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Author/Interview subject: Konnie Huq

Interviewed by: Janice Forsyth

Other speakers: Boy

Girl

JF Well, hello there, I'm Janice Forsyth. A huge warm welcome from me to you, wherever you're watching. This is Authors Live, thank you so much for joining us, you're in for such a treat today, and I'm not here on my own, that would be quite strange. We've got a brilliant audience with us today, some pupils from the Glasgow primary school, Hillhead Primary School, have a wee look, I'm not making it up, they're waving to you. They might even cheer at you.

Aud [cheers]

JF They're such a friendly bunch, you've made new friends instantly thanks to Authors Live. Delighted you can be here today. They're all a bit excited and so am I, we all are here at the BBC, to meet our special guest today. She's a writer, she's a television presenter that I'm sure you have seen or other people in your family might have seen a few years ago, but one of the most famous aspects of her, of Konnie Huq, that's who I'm talking about, that she was the longest serving female presenter of Blue Peter. That deserves a woo.

Aud [cheers]

JF Yeah, come on, what an achievement. What you might not know about Konnie is that she's into all sorts of other things, and she absolutely loves maths and science, so she has very cleverly combined that with the writing in her book called *Cookie and the Most Annoying Boy in the World*, which is a tremendous title for starters. So, she's going to be sharing the book with us today, we're in for tons of fun, let me tell you that, and we would love to hear from you too. So, if your class or whoever you're with has a Twitter account, please get on and put a cracking question to Konnie which I will try to ask her later on. We might have tons, but I'll get through as many as possible towards the end of today's Authors Live. All you have to do is use the hashtag #bbcauthorlive. Altogether now...

Aud #bbcauthorlive

JF #bbcauthorlive. There you go, you won't forget, looking forward to your really cool questions. So, as I say, tons of fun ahead with Konnie. What she's going to do first of all is tell us all about the book and do a little bit of a reading, so I think we should give her a massive round of applause out there and here. Konnie Huq.

Aud [cheers]

KH Thank you very much, it's great to be here today, and to introduce my new book to you. This is *Cookie and the Most Annoying Boy in the World*. Now, hands up if you know someone annoying. Oh, my goodness, every hand is up in the house. Okay, hands down. Hands up if the annoying person you know is sat next to you right now. You can do this at school as well. Really? No way, there's some hands up over here, I can't believe it, there's lots of people going, that's the annoying person, no, that's the annoying person. Okay, hands down. Well, this is exactly what happens to Cookie, the character in this book. So, Cookie has a best friend, and it's her best friend in the whole wide world. She always used to feel like a bit of an outsider, and then Keziah, another nine year old girl, joined the school and they became inseparable best buddies.

And who here has a best friend, hands up? Ah yeah, most of you have a best friend, that's pretty cool. You can do stuff together, share stuff together, sometimes you laugh at the same things, you have the same thoughts, you watch the same TV shows, it's pretty good. But Cookie received some devastating news, that her best friend's dad has got a job in Solihull, so they're going to move house. So, Cookie is absolutely devastated after finding her partner in crime, Keziah, is going to move away. So Cookie thinks about how she can solve this problem, and she's seen this cat in the local pet shop near her, and she wants to buy this cat, and she's been visiting the cat every day in the summer holidays, she's given the cat a name, she's really bonded with this cat, and then shock horror, this chap comes along, the most annoying boy in the world.

Not only does he buy the cat that she wants from the local pet shop, he moves into her neighbourhood and into her school, and the teacher sits him next to Cookie in the space that she has been saving for her best friend, Keziah. And then to make matters even worse, she finds out that he's got the place that she wants on the quiz show team at her school. So, the school are really into education, as most schools are – and so they should be too – and Cookie is also into learning. She loves long words and knowledge, and her favourite quiz show on TV is having a show in which members from her school are invited to

compete, and she's dying to go on this quiz show, but Jake then gets to go on the quiz show. And I won't tell you much more, but we are going to be having a little bit of a quiz later, so you'll have to all get your thinking caps on, and we're going to be playing the very quiz that Cookie plays in the quiz show in the book.

