

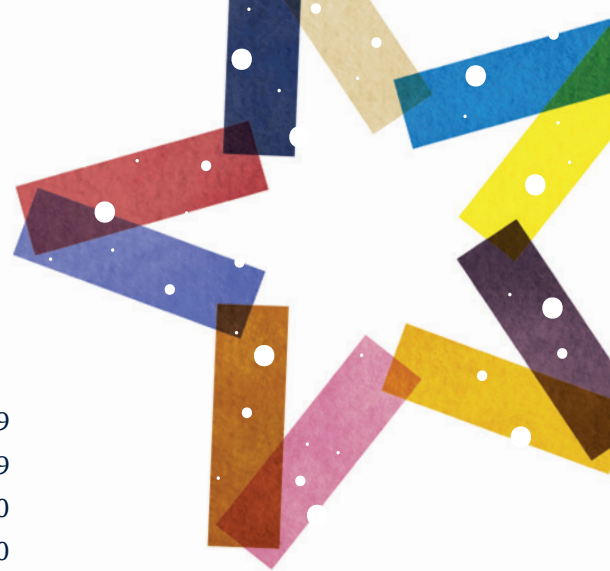
*Our*  
**GIFT OF  
WORDS**

Help us to inspire  
people this season



# Our CONTENTS

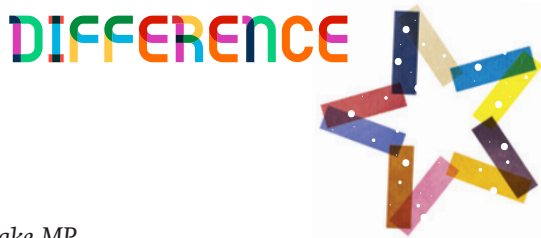
Olivia Blake MP	02	Baroness Harris of Richmond	09
Lord Boateng of Ayken and Wembley	02	Roderick Hunt MBE	09
Gyles Brandreth	03	Lord Knight of Weymouth	10
Alex Brychta MBE	03	Baroness Lister of Burtersett	10
Cerrie Burnell	04	Baroness Massey of Darwen	11
Dr Lisa Cameron MP	04	Anthony McGowan	11
Lauren Child	05	Wendy Meddour	12
Elliot Colburn MP	05	Harriet Muncaster	12
Giles Coren	06	Korky Paul	13
Sir Barry Cunliffe	06	Victoria Prentis MP	13
Susie Dent	07	Lord Ramsbotham	14
Roopa Farooki	07	Kathryn Sutherland	14
Sian Griffiths	08	Dame Marina Warner	15
Robert Halfon MP	08		



## Our GIFT OF WORDS

---

I'd share *The Bear in the Stars*, a short picture book written by my cousin, as it tells the story of the climate crisis and how everyone, young and old, can still make a difference in a powerful way.



---

Olivia Blake MP

---

There is no better gift to a child than *Ananse the Spider* and *Braer Rabbitt* who populated my early reading in two continents. Brave, kind hearted, mischievous, and fun they overcame all not by force but by words driven home by deeds.

I would also give *Things Fall Apart*. The lesson is the same whether Yeats or Achebe tell it. Words and truth must count for something or the ground crumbles beneath us.



---

Lord Boateng of Ayken and Wembley,  
Chair of Book Aid International

## Our GIFT OF WORDS

---

My gift of words to young people always comes in the form of the two books that gave me my lifelong love of language: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Alice Through the Looking-Glass*.

Lewis Carroll had an amazing way with words. He loved playing with language. I encourage kids to read the Alice books because in them they'll meet some of the most amazing (and amusing) characters ever created and will discover what fun words can be. Lewis Carroll invented lots and lots of new words and gave them the meanings he wanted to give them. We've been doing the same in 2020, telling teenagers they're in their quaranteens and new-borns they are not millennials, they're coronials.

DISCOVER

---

Gyles Brandreth, author, broadcaster, and editor of *The Oxford Book of Theatrical Quotations* and *The Oxford Book of Humorous Quotations*

---

When I was about eight or nine, I loved *The Children of Noisy Village* by Astrid Lindgren which is about the adventures of kids living on three neighbouring farms in Sweden. I read it over and over in Czech, since that's where I grew up, but I now have an English translation too.

When I came to the UK at the age of 12 not knowing a word of English, I was given the entire set of *Tintin*. The graphic novel format helped me greatly in learning the language.

