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Author/Interview subject: Danny Wallace

Interviewed by: Janice Forsyth

Other speakers:

JF Hi there, I'm Janice Forsyth. A huge warm welcome to Authors Live, brilliant to have you along wherever you're watching. Hi! You're looking particularly good, and you! Fantastic. Yeah, I am Janice Forsyth and clearly I'm very excited because not only is this Authors Live, which is always good fun, it's also during Scottish Book Week. So I hope wherever you are in Scotland that you've been having a really great time celebrating the wonderful world of books and reading.

Now as usual I'm not here on my own because frankly that would be daft! I have a delightful audience here in the studio with me, pupils from Dundee, from Blackness Primary School. Have a look at them, they're gorgeous. Look! Yeah! Aren't they great? Bright, lively. And enough, calm down! They're wonderful. And I hope that you're having a good time wherever you are too.

So today we're all quite excited because we've got a brilliant author with us today, we're really lucky to have along the wonderful Danny Wallace. He's written his first novel for children, it's called Hamish and the world stoppers. He'll be telling us all about that. And I think if we're very, very well-behaved, or not necessarily, either way, he might just give us some really good advice on what to do if something very, very, very odd should happen. That's exciting, isn't it?

Aud Yeah.

JF Yeah! Thank you very much indeed. Now at the end of the event I'll be putting some of your questions to Danny, and the good news is there is still time to get your questions in if your classroom or your school has a Twitter account. So you can do that right now, get your questions in. But just make sure you use the special hashtag for this event which is #askdannywallace, okay?

So are we all set?

Aud Yes!

JF Shall we just meet the author and shall I just shut up?

Aud Yes!

JF Okay. A huge, big Authors Live welcome please to Danny Wallace! [applause]

DW Hi! Thank you. High Five. Exactly. Oh, another, and a fist pump there. Hello! How are you? I will fist pump and high five you all. Hello to you over there. Happy Scottish Book Week. Are we having a good time?

Aud Yeah!

DW Hands up if you love books. Excellent. Hands up if you love reading those books. Good. Hands up if you enjoy drinking cabbage juice out of the shoe of an old man. Most of you. [chuckling] Okay, that's very, very unusual indeed. Listen, this feels a bit unfair, doesn't it? Because you lot, you all know my name. You lot through there, you all know my name now. My name's Danny. I don't know any of your names, right. So do this as well in your schools, I'll ask you to make some noise. Don't worry about your teachers. I'm in charge now, teachers! They hate that don't they. Some teachers not taking kindly to that at the moment.

But I will ask you to shout out your name after three, as loudly as you can and you as well. So one, two, three.

Aud [shouting]

DW I didn't get them all. Let's try that again. One, two, three.

Aud [shouting]

DW Okay, I got most of them there. I do know though that almost no one in Abbey Primary in North Ayrshire bothered there. Come on North Ayrshire. Neither did most people in Sandwich Junior High in Shetland. They didn't, but you all did. I'll prove it. Where's Ross? I heard a Ross. Ross is here. You see, I was listening. Bethany? A Bethany is over there, excellent. Zainab, where are you? Zainab, I heard your name.

My handwriting did go a bit funny though. Where's Captain Stink Face? [chuckling] That's you! Good, alright. Good, I'm very pleased. Are you happy with that name, Captain Stink Face?

Aud Yes.

DW Very happy is Captain Stink Face. I heard the Mighty Fly as well. Where's...

Aud Me!

DW Very popular name in Dundee it seems, the Mighty Fly. That's good. And finally Carvo, The Moon Faced Bottom Ape, I heard that one. Another very popular name. Also a couple of kids at Hope Primary School in Orkney, also sharing that name. Welcome along.

So who am I and why have I brought you here? Well, let's bond. I'll tell you a little bit about myself first of all. I have my clicker here, so let's have a look at the first thing about me. I have never eaten a prawn. That's the most...

Aud Neither have I.

DW You haven't either?

