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Author/Interview subject: David Walliams (DW)
Interviewed by: Janice Forsyth (JF)
Other speakers: Aud (Aud) Girl 1 (Girl 1) Boy 1 (Boy 1) Boy 2 (Boy 2)

JF Hello there! We're so excited, Hello there, a very warm welcome, I am Janice Forsyth and welcome to Authors Live, a series of virtual authors events organised by Scottish Book Trust in conjunction with BBC Scotland Learning. Authors Live is funded through the First in a Lifetime Fund administered by Creative Scotland.

Now, if you're watching remotely and I know you know all this, because you're media and text savvy, aren't you, out there?! And you know that sometimes the screen might just freeze or buffer or judder or shake, I guess you know that's completely normal during an internet broadcast, just bear with it while your computer screen catches up!

Now, for those of you tuning in to Authors Live for the very first time, a particularly warm welcome, we're delighted to have you along, new faces in our virtual audience right across the UK and if you're a regular Authors Live viewer, hello again, lovely to have you back, particularly you, yeah, you!

Now some of you might notice, if you are regular views, a few changes here today from our previous broadcast, can you spot anything different? Yes, you can. We're not in our usual home of the BBC in Glasgow, we are coming to you today from the Radio Theatre at BBC Broadcasting House in London and we have a large audience with us today and they're particularly lovely, you're about to see them, from Northwold Primary School in Hackney, Our Lady of Lourdes RC Primary School in Stonebridge and Churchfields Junior School in South Woodford, do you want to see them? They're going to wave to you right now! Children in the audience wave to that camera and everyone across the UK watching can see you. Hello!

Aud: Hi!

JF: Aren't they lovely?! Yay! And they're waving back at you, it's so exciting! Now, I should explain, we are in London for this Authors Live event, because today's author is very, very, very busy, some of you may know him from his charity swims across the English Channel or up The Thames, some of you may know him from his starring role in the brilliant very, very funny televisions series Little Britain and I'm sure most of you here and out there will know him right now from his appearances as a judge on a certain talent show, yes, Britain's Got Talent. It's not Simon Cowell though, don't panic! All of you, I do know, will know him from his wonderful novels for children and that's what he'll be talking about today, that's right, it is, yes, David Walliams! And David has, very quickly, established himself as one of the top children's novelists in the UK, his books explore lots of ideas, but particularly about identity and he does all of that with great humour and absolutely brilliant story telling.

His first book for children, The Boy in the Dress, was published in 2008 and the follow up, Mr Stink, won the People's Book Price Award, his third book, Billionaire Boy was one of the biggest hits of 2010 and his latest book Gangsta Granny has just been published, also to great acclaim and on top of all of that, this busy guy, David, is also head judge on BBC Radio Two's five hundred words writing competition. So we are absolutely delighted that he could join us here today along with the many thousands of children right across the UK watching on line, on the Red Button on Glow in the schools right across the country, so are you ready to welcome him?

Aud: Yeah!

JF: Please welcome to Authors Live, Mr David Walliams!

Aud: Whooooo!

DW: Hello, hello! Thank you, thank you.

JF: You're welcome.

DW: Thank you for a lovely introduction, thank you everybody, nice to see you!

JF: It was a very long introduction, because David's done so much in such a short space of time.

DW: Ah, that's nice! That's nice, you've got a day off school, haven't you?!

JF: Of course, all the people watching right across the UK, they don't have a day off school, David!

- DW: That's terrible, but at least they're watching the TV, rather than in a lesson!
- JF: Yeah, which is a treat. I must ask you, what is it like to actually see your readers, because you know that there are many, many hundreds of thousands of them out here, here's a cross section and aren't they beautiful?!
- DW: They are, they're lovely! No it's great actually, because it's great when I meet kids at signings or events like this, because they tell me things that they like in the books and sometimes things they don't, I get a lot of letters from kids, often picking up on spelling mistakes in the book, things like that!
- JF: Really?
- DW: Yeah, but it's great to get that feedback, because as much as I enjoy writing, you know, for myself, ultimately these books are for the kids here today.
- JF: Yeah. And, I mean, can you, thinking back to your own childhood, can you, sort of, identify with preoccupations and things that kids are interested in today, do you, sort of, go back to little David Walliams and think about what you were interested in?
- DW: I was never that little, I've always been big! But, yeah, I do actually, I try and think, especially when I was writing the first book, *The Boy in the Dress*, I was really thinking, what was I thinking and feeling when I was, sort of, 10, 11 or 12, but also, you know, I've got to understand, I don't want it to be a nostalgia trip for me, you know, I don't want it to be my childhood, it's got to be everyone's childhood and it's got to be relevant for kids today. Luckily I've got nephews of teenagers and also one who is five and got lots of friends with kids, so I try and keep in touch with what's down with the kids.
- JF: Yeah, is that good? Is that...yeah?
- DW: Yeah.
- JF: A lukewarm response! Now we have got hundreds and hundreds of questions that have come in from schools right across the UK.
- DW: Wow!
- JF: And later on we'll hear from some questions from our audience here to, but I had a quick look through some of them and something that people are often asking and I'm sure folk here today is just the whole idea of inspiration, as you just said, you don't particularly want to go and, sort of, walk down memory lane, but the

four books are so different, I'm just wondering are there little moments that just inspire you and you think, yeah, that's the story I'm going to explore?