ADVENTURES

---

Alex Brychta MBE, Series Creator and Author of *Oxford Reading Tree Biff, Chip, and Kipper stories*



## Our GIFT OF WORDS

---

*Emily Dickinson:*  
‘Hope is the thing  
with feathers, that  
perches in the soul’.

HOPE

---

*Cerrie Burnell, actress, singer,  
playwright, and author*

---

I would give *The Diary of Anne Frank*. The quote that stays with me from this vital memoir from such an amazingly compassionate young person is ‘how wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.’

COMPASSIONATE

---

*Dr Lisa Cameron MP, Chair for the All Party  
Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Disability  
and member of the APPG for Health*

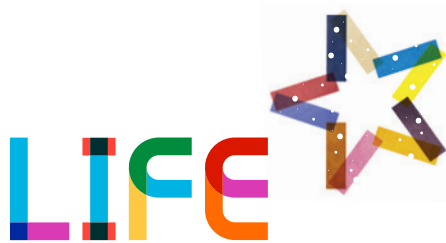


## Our GIFT OF WORDS

---

When life feels too much to bear, I think of these words and they help me focus on what is good and what can still be.

*Mary Oliver:* ‘Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?’



---

*Lauren Child, former Waterstones Children's Laureate and illustrator*

---

I would give a young person the Harry Potter books to read, because it was those books that opened me up to the joy of reading and escaping into new worlds. Harry's story of overcoming adversity, the importance of friendship, and seeing the bigger picture in life still resonates with me today.

FRIENDSHIP

---

*Elliot Colburn MP, member of the Women and Equalities Committee*

## Our GIFT OF WORDS

I would give them a Snoopy book, any Snoopy book, because all human life is there, as it should be in any piece of writing that aspires to the status of art. And if they get into Snoopy, it will seed a hunger for literature that will last their whole life. And if they don't, well, that would be very weird.



ART

Giles Coren, restaurant critic and columnist,  
for *The Times* and *Times Radio*

My choice is something I discovered early in life and return to from time to time. Its a short thank-you note by the Tang Dynasty poet, Li Po called *Coming down from Chung-Nan Mountain* – a reminder that in all the turmoil of life peace can be found in undemanding friendship.



PEACE

Sir Barry Cunliffe, archaeologist,  
academic, and author

## Our GIFT OF WORDS

---

My gift of words would be the story of *Le Grand Meaulnes* by Alain-Fournier (The Lost Estate in English). I first read this haunting, dreamy tale when I was 17, and it has stayed with me ever since. It's about first love and a magical lost house, set in the twilight world between childhood and adolescence. Every time I pick it up, I fall under its spell again.

MAGICAL

---

Susie Dent, author and TV wordsmith

---

The gift I'd give to you are the beautiful poems by AA Milne, the creator of Winnie-The-Pooh, in *Now We Are Six* and *When We Were Very Young*.

My favourite line from is from *Us Two*, when Pooh and Christopher Robin are looking for dragons; it's about being curious, adventurous and brave, and never afraid, with your best friend beside you!

'I wasn't afraid,' said Pooh, said he,  
'I'm never afraid with you.'

BRAVE



---

Roopa Farooki, junior doctor, award-winning adult novelist, and children's author



## Our GIFT OF WORDS

---

From Sylvia Plath's poem *Child*:

'Your clear eye is the one absolutely beautiful thing.

'I want to fill it with color and ducks,  
'The zoo of the new.'

or

*Morning Song* (also Plath)

'Love set you going like a fat gold watch.

'The midwife slapped your footsoles,  
and your bald cry

'Took its place among the elements.'

## BEAUTIFUL

---

Sian Griffiths, Education Editor,  
*The Sunday Times*



---

*The Hobbit* by JRR Tolkien, or *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* by CS Lewis. Two of the greatest books for the younger generation ever written. Tales of heroism, leadership, fighting against the odds, evil villains, and of course, featuring three breakfasts (in the case of *The Hobbit*), and Turkish delight (in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*)!

## HEROISM

---

Robert Halfon MP, Chair of the Commons  
Education Select Committee

## Our GIFT OF WORDS

---

When I speak to schools I always end with, ‘Take every opportunity that is offered to you – be thoughtful be kind’.

For a young person, a book I have recently read – that was written by a colleague of mine about his young life – and was inspirational. It is *I Never Promised you a Rose Garden* by Jonny Oates. For an adult it would be *Becoming* by Michelle Obama.



---

Baroness Harris of Richmond, member of the APPG on Mindfulness

---

Among my favourite stories are the Winnie-the-Pooh books (AA Milne), and this is my favourite (and most helpful) quote. This is what Piglet says to Pooh as they set off to see Christopher Robin.