Aud I haven't!

Aud I haven't.

DW You haven't. Well, that's good.

Aud [inaudible 4:29].

DW Someone here has eaten a prawn cracker though, so that... But no one's eaten a prawn. Good, I'm pleased that we're getting to the root of this. I also have never been on a roller-coaster, never. A few shocked faces in the crowd here. You've all been on rollercoasters, have you?

Aud Yeah!

DW Okay. Well, I've never been on one. I am a married man. Is anyone else here married?

Aud Oh yes!

Aud Yeah.

DW Good. I'm pleased to see that, good. The rest of you though, the rest of you very wise, keeping your options open. Here is a picture of me on my wedding day; this is me and my wife. Very hairy lady, but we make it work. We've got a son, I've got a son. Here's a picture of my son. Yeah, very cute, isn't he? And recently we welcomed a little baby daughter as well.

Aud Awww!

DW So that's my family. A few of you are laughing. I don't know why you're laughing at my family, that does seem a little bit unusual! Also I have sort of another son, alright? And his name is Hamish, and he is the star of my first book for you lot called Hamish and the World Stoppers. And Hamish, I wanted to write a book for you guys. Because when I was a kid I used to read all the time and it seemed like a job that no one could have. It seemed like crazy that people would get to write these books. And then I realised as I grew up that you can do that if you want to.

Does anyone here one day want to write a book?

Aud Yeah.

DW And how about be an illustrator? Who wants to do the drawings in books?

Aud Oh, me.

DW Kind of an even split, it's a good thing. And the thing I want you to remember is that you can do that, alright? You absolutely can. And the only thing you have to do to write a book or write a story or draw the drawings is get on and do it. It is completely achievable. Because I did it and I used to love reading books by Roald Dahl. Has anyone read The Twits? Ah! How good is The Twits? Is The Twits brilliant?

Aud Amazing. Yes.

DW And how about also something like the Beano? Do you read the Beano?

Aud Yes.

DW And you guys should because you're from Dundee which is where the Beano was written. And if you don't know the Beano it's a great comic packed with stories and adventures and jokes, isn't it? And all the things that I used to love reading when I was a kid. So I wanted to write this book. And this is Hamish, like I say, and he's from a town called Starkley. And do you want to know an interesting fact about Starkley?

Aud Yeah, I know.

DW You know the fact, do you?

Aud It's the boringest town ever.

DW You're saying it's the most boring town ever! You're absolutely right. An interesting fact about Starkley is that there are no interesting facts about Starkley. It's a very, very, very boring place. It's very, very, very boring. Very boring, very...

I could just keep saying that forever and that wouldn't even tell you how boring it is. I'll show you the headlines in the local paper. You shout out if you think these are exciting or boring. You do this as well in your schools.

The first headline in the paper; Potato looks a bit like a dog.

Aud Exciting!

DW You think that's exciting!

Aud Yeah.

DW A potato that looks a bit like a dog.

Aud Yeah!

DW Well, then I'm clearly wrong or your standards are very low. Let's have a look at the next one. Unusual yellow car in town. Exciting or boring?

Aud [inaudible 7:50].

DW It is very boring. It's an even split. How about this one; what's that smell?

Aud [inaudible 7:57].

DW Some people applauding this, this is so exciting to them. What's that smell? Well, Hamish doesn't think that it's a very exciting place at all. In fact, he just thinks it's very boring. And then one day something exciting does happen in Starkley, and it's exciting and it's weird and it's strange and it's the first chapter of the book. So shall I read you just for a few minute the first chapter of the book? Are you up for that?

Aud Yes.

DW Good, because it would be very awkward if you said no. So here we go. Prepare yourselves for a man reading out loud!

Aud [inaudible 8:38], he's exciting.

DW Someone shouting one of their favourite characters from the book. I'm pleased, I will get to Madam Couscous, don't worry. But here we go, chapter one.