Now, hands up here if you think education and knowledge is cool. Okay, that's the right answer, because often when I was younger as a kid, I used to think, ugh, school, boring, education, boring, and often you only realise when you're older how brilliant it is, and it's thanks to knowledge that we've progressed in society, and thanks to science as well. Without science, we would all be cavemen living in caves with only sticks and stones. It's because of science that I can be beamed into classrooms up and down the country, and that the lights are on in the studio now, and there's loads of things like phones in people's pockets and cars that drive down the street, planes that fly without falling out of the sky. Science is really cool, so Cookie loves science and she loves maths, she's got a very practical mind, but she also loves all things arty, she's got a very creative imagination, and she also loves long words.

So, one of her favourite words is the word troglodyte. Does anyone know what troglodyte is? Put your hands up if you know what a troglodyte is. Yeah, no-one's heard of that. A troglodyte is a cave dweller, is someone that lives in a cave, and that's one of her favourite words. She also likes the word, to defenestrate. Does anyone know what that means? To defenestrate means to throw out the window, so if I said to my school teacher, I'm going to defenestrate you, which I would never have done at school, that means I'm going to throw you out of the window. So she's got lots and lots of interests and passions, Cookie, and she's got a very inquisitive mind, and I'm going to read a bit of the book to you now, and this is the bit in chapter four, so Keziah is going to be moving away soon, but they've still got the whole term left together at school, and Cookie is out and about with her dad in the shops, and she's gone to a shop which is called a cash and carry.

Cookie's dad owns a restaurant, and a cash and carry is like a giant supermarket where you buy stock for if you have a shop. So instead of buying say one can of baked beans, in a cash and carry, a grocery shop can buy a whole crate of cans of baked beans, so everything is in big quantities in the cash and carry, and instead of having your ordinary shopping trolley like you might get in a supermarket, they have like trolleys that you get in the airport so that you can carry really big quantities of stuff around. So, this is chapter four, where Cookie sees her teacher out and about. Who here has seen their teacher out and about? Oh, where have you in the front you, yes, you on the corner in the front row,

where did you see your teacher? Do you remember? Was it at the shops or was it in the park? Was it on the local high street?

Boy I think it was on the train.

KH It was on the train. Did you say hello to your teacher? You did, because that can often be tricky saying hello. Sometimes when I would see teachers out and about, I'd hide, because I'd be like a bit nervous and a bit worried. Hmm, if you've seen your teacher and about ever, you might relate to this next chapter, chapter four. Ms Krantz is in the cash and carry. What's she doing here? She's in the sweets section, the best section, there are buckets of cola bottles stacked up next to tubs of gummy bears, and there's a gap in between, so I can see through to the next aisle. She's getting a bucket of marshmallow flumps. Wow, she is such a cool teacher. Knowing her, she's probably going to dish them out one by one to each member of her new class at the start of term as a welcome present. I cannot wait. It's so strange seeing teachers out of school.

She's wearing normal civilian clothes, a baggy oversized hood top, leggings and trainers. Very un-teachery. She looks more like a celebrity in a paparazzi shot when they're in scruffy no make-up mode, but look cool anyway. I don't want her to see me or Dad, that would be a bit weird. Teachers are for school, not for normal life. The two worlds do not mix. Plus, it's kind of fun spying on her. I wonder what else she's buying. I can't see from here if she has a trolley. I'm going to follow her and find out more. Is she alone? If not, who's she with? Is it her husband? Does she have a husband? Do they own a shop? What does it sell? Does it sell cereal? What's her favourite cereal? Does she have sugar in her cereal or in her tea? Does she even drink tea or is she a coffee person? Does she have cappuccino or espresso? Does she pick her nose? What does she do with the bogey? Does she use emojis?

Crying laughing emojis, I have so many questions, I quite fancy myself as a private detective. She is walking with purpose. I am hot on her heels. Something catches her eye. She turns around to look. I quickly duck out of the way behind a mountain of Turkish delight. I am not a fan. I like chocolate and I like jelly, but not together in the same mouthful, yuk. She's looking at a sign about made to order cakes. Perhaps she's having a party. She seems like the type that would throw lots of parties. I reckon she has loads of friends, maybe some of them are even famous. There's probably a chef who cooks the food and an outdoor area with sofas and fairy lights, even a chocolate fountain to dip fresh fruit and marshmallow flumps in. Yes, that's it, the flumps are for the party. I bet Ms Krantz throws the coolest parties. She turns back. Looks like she doesn't want a made to order cake on this occasion. Phew, she doesn't seem me.