“Supposing a tree fell down, Pooh, when we were underneath it?”

“Supposing it didn’t,” said Pooh after careful thought.

‘Piglet was comforted by this.’



---

Roderick Hunt MBE, Series Creator and Author of Oxford Reading Tree Biff, Chip, and Kipper stories

## Our GIFT OF WORDS

### *Oh, the Places You'll Go!*

by Dr Seuss. It is a beautiful story of every individual's capacity to make change happen, to deal with the struggles and bounce back – 'kid, you'll move mountains!... so... get on your way!'

CHANGE

Lord Knight of Weymouth, member of  
the APPG for Education

My gift of words is 'when the world is puddle wonderful' from *In Just* by E.E. Cummings. I read the poem in my youth and the phrase still makes my heart sing.



Baroness Lister of Burtersett,  
APPG on Mindfulness

## Our GIFT OF WORDS

---

I think the *Velveteen Rabbit*. It had such an impact on me and I still quote its wisdom in speeches – the ‘how you become real’ section – when your fur gets scuffed and your eyes fall out but you are still real to someone. I once quoted this in a speech in Parliament. A hardened politician asked me about it and I gave her a copy. She said ‘I cried.’ Ah, the power of words!

WISDOM

---

Baroness Massey of Darwen, member  
of the Young People’s Health APPG

---

*Fire and Ice* is the poem I’d like to pass on to a young person. I’d guess that, like me, they’ll be a little perplexed at first – although the language is quite plain. But I’d hope it would plant itself in their mind, and stay there, ticking...

Some say the world will end in fire,  
Some say in ice.

From what I’ve tasted of desire  
I hold with those who favor fire.  
But if it had to perish twice,  
I think I know enough of hate  
To say that for destruction ice  
Is also great  
And would suffice.



---

Anthony McGowan, author

## Our GIFT OF WORDS

---

I start my day with a cup of tea in a china mug that says: ‘She is too fond of books and it has turned her brain.’ (Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women*).

It makes me smile and reminds me that you should always pursue your dreams, even if others think you’re mad. (And yes. My dream was to read and write books).

DREAMS

---

Wendy Meddour, author and illustrator



---

Books are magical doors into other worlds. You can escape into them and live a different life for a few hours!

A series of books I really love escaping into are the *Brambly Hedge* books by Jill Barklem. She creates such a wonderful, magical, comforting world where the mice live inside hollow trees and go about their days surrounded by beautiful nature. I find them absolutely charming and they bring me lots of joy to read.

My passion is tiny things and so I especially love reading about tiny worlds like in *Brambly Hedge*. Another series of books that really resonates with me for similar reasons is *The Borrowers* series by Mary Norton about a tiny little girl called Arrietty. I find that if I read books that contain something I’m really passionate about (like miniatures!) then I get an extra amount of delight from them!

---

Harriet Muncaster, author and illustrator

## Our GIFT OF WORDS

---

Ever since I was a child I have loved drawing and so was always captivated by both the words and especially the pictures. One book that I especially adored, and still do, is *Struwwelpeter* by Dr Heinrich Hoffmann. It comprises 10 cautionary tales, written in rhyme about misbehaving children, the punishments meted out to them, and the consequences they endure. The most memorable tale for me was *The Story of the Inky Boys*.

Growing up in colonial Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, it really resonated with me. It concerns The Great Agrippa who plunged mean and nasty children into a pot of black ink for teasing a 'black-a-moor' as punishment for their misbehaviour. Great Agrippa was a magnificent figure dressed in a long red gown, red pointy hat, and a full red beard. A memorable image indeed.

As I child whenever I heard anyone making racist remarks I wished I could magic The Great Agrippa to appear and give them their come-uppance.

MEMORABLE

---

Korky Paul, illustrator for  
*Winnie and Wilbur*

---

*The Tiger Who Came to Tea* with the quote 'Or did he? We will never know. Sophie probably doesn't know herself.'



---

Victoria Prentis MP, member of the APPG  
on Child and Youth Crime

## Our GIFT OF WORDS

---

I would give them my favourite childhood book *Perkin the Pedlar*, which is an alphabetical journey round England, with Perkin telling the story of various villages, illustrated with beautiful woodcuts by Eleanor Farjeon. I have it on my shelves still, and read it to my two sons.