Hamish Ellerby's eyes were the size of satsumas as he sat completely still in his chair. And he sat completely still because he was totally, utterly petrified. This was so strange. What on earth was going on? Seriously, what on earth? It had all happened in an instant. The scariest, coolest, most awful, most brilliant, most

horrible, most wonderful thing. Hamish wanted to get up and look around but he couldn't, he was too frightened even to move a single muscle. This was incredible.

Just a matter of moments ago gangly Mr Longblather had been leaning forward onto a desk using just his knuckles. The way he always did when he was about to ask class 4E of Winterbourne School a question. Who can tell me about soil erosion, he'd said. And everybody heart's at sunk at once because if there's anything more boring than soil erosion then no one's told me about it.

Mr Longblather was one of those particular boring teachers with a particular talent for making particularly boring things even more particularly boring than normal. In this respect he was extraordinary. And when the question had been asked Hamish had stared at his pencil case and made his special oh, let me think face. He ran his head through the thick black hair his mum called the mess, and squeezed his huge eyes shut like he was really trying to come up with an answer.

Soil erosion, Mr Longblather had repeated, now looking a bit peeved. Come on, 4E, soil erosion. Mr Longblather had then put his hands on his hips and sighed a deep sigh. Surely someone knows something about... And there he had paused. And this pause went on, and on, and on, and then on some more. In fact, no one said anything for ages. The class had never been so quiet. It was really very awkward.

And that was when Hamish realised something was just a little bit wrong. Because when he finally looked up Hamish could see that Mr Longblather was completely and utterly still. Frozen. A statue, immobile, not moving, stuck. Stuck-stuck. And I think we might be able to see a picture of that. Let's get that up.

Well, this is odd thought Hamish. He frowned and studied his teacher a little closer. Mr Longblather's mouth was wide open, his fat pink tongue hovering near his two front teeth. Mr Longblather had a very thin, very droopy moustache that sort of looked quite sad to be there. It was so long it looked like it was trying to escape from his face. Hamish could see some drool glistening between its thin brown wiry hairs, and then Hamish noticed something even odder, if that was possible.

A tiny ball of spit was hanging in the air, just a few centimetres from Mr Longblather's mouth. It caught the sunlight and glistened like a miniature star. How was it just hanging there? It was fascinating. It made Hamish want to reach out and touch that little wet ball. And this was probably the first time in his life he'd ever actually wanted to touch someone else's spit.

He turned to see if the rest of 4E had noticed this little spit star too, which is when he saw what really shocked him. They were all perfectly still too. Nobody was moving. The school bully Grenville Bile had one grubby, tubby little finger halfway up his nose and was making a face like he'd just smelt some really awful cheese. But he wasn't moving.

Colin Robinson had one skinny leg raised slightly off the ground and a very guilty look on his face. But he wasn't moving. Hamish started to sweat. He looked out the window and saw the school caretaker Rex Ox, maybe he could call out to him. But then Hamish realised that Rex Ox's feet seemed to be planted to the ground and his broad shoulders were perfectly still. The bright orange leaf blower he had in his hands was silent and my goodness, look, leaves were stuck in the air all around him.

And there, over there by the bins, a cat was leaping between two walls except it was just floating in mid-air. It looked like some kind of weird cat balloon. And then Hamish pressed his hands against the window and stared into the sky because there was a plan up there, stopped still, like it was pinned to two clouds that weren't moving either. Hamish's eyes struggled to take everything in. They were getting wider and wider and wider and wider. What should he do? What do you do when the whole world stops?

And the longer the pause became the more Hamish realised he was afraid, he was very, very afraid. Because what if the world never starts again, he thought, alone in the silence. What if this lesson about soil erosion just goes on and on forever? And then after what could've been a minute or an hour or a whole month later, soil erosion, Mr Longblather shouted, which startled Hamish so deeply his knees slapped against the roof of his desk. Then he felt that little spit star finish its journey and slop right on the end of his nose.