She is walking with purpose. I'm right behind her, and before I know it, she's striding out towards the cash points, past the queue, past the tills, past the security guard and straight out of the shop. What? I am dumbfounded. Ms Krantz is taking the flumps without paying. Ms Krantz is a shoplifter. No way. There is a security guard by the exit doors, and she strides right past him with complete confidence. How brazen. She's even smiling at him. Unbelievable. Wait 'til I tell Keziah. Krantz has gone way down in my estimation, thief. Did I imagine the whole episode? I just saw my favourite teacher in the whole world shoplifting, and not just any old thing, but a whole bucket of marshmallow flumps. Don't get me wrong, it's better than a gold watch or a laptop, but it's much worse than taking one marshmallow flump from the pick and mix, that would be small time. This is medium time. What's she going to do? Will she report her teacher? Will she keep it a secret? Will she tell her friends? Will she tell her family? What will she do?

What would you do if you saw your teacher shoplifting? Oh-oh, you might be in a classroom with your teacher now, so maybe keep that thought under your hat, but you'll have to read on to find out, and somebody's hat is up in the front row. Yes, did you want to ask a question?

Boy If I saw my teacher, I would probably go into school and then tell all my friends and then like...if they had him in the class, just steal all of the marshmallows and eat them myself.

KH You'd steal back from the teacher?

Boy Yeah.

KH Revenge.

Boy Yeah.

KH Interesting tactic, but then what happens if the teacher told the headmaster?

Boy Then I would just that they shoplifted and I kept it a secret, and then I could just...

KH [laughs] And that's the thing, it would be your word against the teacher's word, so Cookie comes up with four options of what she could do about the shoplifting teacher, but she's not sure which one to pick. Ugh, it's tricky stuff, and there's a lot of tricky stuff going on in Cookie's world in general. As I've told you, her best friend is moving away, this new annoying boy has come into town, and you all know what it's like to meet someone annoying, and she really wants a place on the quiz team of this show called Brain Busters which is on TV. So, who here is ready to play a quiz, hands up? Ah yeah, that is good news, and you guys, you can play along in your classrooms and see how well you do. Now, because

Cookie likes science and learning, all the questions in this quiz are going to be to do with science and learning and information and knowledge in general.

I like the excitement on your face in the front row, this is good news. So, first up, I need to explain to you the rules of the quiz. Okay, so we're going to have to pick now which team is going to go first, so I need to think of a random way...I'm going to ask a question. The first hand to go up into the air and answer the question correctly, your team will start the quiz off. Okay, so guys, are you ready?

Aud Yes.

KH Okay, that is good news indeed. Alright then, hands up if you can tell me the biggest components of – or actually, I'm going to make it easier – one of the components of the air we breathe. Yes, you were first.

Boy Oxygen.

KH Oxygen, that is correct, which means you, the red team are going to go first, so you're the red team, and you're the blue team, and I'm going to explain the rules to you. So, the red team, what you need to do is you need to work your way across this board, linking red to red by answering questions right. So all these letters correspond to answers of questions that I'm going to ask you, so you want to make your way across the board. You can do that in a straight line by answering questions C, M, H, D, or you can go wiggly or you could go diagonal, however you want, link red to red. Blue team, you are also playing, but you want to link the blue side of the board to the blue side of the board down here, so you're going from top to bottom, okay? And that's all done by answering questions which correspond to letters. So, as you won the toss, red team, and as you said the correct question, would you like to pick a letter that will help you link from red to red, so you're the red team, you're going first. Okay, what letter is it that you'd like to start off with?

Boy C.

KH C, ooh, that's good, and you all conferred, I like that, good team tactics. Okay, so hands up whoever on the red team would like to answer a question where the answer begins with a C? Okay, good confidence here. Right, young lady in the front row, the first question is, nimbus, cumulus and stratus are all types of what C? Do you know? Oh, it's a tricky one. Oh no? Okay. I'm going to have to say...well, shall I give you a clue, because it's the first time, I'll give you a clue when you have your first question, blue team. It's something that you see in the sky. Fluffy.

