

## The Lost Words continues to unearth nature for new audiences

If a classic is defined as “a book that has never finished saying what it has to say; it’s news that stays news” (Joe Norman) then *The Lost Words* is well on its way to ‘classic’ status. Eighteen months since its [release](#) there’s no let-up in its popularity, nor its relevance. The collection of spell-poems and illustrations by Robert Macfarlane and Jackie Morris has found its way not only into homes and mainstream education but numerous learning niches too. With its complementary resources, it’s inspiring new audiences in accessible and inclusive ways to re-discover words, unearth nature, and to interpret their own learning and meaning from these connections.

Here’s a selection of examples from early 2019.

### Reluctant readers, English as a second language, inspiring art

A volunteer with the Coram Beanstalk charity, working with children who are struggling with their reading, is “struck once again how no other text has the same effect”. ‘We are Bilingual’ learners from the East End of Glasgow for whom English is a second or other language (and who run their own [twitter feed](#)) choose a ‘Lost Word of the week’ and use what they find to stimulate their own nature quests. And *The Lost Words* is inspiring [St Kentigern’s RC Academy](#) pupils in their Low Port Centre outdoor learning visits to follow in the brush-strokes of illustrator-author Jackie Morris.



**Piers Torday**  
@PiersTorday



Working with my [@beanstalkreads](#) Y4 "reluctant" boy readers in school today, and using [#TheLostWords](#) - struck once again how no other text has the same effect. The language is rich, complex, and yet the short spell-poems are accessible, the artwork irresistible- they love it!



8:10 AM - 5 Mar 2019



**Mike Harvey** @MacallaMike · 19h

Fabulous skills by John Muir Award pupil at [@StKentAc](#) I hope [@JackieMorrisArt](#) likes this effort!

[#johnmuiraward](#) [#getoutside](#) [#art](#) [#Lowport](#) [@SAPOE\\_org](#) [@ClarkToby](#) [@donnamcmaster](#) [@GLoganEd](#)



**We are Bilingual**

@wearebilingual



[#thelostwords](#) [#adder](#) is our word of the week. We looked at the beautiful patterns and talked about [#camouflage](#). We made our own snakes to take home to share. [@RobGMacfarlane](#) [@StRoLAttain](#) [@ClarkToby](#)



10:44 AM - 21 Feb 2019



**We are Bilingual**

@wearebilingual



We found [#acorn](#) in [#TheLostWords](#) we loved the poem and thought of our own [#stanza](#). After we went outside and looked for [#acorns](#) [#conkers](#) and [#pinecones](#) we didn't find any but we did see the start of new life beginning to appear [#excited](#) [#springiscoming](#) [@StBenedictsPS](#) [@ClarkToby](#)



1:10 PM - 4 Feb 2019

## Inner cities, wider settings

*The Lost Words* has become a focus for learning and a primer for action in urban settings, where ‘nearby nature’ can offer rich pickings for creativity. It’s making its mark within larger initiatives, too.

Tullochan makes a vital contribution to the learning engagement of young people in West Dunbartonshire. Youth worker Craig Auchinleck uses a copy of *The Lost Words*, gifted by Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park, in Dumbarton schools. “It has been a huge hit with the students and staff! Knoxland Primary 5 pupils loved going into their nearby woods to dream of being wild animals and [film their songs, raps and poems](#). We’re definitely going to incorporate it in our John Muir Award and outdoor programmes in the future.”



[Dundee Outdoor Learning in Nature Project](#) is a Scottish Natural Heritage-funded partnership bringing regular, structured time outdoors to six targeted schools in Dundee. Education Support Officers provide Literacy and Nature training for teachers with the book and its associated resources at the heart of this support. “Learning in nature can transform lives”, says Neil Crutchley of host organisation Arts and Communities Association. “This project offers many exciting creative activities, including using *The Lost Words*, to build skills and confidence as well as encouraging young people to reflect on important issues of environmental protection and conservation.”

“My head is swirling with ideas” beamed a principle teacher at Carmuir Primary School, Falkirk, as she reflected on a ‘Learning in Local Greenspace’ literacy session that included *The Lost Words*. This is a Scottish Natural Heritage priority project for Scotland’s Biodiversity Strategy Route Map, aiming to get one hundred schools serving some of the most disadvantaged areas taking pupil learning outdoors “regularly and often” by 2020 ([#BeyondYourBoundary](#)).



In [East Ayrshire](#), *The Lost Words* is included in literacy boxes for schools - along with a Kelly Kettle and local species (stuffed varieties) - as part of a Curriculum Outdoors Attainment Challenge resource.

The Countryside Ranger Service at Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park literacy training took place “under the watchful eye of legendary climber, author and broadcaster [Tom Weir](#)”, session review words including “Inspired, Imagination, Re-invigorated, Relit the spark, Emotional, Come alive, Fun, Be yourself, Finding inner child”.