But Hamish didn't care, because there was movement. The clock ticked again like nothing at all had happened. Somewhere a bell rang. One of Mr Longblather's hairy knuckles cracked on the desk. Hamish glanced at Grenville Bile who was still foraging in his nostrils trying to find what he always called the fruits of my nose. Outside cars motored by, the cat landed safely and dashed behind some bins which rattled and rocked as she knocked them. Hamish felt such relief.

Trees were swaying, shadows shifting, planes flying, clouds floating, winds blowing, and Mr Longblather still waited for his answer. I am perfectly happy to keep asking until the end of time, he said grumpily. And then everybody laughed as Colin Robinson farted.

And that's chapter one. Give yourself a round of applause for listening so intently. [applause] Good work. I apologise by the way for the use of that rude word right at the end there. I know you're okay with it, but all the kids at Gilmerton Primary School in Edinburgh, they're so polite, they're all angels! They would've hated that!

So what have we learnt? Well, we've learnt that Hamish was in a lesson and then the whole world just stopped. And that idea came to me when I was about your age, and I was going on a school trip. And I looked out of the window and saw a city that I'd never really seen, and loads and loads of strangers. And I'd never seen so many strangers. And I was thinking what do all these people do when I'm at school? Do they still go about their business or are they like robots? Do they just stop?

And that got me thinking. What would you do if the whole world stopped. So let me ask you what would you do? Any ideas? What would you do? Yeah, you've got an idea.

Aud Eat all the sweets.

DW You would eat all the sweets. He would eat all the sweets. Who would agree with that? That's good. All of you. Yes, you've got one?

Aud I would pull the teacher's trousers down.

DW He would pull the teacher's trousers down. What disgraceful behaviour. I'm so sorry teachers if you're watching, but you know, it is a good idea. Any others? How about you with the glasses there?

Aud [inaudible 16:31].

DW You'd take a computer and then play it, yes. So all the video games that you're not supposed to be playing. How about you, yes?

Aud [inaudible 16:38].

DW You would get revenge on anybody who's done a naughty thing to you. Well, all these things are possible. Let me tell you, I asked some kids down my road and by the way, if you're watching in your schools and you've got any brilliant ideas for what you would do if the world stopped, get your teacher to tweet in, #askdannywallace. And tell me what you would do if the whole world stopped.

And let me know, would you agree with any of these, right. These are some kids down my road. This is what they would do. Give me a cheer or a boo if you would

do this. I would put a fake moustache on every single person in class so that when the world started again they all though they'd become old men.

Aud Yeah!

DW That's a pretty good one, but one person says absolutely not over there. Someone says I would tie my teacher's shoelaces together, then run out the classroom laughing.

Aud Yeah!

DW Really? That sounds good. I would watch myself right now, teachers, if I were you. I'm giving them ideas. I would use every toy in every toy shop I could find.

Aud Yeah!

DW Pretty good as well. Oh wait, I like this one. I would wait until someone was about to score a goal, pause, and then I'd move the football so that when the world started again they'd just kick nothing.

Aud Yeah.

DW That's not a bad one, is it? I'd drive a Ferrari to Alton Towers and not have to queue for anything.

Aud Yeah!

DW This one I find a little unusual. I don't know how you're going to respond to this one. This was a kid down my street. I would collect all the dog poo that the man down our street lets his dog do on the street, and then put them all in his pocket.

Aud Yeah!

DW You're a bunch of sickos, that's what I reckon! Well, that's what people could do, because you could do anything! The world would be your playground and all that. What Hamish does, he goes to Mr Slackjaw's Motors and immediately gets on a moped that he knows he's not allowed to use and races around town. Who would do that? Good. Do wear a helmet though!

But that's the kind of thing that he would do. And I think it's in tune with what you guys would do. Someone here mentioned revenge as well against the bullies in life, and there is that kid I told you about, Grenville Bile. And Hamish does exact revenge on Grenville while Grenville is on the toilet. I won't tell you exactly what he does, but it's disgusting. Absolutely disgusting.

