

DAVID ALMOND

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN AWARD – CARNEGIE MEDAL
MICHAEL L PRINTZ AWARD – ELEANOR FARJEON AWARD
LE PRIX SORCIERES – GUARDIAN CHILDREN'S FICTION PRIZE
PREMIO LETTERATURA RAGAZZI

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Dear pupils of Ian Ramsey CE Academy,

I hope you're all well and coping OK in these very strange and difficult times. I'm not sure how I'd have taken it all when I was your age. I grew up on a council estate in Gateshead. I loved running about with my friends, playing football in the streets and fields. It would have been difficult to have my freedoms curtailed, as you have now. Still, we can look forward to the days when we'll all have more liberty again. I know I'd have spent a fair amount of time reading. Books were (and are!) really important to me. They took me out of myself, allowed me to experience and imagine other lives. Reading was so important to my education and to my whole life. I used to write as well as read. I wasn't a particularly good or brilliant school pupil, but I knew I wanted to be a writer from a very young age. I used to scribble stories in notebooks – didn't matter how messy or weird they were. Nobody else had to see them. Writing allowed me to explore the world, experiment with ideas, to understand a bit more about myself. I've published lots of books now, of course. But in many ways, I'm the same now as I was then. I scribble in notebooks, I write stories, I wander about in the world. And most of my stories are set in the North East. They're about people like us who speak like us and who live in the kinds of places that we do.

My most recent novel is *Brand New Boy*, set in a Northeastern school. In April my next novel comes out. It's called *Bone Music* and is about a girl who moves from Newcastle to the wide-open spaces of Northumberland. My best-known book is *Skellig*, which has been published all around the world, and which has been turned into a film, a stage play and an opera. All these books are mainly for young people like you. I hope that when young people read them, they begin to think, 'Maybe I could try to write something like that!'

Anyway, look after yourselves. Keep reading. Keep writing. And let's all be optimistic!

All best wishes,



David Almond's books are strange, unsettling wild things – unfettered by the normal constraints of children's literature. They are, like all great literature, beyond classification.

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