After reading ‘Otter’, 12-year-old Joseph wrote his first ever poem, ‘Night’s End’. It came second in the inaugural [Perthshire Wild Poetry Competition](#). Held alongside Pitlochry Festival Theatre’s Winter Words Festival, “a fantastic show of wonderful wild poems in [English](#) and [Gaelic](#) [sound links] showcased a new generation of young writers that appreciate time spent in wild places”.



**Toby Clark** @ClarkToby  
Following

Fab to see @lomondtrossachs NP Rangers & partners engage with Literacy & Nature this morning under the watchful eye of Tom Weir (he knew a thing or two about communication!). #TheLostWords continues to be relevant across all educators 🍀 [johnmuirtrust.org/initiatives/th...](http://johnmuirtrust.org/initiatives/th...)



### First Minister’s Reading Challenge blog

‘Outdoor Reading Journeys with *The Lost Words*’ featured as a February Scottish Book Trust [blog for the First Minister’s Reading Challenge](#), which helps children and young people in Scotland develop a love of reading.

It tells of captivated pupils, “children who would never dream of reading out their work”, proud to share their own spells on video, and children reconnected with the nature through creative writing. Learning is taken out of the classroom – “On a blustery January morning, we hunkered down in a tent in Culag Woods” – and discussion stimulated about urbanisation and nature access. Along with [free resources](#) the book is seen as “a vital puzzle piece to understanding the natural world, while also providing an excellent resource for cross-curricular-learning”.



**Reading Challenge** @FMReadChallenge  
Follow

We’re starting to step tentatively towards spring, and if you want to take your class outside, we have a blog for you – how to use your copy of ‘The Lost Words’ to bring the magic of nature to your pupils. 🍀 🌻 🍀 [bit.ly/LostWordsBlog](http://bit.ly/LostWordsBlog)



1:53 AM - 26 Feb 2019  
4 Retweets 9 Likes

Tweet your reply

**Robert Macfarlane** @RobGMacfarlane · Mar 6  
Replying to @FMReadChallenge  
Reading this - and seeing this photo - with such pleasure. Thank you for all you do to spread reading & literacy across Scotland.

## STEM Sessions, Cross-Curricular Collaborations

STEM learning – Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths – traditionally brings to mind lab coats and algebra. A major drive in Scotland “to widen public engagement for all ages, to increase confidence and strengthen STEM-related life skills and STEM literacy” (Sheila Rowan, Chief Scientific Adviser) invites creativity and collaboration.

To explore nature as an inspiration for learning and ‘literacy’ in its broadest sense, [Highland Council’s RAiSE](#) (Raising Aspirations in Science Education) programme and [Glasgow City Council STEM team](#) invited the John Muir Trust to run [workshops](#) with them. Activities from [The Lost Words Explorer’s Guide](#) - including creating a conversation between two wild animals (mostly native Scottish species); writing collective poems to instil curiosity; ‘Hapa Zome’ creation of natural leaf prints – appealed to over 100 participants including early years practitioners, primary and secondary school teachers, additional support needs staff, rangers and partners.

STEM Glasgow  
@STEMglasgow

Follow

Interested in literacy and nature? The #LostWords CLPL on 20th March delivered by @ClarkToby from @JohnMuirTrust is for you. Sign up is available on CPD Manager using ID:64787 #STEMGlasgow #LostWords

### The Lost Words

**What's On**

To coincide with *The Lost Words* being placed in every School in Scotland, the John Muir Trust, Glasgow City Council and Glasgow Science Centre are providing free training sessions on Literacy and Nature. The training will include: discussion exploring 'literacy' in its broadest sense; hands-on experience of different writing activities and balance with art/science approaches; and references and signposting to literacy & nature resources. In particular, we shall be using Eva John's Explorer's Guide to *The Lost Words* to make our own 'spells' and art work inspired by nature, and enjoy time outside in nature.

Further information can be found here: [www.johnmuirtrust.org/initiatives/the-lost-words](http://www.johnmuirtrust.org/initiatives/the-lost-words)

#TheLostWords

Please note only one space per school

**When and Where**

Wednesday 20th March, 4pm-6pm  
Glasgow Science Centre  
50 Pacific Quay, G51 1EA

**CPD Manager**

ID: 64787 Ref: STEM15T







The twin taproots of *The Lost Words* are, as Robert Macfarlane puts it, “nature and literacy twining together”. Described by one educator as “an unashamedly glorious celebration of relationships with nature through words and images”, its messages of curiosity and care, kinship and connectivity, are reaching deep into families, schools and communities. They’re finding a home in a wide range of contexts and locations, from inner cities to rural settings. It’s not just “a book that has never finished saying what it has to say”, it seems that it’s only just started.

Rob Bushby, May 2019 @rob\_bushby