And while moving around he meets a new friend, and this is Alice who is super, super cool. And she is head of something called the Pause Defence Force. Because if there is a pause, it's not just all fun. Because if you've got a hero in a book what do you also really need?

Aud A villain.

DW A villain, exactly. It's no good being a hero because you're not a hero against anything unless you've got a villain. And together with Alice and the PDF he fights these villains. And these are called the Terribles, and they are terrible! And do you like the drawing though? Do you like the illustration of the Terribles?

Aud Yes.

DW It's great, isn't it? And my friend, Jamie Littler, he is a brilliant illustrator. And together we create these books, because you want to see all the pictures as you go along. And that's the most fun that I have while writing these books, is writing the story and then sending it off to Jamie. And then Jamie comes up with brilliant, brilliant drawings and brilliant characters. And then we go back and forth and really develop them.

And so if you're going to be a writer, and if one of your friends is going to be an illustrator, you should get together with them and try and create your own books in your lessons. I'm sorry, teachers, I'm doing your lesson plans for you now. But I think that's a great thing because it's all about teamwork at this stage.

And me and Jamie, we've got together because we like Hamish. So we decided we would write another Hamish book. And this one is called Hamish and the Never People. And I've only just finished writing it, and Jamie has only just finished doing all the illustrations. And I've never ever read this out loud to anyone, ever, not even on my own in my bedroom. But I thought if you were into it I could read you a little bit of the brand new book now if you wanted to hear it.

Aud Yes!

DW Yeah? That's great. That's the enthusiasm I'm looking for. So in the first book Hamish has done quite well against the Terribles. And the Prime Minister wants to come to Starkley to say congratulations to Hamish. And so they have one of those big TV shows where the politicians go on and they drone on endlessly and boringly.

Aud David Cameron?

DW It could be David Cameron, but it's not. And it's called Question Me Silly. And so the whole TV crew, all the people like this, all these cameras and all these lights, they come to Starkley and Hamish has to go there in order that he is somehow rewarded. But it might not go to plan.

Question Me Silly was 45 minutes long, but everyone agreed it must be great value for money because it felt twice as long to watch. At 6:55 PM Hamish queued with his friends to get in. According to a poster on the wall there were three important topics they'd be discussing on the show tonight. Number one, the new potato recycling scheme in Frinkley. Number two, should kids wear inflatable suits of armour while cycling? And number three, Norway, where is it and what does it want?

The show was hosted by Elydia Exma, a very snooty woman who was basically just a couple of nostrils on legs. Hamish had been told that right at the end of the programme the Prime Minister would say a few words and make a fuss of him. Hamish's tummy flipped a little when he thought about it. His whole school would be watching. And now here he was, the Prime Minister himself strode in, hands clasped together like a champion boxer ready to take his seat.

Hamish studied him. Big, bushy, billowy, bristly beard like a Santa who'd just woke up. Little round glasses which made his eyes look even smaller than they were. The top of his head as round and pointy and bald a pigeon's egg. He's so handsome cooed Madam Couscous. Hamish knew that Ernst Ding-Batt was a Prime Minister who was very keen for everyone to know just how brilliant his achievements were.

I am the tallest Prime Minister in 50 years, he'd tell anyone who would listen, sometimes while banging his fist on the table. I am the only Prime Minister in the history of this country to own a poodle. I can lift 16 cans of Fanta at once. I can say excuse me, who's uncle is this, in six different accents. I once fixed a broken pen using just my mind. That one was his absolute favourite. It had been used a lot on posters when he was running for election. Ernst Ding-Batt, we need a country in which pens can sometimes be mended just by thinking about how it would be better if they were mended.

Anyway, it turned out he didn't actually fix that pen; someone had just replaced it with one that worked and forget to tell him. But no one minded much because he was still pretty tall and he could lift all that Fanta. What's more, he'd never travel anywhere without Mysterio, his personal life coach and executive assistant. The most mysterious thing about Mysterio was his accent. It was absolutely impossible to tell where Mysterio was from.

