

# **Revolutionary Reading Workshop – Hardenhuish School**

## **Who was the workshop for?**

This was a 1.5 hour workshop for members of the Hardenhuish Creative Writing Group – which is a mix of year 7, 8 and 9 pupils.

## **What happened?**

The aim of the workshop was to use dystopian teen fiction (we focused mainly on *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins and *Momentum* by Saci Lloyd) to explore freedom and control. The workshop also set out to inspire the group to create their own dystopias and start thinking about plot and character within that kind of setting.

To start off, I read a bit from the *Hunger Games* to provide everyone with an example of a dystopian setting. We then discussed what kind of society this was and how people lived.

I got the group to think about three different ways that decisions are made by using chocolates and a series of fun statements. This was popular! We ended with a dictatorship where the small groups we were working in had no say over the final decision. Of course, everyone was able to eat the chocolates at the end!

We then looked at the different aspects of dystopian fiction and the central theme of Freedom vs Control. The group did some brainstorming around these concepts. We heard a thought provoking extract from *Momentum* at this point – which highlighted why some of the characters felt that freedom was worth fighting for at all costs. We also looked at the characters in these books who are at the centre of this conflict between freedom and control. Who are they and what characteristics do they need?

We explored this further with a game to get some debate around human rights, freedom and control using the books as our basis. This led to all sorts of interesting discussion about our own society and what freedom really means and controls that are put in place for safety reasons etc. People had some fantastic ideas, thoughts and insights. They looked at how they might respond to some of the situations in the books. How do we respond when other people have their freedom taken away?

The group ended by creating their own mind-maps for a dystopian story set in an imagined Chippenham of the future. The ideas coming forward were really inspiring. Most of them involved young people at the centre of any change - fighting against whatever system they had imagined.

## **What were the challenges?**

Just the time factor – we could have continued for another half hour and seen more of their stories come to life.

## **Outcomes/Feedback..**

**Comment from the group included:**

“It was super fun discussing our opinions and the chocolates were tasty.”

“Loved it, loved it, loved it!”

“It was great because I could express a number of views.”

“It was amazing, I loved it. Thanks.”

“Imaginative.”

**The teacher was asked to make comments about the session too:**

“Applicable not only to ‘English’ learning but elements of politics/citizenship/philosophy too. Engaging and interactive whole group activities. They enjoyed the kinaesthetic aspect.

It’s different to what they would experience in the KS3 curriculum – far more possibility of debate/extended discussions.”