Girl Clouds?

KH Cloud is the correct answer, so blue team, you are off...no, no, you're the red team, I've totally got that wrong. Red team, you are of the starters' blocks, so there we go, that's a red square for you. Marvellous. Okay, so next letter, what will you be picking next? Remember you're working your way from left to right.

Girl M.

KH M, it's a good choice. Okay, so hands up on this team, who would like to answer a question, okay, for M, and I'm not going to give any clues this time, so it could get a bit trickier. So young lady in the back row, what M is the closest planet to the sun?

Girl Mars?

KH Mars I'm afraid is not the correct answer, it's actually Mercury. I'm sorry, so I'm now going to go over to the blue team, so blue team, who would like to answer a question for M, the letter M? Okay, young lady in the front row, what M do you call molten rock before it has erupted out of a volcano? Oh, these are tricky questions, but I did say I would give a clue, didn't I? So, you could say it's magnificent, that's a clue in the word. Any ideas, you can confer, comes out of a volcano. You can confer, because they conferred on their first question, so see if your teammates might have...

Girl Magma?

KH Did you say magma? No, what did...

Girl Magma, she said magma.

KH Magma? Magma is the correct answer, which means that we have...okay, one all, what letter would you like next? Any ideas? Choose any letter. Remember, you're linking top to bottom.

Girl E.

KH E, it's a good choice, right there above the letter M. Okay, so hands up if you want to answer an E question. Okay, so I'm going to go for the young man in the front row. What E is the name given to the two days a year when day and night are of equal length? That's really tricky. No? Okay, I'm sorry, it's actually equinox, which means we go over to the red team over here. So, who wants to answer a question with a letter E? Ooh, you're looking uncertain. This gentleman in the middle of the front row, what E orbits the nucleus of an atom? It's so tricky. You

can confer, does anyone know in your team? Any ideas? Oh, I think we're out of time. It's electrons, which means that I'm going to have to pass it back to the team over here, which is the blue team. Okay, blue team, who's going to answer a question beginning with E, any ideas? Okay, good, okay, so on the back row in the middle there, name me an animal beginning with the letter E. Are you out of time?

Boy Elephant.

KH Oh, just in the nick of time, okay, just in the nick of time, well done, well done. Okay, which means you get a blue there, so what would you like next, what letter?

Boy B.

KH Okay, working your way down the board, don't worry red team, you can snatch this away. So who's going to answer a question beginning with B? Okay, gentleman in the middle, there we go. What B is the name used in computing for a system using zeros and ones? That's tricky. I'm afraid we're out of time, the answer is binary, which means we come back over to the red team. Who's going to answer a B question? Okay, who shall I pick, it's all the same people, hands going...okay, you in the back row, what B measures pressure, is an instrument used to measure pressure? So, like a thermometer measures heat, what could measure pressure, any ideas?

Boy Is it PSI?

KH Sorry?

Boy Is it PSI?

KH PSI does measure pressure, but I need an instrument that begins with the letter B. No? The answer was barometer, which means I'm going to have to pass it over again to the blue team. Okay, hands up, okay, you on the front row, what B is the food that makes up nearly 99 per cent of a giant panda's diet?

Boy Bamboo?

KH Oh, bamboo is the correct answer, well done, which means blue team, you've got...you've nearly done the linking, but don't worry red team, you can steal this and still make your way up like that. So, let me guess, what letter would you like?

Boy I.

KH I, I thought you might want I. Okay, who is going to answer a question with the letter I? Young girl in the back row. Okay, the mass of the earth is made up mostly of two elements, oxygen and which I, any ideas? Have a guess.

Girl Iron?