I'm Mysterio, he'd yell. And people would think Italy maybe? It is a nice day, he continued. And people would think France? Belgium? And now we must go, he'd finished. And people would think oh no, Germany, Sweden? Pluto? Right, said Elydia, start the music. The theme tune began, the programme was starting, but no one could've guessed that this would be the exact moment that something far more sinister started as well.

And something sinister does happen, and Hamish is there, and the Prime Minister is zapped and he goes blank and live on TV all he can do is start talking about his brand new pair of little blue pants. And that is where the story takes off.

So you're the first people I've read that to. Does that sound alright? [applause]

Aud Yeah.

DW Good, thank you for that. So what we're seeing here, what I like is books where it seems like anything could happen, and where a hero has to fight against the badness that might be coming. And I want you to be prepared for this, and I want you in your schools as well also to be prepared. So I'm going to make you do the oath. Oh no, that's actually a picture of my dad. There he is.

So we'll do be prepared, okay? That's what we'll do. Now, hold up your right hands, and I want you to read along with me. Repeat after me...

Aud Repeat after me.

DW Well, that was very good. I didn't mean that bit. But yeah, that's good. That shows you're paying attention. So repeat after me, I promise to be a good pause walker.

Aud I promise to be a good pause walker.

DW I will stay still in the pause.

Aud I will stay still in the pause.

DW I will be responsible.

Aud I will be responsible.

DW I will not put dog poo in my neighbour's pockets.

Aud I will not put dog poo in my neighbour's pockets.

DW I will not tie my teacher's shoelaces together.

Aud I will not tie my teacher's shoelaces together.

- DW Because my teachers are wonderful.
- Aud My teachers are wonderful.
- DW Even though they stink.
- Aud Even though they stink.
- DW And I will keep reading books.
- Aud And I will keep reading books.
- DW Even stupid ones like yours.
- Aud Even stupid ones like yours.
- DW How dare you? Congratulations everybody, you are pause walkers, well done!
- Aud I had my fingers crossed behind my back.
- DW He had his fingers crossed behind his back, it doesn't matter. You're all pause walkers, you are now prepared should anything happen. And I believe now is the time we're going to start doing some questions and some answers. So please welcome back Janice Forsyth!
- JF Yey! Thank you very much. [applause] Oh, I think a huge round of applause for all of that, and cheering. [applause]
- DW Thank you. Thanks very much.
- JF Oh. Nice tartan shirt incidentally.
- DW Thank you. Well, Scottish Book Week, and you know, Dundee and we're in Glasgow and I'm from Dundee.
- JF He's from Dundee.
- DW It felt like I should wear tartan.
- JF Yeah, it suits you. It suits you.
- DW Good.
- JF Great stuff, thank you very much. And we're going to have some questions. You've been asked so many already.
- DW Yes, I've been asked questions, yes.

JF It's a shame this crowd are not very lively. [chuckling] They're just a wee bit too quiet.

DW They are.

JF I'm joking! Now we have our first question over here and from Erin. Hi Erin.

DW Erin.

Girl What do you enjoy most about writing?

DW What do I enjoy most about writing? Well have you ever had an idea where you get really excited by the idea and you just think wow, so many cool things could happen. If my parents let me do that or if the world was a bit like this. And that's how my mind works. I always think what if? And so the most exciting thing about writing for me is that you can write a what if and then explore that whole world. So you can say what if the world stopped? What would happen? And then you can get excited and come up with loads of crazy stuff.

And so I enjoy sitting there and being in charge of creating a whole world. And that's what I really get a kick out of, and I've always liked that, and I think I always will. So that's my favourite thing about writing.

JF A great question, thank you.

DW A great question.

JF And do you have a special place that you like to write or can you write on a laptop on a train or do you have to really be in a room and really be concentrating?