---

Lord Ramsbotham, member of the APPG  
for Young People's Health

---

Jane Austen describes the short pains and the long joys of reading in *Northanger Abbey*: 'it is very well worth while to be tormented for two or three years of one's life, for the sake of being able to read all the rest of it.' (Chapter 14, Oxford World Classics edition, p. 85)

READING

---

Kathryn Sutherland,  
author and academic

## Our GIFT OF WORDS

---

Ted Hughes and Seamus Heaney, *The Rattle Bag*; RL Stevenson, *A Child's Garden of Verses*; Christina Rossetti *Sing Song: A Nursery Rhyme Book*; and Eleanor Farjeon, *Elsie Piddock Skips in her Sleep*, which was part of the book of stories *Martin Pippin in the Daisy Field*, but I found it published separately with wonderful pictures by Charlotte Voake.

I think these favourites have something in common that arises from the spring and leap of the verse, or, in the case of Eleanor Farjeon's enchanting fable, the joyous repetitions in the prose. Heaney and Hughes specially loved the music of word patterns and they found, a huge and wonderful variety of poems, old and new, which move to a patter and beat, striking notes of mystery and wonder. The stories and poems are filled with a blithe light-footedness that is a life force in itself, opening up the possibility of happiness. Meaning often eludes but that doesn't matter and may even enhance the experience. The rhythms then have a way of lingering in the memory which continues to bring back the hope of those early encounters with them.

---

*Dame Marina Warner, President of the Royal Society of Literature and author of fiction, criticism, and history*

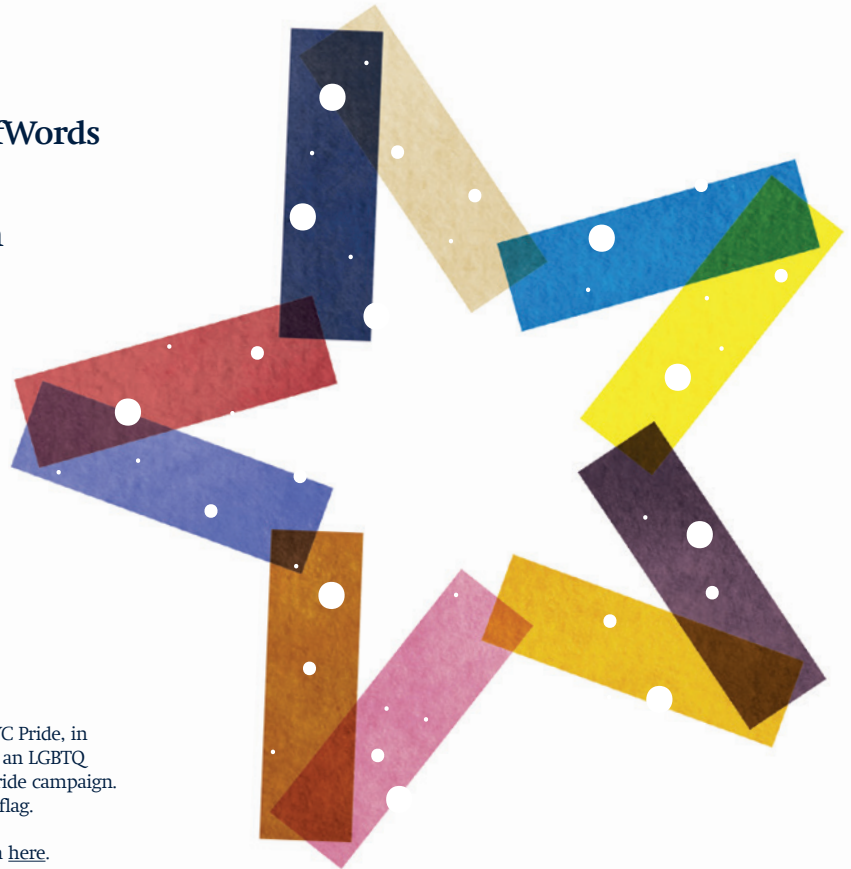
HAPPINESS





Get involved by sharing your own **#GiftOfWords** on social media.

For more information about the campaign visit **[www.oup.com](http://www.oup.com)** or contact **[GroupCommunications@oup.com](mailto:GroupCommunications@oup.com)**



#### Type With Pride

The font used in this report was a free font designed by NewFest and NYC Pride, in partnership with Fontself. It was created in recognition of Gilbert Baker, an LGBTQ activist and the creator of the iconic Rainbow Flag associated with the Pride campaign. The font - named 'Gilbert' - was inspired by the design language of the flag.

You can find our more information about the **#TypeWithPride** campaign [here](#).