KH Iron is the correct answer, which means well done blue team. Those were really tricky questions, so congratulations to the blue team, but red team, do not worry, because I know that those questions were very tricky and sciencey, and so I think you should all give yourselves a massive round of applause. Well done. It wasn't easy. Great, so there you go, science is the reason why everything is as it is in our society. Like I said, we'd all be cavemen living with stick and stones in caves, but it's so brilliant, and in the book, Cookie's class has a science competition, so the school are all doing this science competition. They have to come up with brilliant ideas for inventions and innovations, and in the back of the book, there's loads of experiments that you can try out yourself of the things that Cookie does with her school in classes. So, you can learn how to make a potato clock, you can learn how to do the...who knows what happens if you put Mentos in a fizzy drink? Yeah, on the corner there, what happens?

Boy It blows up.

KH Yeah, you get a massive fountain, which is what happens on the front of the book. I don't suggest you ever do that inside, only in your garden, but there's loads of stuff that you can try. And so we're going to chat a little bit about the book now, and we're going to welcome back onto the stage Janice.

JF That got tense.

KH It did, it was back and forth and back and forth.

JF I loved that final answer from the girl in the back, iron.

KH I know.

JF That was magnificent, well done.

KH And it was a tricky question, wasn't it?

JF Very tricky. Well, thinking of questions, actually, we've got a few coming in.

KH Ah, okay, marvellous.

JF We're going to start, we've heard from a few people who are watching across the country, but also, we've got a couple of questions from our pupils here at Hillhead.

KH Oh brilliant, okay, right.

JF So who are we going to start with? Shall we go with Olivia, and we'll get the microphone to you and you can ask your question to Konnie, Olivia, thank you.

Girl What was it about science that you loved so much in school?

KH Do you know what I think it is? I think it really makes a difference if you have good science teachers, because I think for lots of people, science is this thing that you start doing at secondary school, and it's almost like a foreign language, it's a bit alien, there's lab coats and experiments and chemical formulae, but actually, science is all around us, even the way that say that drops on the floor is to do with science. Some things drop faster, some things drop slower, some things might propel down to the ground if they're in a helicopter shape, everything we do, me speaking now, you can hear me because of these vibrations, everything is vibrating, and there's this thing called the electromagnetic spectrum.

You know what science is? It connects everything, and you don't realise how the world is all connected and how the world works, and how buildings stand up and things...you know, even the clothes we wear don't rip, they're the right sort of tensile strength. Everything works because of science, and that's absolutely fascinating, and I think once you sort of start to see that it doesn't have to be this complicated thing, we can start being interested in science a little bit earlier, it's fascinating. The other day, I met a scientist and I said, what's your specialist subject, and she's a scientist that studies laughter. So, she travels the world and meets people in different cultures, and there are people that laugh at sadness. I didn't know that before. Mice laugh.

JF No.

KH She does experiments where she has to tickle mice. [laughter] Yeah, and her work is fascinating, so science can be to do with anything, you know, and laughing is something we often associate with jokes and performance and comedy and the arts, but actually, the science and the arts are really, really integrated, and Cookie loves both arty things and sciencey things, and I always think that about myself, and more and more in society, the two are totally combined.

JF Yeah, I always think that too, because when I was at school, I was into the arts side of things and not so much science, but you're absolutely right, it's just the things we take for granted, like the physical objects we're sitting on and everything you've just said, once you start thinking about it, it's like wow, you could get totally hooked to that.

KH Absolutely, and nowadays when you watch a film, often there might be lots of CGI in it, and that's all through...down to computer that that's happened. And sometimes if you're playing – I don't know – a video game, the graphics can almost look real, like you're watching a film, and its actors acting, and then they...the two are combining more and more.

JF Yeah, indeed. Let's have another question, and we have Lachie here who is in the front row, and the microphone is all yours, sir.

Boy What was it like having to illustrate the book with so many drawings?

KH So it was actually really fun, and I wasn't originally going to illustrate the book, but what happened was as I was writing the story, I realised Cookie is often thinking things that she isn't saying, so she might be saying one thing and thinking a totally different thing. So she might be saying, oh yes, I'm very well today, and inside she might be thinking, I'm really nervous and scared, and so the comic strips are often things that are going on in Cookie's mind and funny things that she's thinking, and it was funny, because I always say to people, you know, I would have done amazing illustrations like Chris Riddell or Axel Scheffler, but luckily Cookie is just doing stickmen, because she's a young girl at primary school, so I'm just drawing through the eyes of Cookie, and that's why the drawings are sort of funny little stickmen type people.

