cancelled within the six weeks before the date (50% of fee if the event is cancelled earlier).

Best wishes,



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8. Contact

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