DW Well, I write all over the place, but when I'm writing a book I have to...there has to be a bit of tradition about it. I have to know I'm going there to sit down and write it. Because writing's great fun and coming up with stories is great fun. But loads of people who want to write a book, they stop really quickly because they find a problem with the story or they can't come up with any more ideas. And then they put it in a drawer and forget about it.

And the trick is that you have to keep going. If you want to write a book you have to do it. I always say the only way to do something is to do something. And you can. If you want to write a story you've got everything you need because all you need is a pen and some paper and your idea. So that's what I do. And I have a little office near my office and I walk from my house and I think up some ideas on

my way there, and then I sit down at my desk and I write for as long as I've got energy. And then I stopped when I don't, and I go home and I play video games.

Aud Yes!

JF That sounds like fun, doesn't it? All of it, not just the video games, the writing as well. Now we've got another question from Ewan. Hi Ewan.

Boy Hi. Did you base the character of Hamish on a real person?

DW Well, did I base the character of Hamish on a real person? Well, not really. I sort of, kind of invented Hamish. But I like him as a kid. Do you know why? Because he's a good kid, right? But he's not an angel. And I think that's most people, right? So you seem like a good kid, but I bet you're not an angel. I bet there are times... Exactly! I bet there are times when you do the wrong thing, but you do it maybe for the right reasons.

So you know I showed you that picture of him getting revenue on Grenville Bile? Well an angel wouldn't have done that. An angel would've gone I forgive Grenville. But it's more fun sometimes to be a little bit naughty. So I like Hamish for that.

Mr Longblather, the very boring teacher who spits when he talks, he may or may not have been based on an old geography teacher of mine. I'm not saying whether he was or he wasn't. But he was.

JF Excellent, thank you very much for that, Ewan. And thank you because you've also answered primary 5B in Carronshore Primary in Falkirk who said...now I don't know if it's the person who wrote this down wrong, but it's a good name anyway, who said who inspired Mr Longbladder? [laughter] I like the idea of Longbladder.

DW Longbladder!

JF It could come in very handy!

DW Very handy, yeah, in a crisis. Thank you for your question, yeah.

JF There you go.

DW Well, yeah, I'll be honest, yes, it was an old geography teacher. So you've got it out of me. Well done.

Aud You can imagine it is.

- JF We've got a question from Stewart Foster...
- DW Oh yeah?
- JF ...Danny, who says... Hi Stewart. Hello! Who says would Hamish make a good prime minister?
- Aud Yes.
- DW Well, that's a good question.
- JF We've already had a yes shouted from the audience.
- DW Well, absolutely. I think there is actually a kids' book out at the moment called something like... Well I can't remember what it's called. But it's about a kid who becomes the prime minister. And that's another great big what if question, if kids were in charge what are the things that you would do. I think Hamish would be a good prime minister, Stewart. I think he would be fair, I think he would be even handed and I think that he would give us all free sweets all the time. So yeah, thank you for that.
- JF Which is the main thing.
- DW Yeah.
- JF We've got another tweet in from Foyers Primary School. Hiya! Thank you very much.
- DW Hi Foyers. How are you?
- JF And I think that's near Loch Ness.
- DW Ah, up there!
- JF Which is a great big long loch. It's huge. So yeah, I think they're near it, and maybe that's why the question, Danny... Have you ever been to the Highlands?
- DW I have, I've been up to Inverness and around Loch Ness. And I went there to meet... This sounds a bit weird, but a heavy metal loving vicar called Gareth, for a book I did a few years ago for grown-ups. But yeah, beautiful up there. Miles away from where I live, but stunningly beautiful, so you're very lucky to live there.
- JF And of course Hamish is a great Scottish name, isn't it?
- DW Hamish is a great Scottish name, and yeah, I'm excited to be here with these guys, because they're all from Dundee and I half mentioned it before, but I grew

up in Dundee. I lost my accent when I was about eight because I moved to a little town that was a bit like Starkley, and no one could understand a word I said. So now I'm speaking like this when I should be speaking like you.