JF They are very funny. Could have the microphone back to Lachie, because I just wonder, Lachie, that's an interesting question picking up on the drawings and illustrations rather than the words, do you like drawing myself?

Boy I'm not that good at it, but...

JF Are you not?

Boy I do like drawing, yeah.

JF Yeah.

KH It's funny you should say that, because I'm not that good at it either, but you know, you don't have to be good at something for...you know, I've illustrated a book and they're just funny little cartoons that sort of tell a story, and that's the

thing. It's not always the winning, it's the taking part, as you all know from the quiz, because, you know, it's fun to have a go at stuff, and that's so important. And Cookie, I would not say, is a winner in life, but you know, having a go is really, really important.

JF Yeah, and I think also brings up the whole idea of...in terms of reading, you can read anything. When I was a kid, honestly, I used to read the sauce bottle when I was having my tea, was having my chips, I'd read the sauce bottle and all the stuff on it.

KH Yeah, yeah, yeah, the ingredients.

JF And cartoons, graphic novels, all of that stuff, it's all out there.

KH Yeah, pictures help draw people into narratives, because often when young people say that they're not into reading, they just haven't found the right books for them, because there's so many books in the world, and there's so many books on offer, and sometimes it just takes to tap into the right book before you realise, hey, I like this.

JF Yeah. We've got some questions that have come in from across the country. Do you want to hear some questions from some of the folk who are watching?

Aud Yeah.

JF Yeah, so here we go, Konnie. This is from Matthew, primary seven, Livingston Village Primary School, thank you very much. Which camera shall I wave at? Is it this one? Hello.

KH I'm waving too.

JF Yeah, we'll wave at all cameras.

KH Hello.

JF Thank you very much for watching, hello to all of you, and Matthew's question for you, Konnie, is, we know that Cookie wants a pet, do you have any pets?

KH On my years in Blue Peter I had lots of Blue Peter pets, but the travelling around and going to different places means that it can be tricky to have a pet. I guess cats are more independent, which is what Cookie wants, and also living in a city, often it can be tricky, because pets need love and exercise, a bit like children. I've got two young children, so I don't have a pet, and will Cookie get the pet? You'll see.

- JF And what about in your family, is there a demand for pets there?
- KH You know, my two young sons actually are very fond of my friend's dog, and she often brings her dog round, this very sweet little dog, and I think it's nice, because they get to play with a dog, and then they don't have the responsibility.
- JF [laughs] And the doggy goes home.
- KH Yes.
- JF That sounds like a very good arrangement, you've lucked out there.
- KH Yeah.
- JF Pencaitland Primary, gorgeous part of the world, Pencaitland Primary, P6 and P7, their question for you, Konnie, are your characters inspired by anyone you've met in real life?
- KH Hello, Pencaitland Primary. I would have to say that most of the characters are inspired by people, and often when you're writing a story, it becomes more authentic and much easier to write if you can base it to some extent on reality, but often the characters are a mix of people, but Cookie, for instance, has two older sisters, and the middle one is into politics. My little sister is my local MP. The eldest one is nine years older than her and is off at university, and my eldest sister was nine years older than me, so there are, sort of, similarities in the set-up and yeah, the dynamic.
- JF I guess that's quite good, actually, for anybody who's here in the studio or watching, actually, who writes lots of stories at primary school, but it's the idea of continuing that and how you can draw inspiration from your own life, which might make it a little bit easier when you're starting off.
- KH I always think to draw inspiration from your own life is a good starting point, and then you can sort of go off on a tangent if you want to bring wizards or aliens into a story, or have something magical happening, but it's always a good starting point to write what you know, if you're having troubles thinking about, what can I write about, I want to write a story. Obviously if your imagination's already run wild and you've got it locked down, then that's fine, but if you're thinking, hmm, I'm not sure.
- JF And do you have a particular writing routine, do you have a particular little room in the house or a little space or a particular pen? I'm talking about pens. Presumably you do it all with computers, although your drawings, presumably you don't.

- KH Well, no, the drawings are definitely done with pen, but the whole book was actually written on my phone.
- JF What?
- KH Yes, because I'm a mum of two young children, and my youngest only started primary last year...
- JF So you've been busy.
- KH ...and so I write in the window of between drop off and pick up, and often there's lots of other things to do, and I found because I'm often on the go, to be able to just write anywhere and everywhere quite quickly and easily really works for me.
- JF That's amazing. See, I wouldn't be able to do that because of my glasses, it would take me forever. Do you then...so you get it all done, and then is there a process after that where you're going back through it maybe changing stuff or not much?
- KH So what I'll do is I'll write the story first and then I'll go back through it and think of sewing the pictures in, but often the two work hand in hand, so a lot of the time the pictures will come as I'm writing the story, in which case I'll note them down.
- JF By the way, I just love the idea of Cookie sort of spying as a detective on her teacher, because it reminded me of when I was that age, I thought that my teacher...I convinced myself that a teacher...I loved most of them, this was one I didn't particularly like, so I made her a baddie, and she was a spy, and I used to follow her down the road and see her with a raincoat on, and it was exactly that feeling of, I'm seeing her outside of the school.
- KH Well, you never know.
- JF Yeah.
- KH Some of these undercover spies have to have double lives, so you just don't know.
- JF [laughs] I might have been right. Okay, this is from Ally in Greenrigg primary four, and Ally says, how did you get into reading?
- KH You know what, so like I said before, often it's a gateway book that can pull you in, and I remember reading the very first book that I felt was a grown up book, so there weren't many pictures in it, if any, actually, and it was a book called Superfudge by a lady called Judy Blume. And what's interesting was that it was actually the sequel to another book that I hadn't read, but it didn't matter,

because I was so drawn in by the writing, because I felt the writing was for grown-ups, not little children, and I remember this descriptive part of the book where this boy is told by his parents that they're expecting a baby, and his mum's chopping carrots in the kitchen and he's just picking up bits of carrot and eating them, and then she drops this bombshell that she's going to have a baby, and he already doesn't get on well with his little brother, and he spews bits of little...chewed up bits of carrot across the kitchen, and I remember it being very descriptively written, and I could actually picture it in my head [laughter], and that book I read cover to cover almost in one sitting, and often, you know, when a certain book speaks to you, you can get really hooked in.

JF Yeah, I wonder, I mean, anybody want to tell us, put your hand up if there's a particular book that you absolutely loved and we can try and get a microphone over to you, if we can do that? And here we have...so the boy in the middle there, yes, you, thank you.

Boy It's a book called The Last Chance Lighthouse by Nicki Thornton that I really enjoyed. It's basically about this boy called Seth who's a kitchen boy for the Last Chance Hotel. His boss, Mr Bunn, he has a meeting, and this magician comes in, and then he gets into a whole world of adventure and magic and things.

KH And magic, ah.

JF Wow. What was it about...do you remember that feeling when you opened the book and you got into it, what was it about it that hooked you in and made you want to keep reading?

Boy It's just I hadn't read any other bed like it. It was the first in a series, so it was really...yeah.

JF Fantastic, that's great.

KH And have you read the rest of the series then?

Boy There's only two books out, the second one was quite recent.

KH Ah, okay.

JF Well, if the author sees you on this, they might get writing a third one. Let's just...anyone...the girl in the back row here, yes.

Girl I liked a book called Smile. It's by Raina Telgemeier, and it's where this girl comes back from like brownies or something, and then she runs for like a race,

and then she trips over like some wood, and then her front teeth fall out, so she has to get braces.

JF Wow, gosh. That's a traumatic incident. Thank you very much, beautifully explained. This is great, and I guess you can continue the conversation in your classrooms about favourite books, and particularly books that got you hooked in. Thank you very much for that. Let's have another question from...this is from P5, Konnie, Menstrie Primary. I wonder if you sort of answered this, maybe not, who inspired you to become an author?

KH You know, so I presented Blue Peter for over ten years, and in that time we started up the Blue Peter book awards, so I would read a lot of books. Often I was on the judging panel for the Blue Peter book awards, and like I said that after I had read as a child this one book, I became quite a voracious reader, so I'd always been interested in reading and books in general, and then having had my own children now, and I read to them every night, the timing felt right now that my youngest has gone into school, to be able to write a book, because I've been asked ever since I left Blue Peter. And I've always had this character, Cookie, within me, so when I used to do babysitting and looking after kids, I'd often tell them stories about this character called Cookie that I had just made up, so I guess all the sort of elements came together, and it felt like now was the time.