JF You can't do it now.

DW I can...sometimes it slips back, I can talk a little bit. Not very well.

JF Drumbowie Primary in Falkirk, hi there. Thank you for your tweet.

DW My favourite primary school in Falkirk, by coincidence.

JF I thought that. What's your favourite book? That might be difficult.

DW Well, my favourite book. Well, I mentioned The Twits earlier. I thought The Twits was great. You know why? Because grownups in The Twits, they're just like grownups are. They're a bit stupid, they stink, they're doing the wrong things, a lot of them are mean and meaner than they should be. And in it the kids are the sensible ones who should be running the world. So I loved the Twits when I was growing up. And like I mentioned the Beano.

Right now as a grownup my favourite book, there's a book called Diary of a Nobody, which again is just about quite a stupid man who thinks he's a lot better than he is. So maybe I relate to that.

JF And it's very interesting because you kids were all saying most of you I think would like to write, wouldn't you?

Aud Yeah.

JF Yeah.

DW And you can! You can!

JF And people are tweeting and asking for advice on that. I know that you said a couple of times the main thing is if you get stuck and I think most people do get stuck at points, just keep going. Is there any other advice? We were just starting.

DW Well, yeah, I mean if you can find an idea that you really get excited about, or something that you just think wouldn't life be better if I could do this thing? Well, you can explore that, and that's what you need to kick things off. I always start with a big idea, and then I bring in a character and I see what their life would be like if that idea happened. And then you just keep going, and you've got to keep going.

And a teacher once told me when I was at school, something like no one in this class will ever do anything like that, will ever write a book or have a hit record or anything like that. And I remember thinking that was really silly and really unfair. And so my message to you is that you can, easily. You can be that person, but you've got to work at it and find something that excites you and then make it happen.

JF And it's also important to read as many books as possible as well, because that inspires you I think to write.

DW Yeah, and anything. It doesn't have to be the books you're supposed to read, just reading anything. So if your school is always saying oh, read this book, but you find it really boring, just reading is the important thing. So comics is a great thing to read. I used to read video games mags when I was a kid, video game magazines and my parents were worried about me because it was all about video games. But really I was reading the writing. And it all helps and it all goes into your mind and all the ideas stay there and they mix around and they all help you when you want to write a story.

JF Fantastic advice and thank you also to Kirktonholme Primary in South Lanarkshire, thank you very much indeed, particularly primary six. And you've answered quite a lot of their questions there too, because a lot of people asking the same kind of questions.

DW Hello primary six.

JF Hello.

DW You're so much better than primary five!

JF You're so naughty, Danny!

DW I was being naughty.

JF You're so naughty. He's very naughty. Guess what?

Aud What?

JF We've come to the end of the session. You're all supposed to go aww.

DW Yeah.

Aud Aww.

DW It'll help.

- JF I can hear you all over the country doing that.
- DW Yeah, exactly. I was going to say, let's try that again. We've come to the end of the session.
- Aud Aww!
- DW There you go. That's good.
- JF Oh, some booing. The good news is, if you missed any of this or maybe your friends missed it, you can watch it online. We've got all these events, Danny, online. You just go to the Authors Live website at the Scottish Book Trust and they're all there. And this one will be up again very, very soon. And also BBC Scotland Learning has made some really brilliant radio shows, including one all about Danny and his books, and some of the children here today from Dundee have taken part in that.
- DW Ah!
- JF So that will be ready for you to listen to right now, you just go to bbc.co.uk/authorslive. Well look, please thank Danny, join me in thanking Danny for everything he's done today. Tremendously entertaining and wherever you are, shall we do a huge cheer and thank you and applause.
- Aud Yeah. [applause]
- JF Thank you!
- DW Bye!
- JF Bye!
- DW Do some high fives. Thank you everybody.