JF Here's a difficult one, it's like saying which of your two boys is your favourite maybe. This is from Madison at Knights Ridge Primary, who is your favourite character in the book? Is it just Cookie?

KH No, actually. My favourite character's a character called Axel, and Axel is...at first you might think Axel's very shy. He's a sort of...he's the boy that gets picked last for PE at school when they're doing PE team picking, and he sort of looks at the floor, so Cookie and her friends, they start off by calling him Axel, I always look at the floor Khan, because he's always looking at the floor, but then as Cookie has to sit next to Jake, the most annoying boy in the world, her best friend Keziah is seated next to Axel, and they actually find out that Axel is really funny, and Axel is a hidden gem, as it were. And I quite like Axel because of the things that he comes up with and the way he is.

JF That's a brilliant answer.

KH He's a good character.

JF A quick answer to this one, this'll be our final one from Burravoe School, thank you very much for joining us, good one to end on, will there be any more books about Cookie?

KH Yeah, so Cookie is...so this book, which is Cookie and The Most Annoying Boy in the World, the overview is about science and learning, like I say, Cookie likes long words, she likes knowledge, she makes lots of lists of things, and there's loads of sort of things in there like tables and graphs and Venn diagrams. You might not know what those things are, but they're all to illustrate funny things, and they're all things that are used in science, and then the book too is all about climate change. Who's been learning about climate change at school? Oh yeah, so you all know, you're all down with climate change, and yeah, climate change and saving the planet, and Cookie joins this forest club and becomes sort of more aware of the bigger picture. And then book three is all to do with coding and computing and hacking, and as well as telling a funny story, I like to think that some of the sort of education will also filter into the readers' minds.

JF I'm sure it will. Well, look, guess what, it's that sciencey timey wimey thing, we've run out of time, because we've been having so much fun. Will you give a huge round of applause please, to Konnie Huq.

KH Thank you.

JF Wow. Multitasking Konnie, yeah, giving us a quiz, reading, telling us about the book and science and all the rest of it, thank you very much indeed, it's been really good fun.

KH Thank you.

JF And don't forget, you can watch the rest...indeed, watch this again, tell your friends if they missed it, or if you want to watch it again with your family, you can do so, and you can watch all the other Authors Live events that we've done, because there's been absolutely tons, if you go to scottishbooktrust.com/authorslive. So we're about to say cheerio to you, but before that, we're with the pupils from Hillhead Primary School, and we're going to see them again on film now, because some of them have been having a wee think about what they would do, what they would invent if they had the chance to come up with their own inventions. So, from all of us, thanks for watching.

Boy I would invent a machine that can do anything I cannot do.

Girl If I could invent anything, it would be a medicine that could cure all diseases.

Girl I would invent a kindness machine, because if you were lonely in the playground, you would press a button on the kindness machine, and somebody else lonely in the playground would come and be your friend and play with you.

- Girl I would invent a time machine so that I could look in the past and future and see all the cool things.
- Boy I would invent a time machine because...in case I make any mistakes, I could reverse time and then I won't have to be in big trouble.
- Boy If I could invent anything, I would invent a knowledge shape that you would plug into a computer, type in what you would like to learn, take it out and eat it and then you would learn the thing.
- Boy I would invent an animal changing machine so I can change into any animal in any sort of situation I want.
- Boy If I could invent anything, I would invent anti-gravity boots, because then it would feel like I was swimming in the air.
- Girl I would invent a teleporting machine so when I want to go on holiday, I can just click my fingers and I'd be there.
- Boy If I was to invent something it would be a cat translator so I could talk to my cat.
- Girl I would invent a never-ending sweet machine so then I could have them whenever I wanted.
- Girl If I could invent anything, I would invent a chocolate robot so that it would give me anything I want, and if it was rude, I would take a bite out of it.
- Boy If I could invent anything, it'd be a rocket skateboard so I could go down the hill, like yeah.