DW: Yes, that's the biggest question, where do you get your ideas from? Because it would be lovely if there was just a place where you could get ideas from and, you know, didn't have to work! But sometimes it's...I think if it's someone plants a seed and then it's up to you to grow that seed, like, for example, a friend told me a story about how, when he was young, they used to see an old lady waiting on the corner of the street when they were driving to school and they used to see her every day and they thought, one day, let's stop and give her a lift and they stopped and gave her a lift and she absolutely stank! And she stank out the whole car and all their eyes were watering, but they were trying to be as nice as possible and my friend told me that story and I thought, wow, that would be, you know, and that became Mr Stink. It's a completely different story, in some way, but it's a story about how, you know, you can love someone even if they stink!

JF: Yeah.

DW: So that's all it was, that's all I had. So sometimes, yeah, it's just a little idea, Gangsta Granny, I suppose I was thinking about my own grannies, but at no point were they international jewel thieves, you know.

JF: Ah, what a disappointment, because, again, as you can imagine, that was a question asked many times by children right across the country, was it based on your own granny, David?!

DW: Yeah, well all the other bits of my granny are, you know, the tissue up the sleeve, the house smelling of cabbage, I don't know if your grannies have that, but my granny certainly did. So, yeah, you know, you take something that's truthful and then you turn it into a story.

JF: Yeah. Because another thing that's interesting, do any of you...just give me a, kind of, yes, do you write your own stories.

Aud: Yes!

JF: Right, that's all of you basically, which is fantastic! Because I think, as grownups, quite often we can get out of the way of writing stories, David clearly hasn't, I think a lot of people are really good at letting their imagination run free, but at this stage with the children, would you recommend if they've got a daft idea for a story or what they might think is just a silly idea to just write that down and, you know, keep a hold of it in a diary or something like that?

DW: Definitely, you know, write your stories, just enjoy writing them and don't think of what other people might like to read, just think of what you would like to read, if it's something you find funny or scary or exciting, you know, put that down, because so much when you're writing as a kid, you're trying to maybe please others, you know, your teacher or your parents, but actually, write for yourself and for the fun of it, because it is, actually I find it a lovely place to be, alone with your imagination, just dreaming up ideas and as kids, we tend to do that more than we do as adults, you know, we're often alone in a room, you know, drawing or writing or singing or whatever you like to do! So it can be one of the most creative times when you're a kid, so, you know, if you are interested in writing or anything creating, this is the time to really develop it.

JF: Yeah, absolutely. Did you write as a child?

DW: I did, but probably I'd never really wrote stories other than when I was made to at school, but I did write comedy sketches, because that's what I really wanted to be was a comedian, comedy actor and actually on TV! And so that's what I started writing, it was the first thing I wrote and then really it was a long time before I started writing books.

JF: And did you find thought that that...I mean, it's a very different kind of writing, isn't it, writing comedy for television and so on, maybe short sketches as opposed to writing what seems such a daunting thing, would you agree it seems quite daunting to write a great big novel?

DW: Mm.

JF: Was it? Or did the background help you?

DW: I think the background helped me in two ways, coming from doing a television sketch show, one is, you know, I got better at writing characters through television and also through writing dialogue, all the things that people say, but as for stories, we never really told stories in Little Britain, so that was something that I had to get good at and, of course, when you write a script, you don't have that much description, it's mainly, you know, this person says this, this person says that. So I had to get good at that as well.

JF: And do you think you've got better as you've continued writing?

DW: Have I got better...?

JF: What do you think?

Aud: Yes!

DW: Yeah, thank you, thank you very much! It would be awful to have got worse!

JF: Has it become easier though?

DW: The first book I wrote, *The Boy in a Dress*, it was quite, sort of, personal I was really thinking about my own childhood, I didn't go to school dressed as a girl, but, you know, I put a lot of myself in there and then the other books are more acts of imagination and, what, sorry, what was the question, was it hard?

JF: Yes, has it become easier?

DW: Has it become easier? Well, you always worry you're going to run out of ideas, that's what you worry about, but you won't really, because there's a million ideas out there, but I suppose I've got a bit better at knowing how to structure a story, because I've done it before.

JF: Yeah. And if you're writing a story as homework, as David indeed did as a child, and you do too, I guess you show it to your teacher perhaps, you show it to your family, friends, when you're, you know, writing as a professional writer, is there somebody that you like to show it to or do you like to, kind of, keep it to yourself?

DW: I like to keep it to myself, but I do...because when you're liking a book, because there's a publisher, which is Harper Collins, and I have a book editor who then goes through it and points out all the mistakes and gives me suggestions, so they're a very important part of the process for any writer and whoever you are as a writer, you normally have a book editor.

JF: Yeah.

DW: So that's like the teacher really, you know, so you don't really look forward to their notes on your book.

JF: And they turn your homework's over too!

DW: Yes. Yes, that's the main thing actually, is deadlines and things like that and then there's other people in Harper Collins, but they're very experienced, you know, every day they're publishing books for kids, so they probably know a lot more about it than I do, so I trust them.

JF: Yes. I know we've got lots of questions about *Gangsta Granny* in particular, so we can ask those on behalf of the children later. You're going to give us a little reading I think from the book.

DW: Would you like me to read from the book?

Aud: Yes!

DW: Yes.

JF: You knew they were going to say yes, didn't you?!

DW: I was hoping they'd say yes.

JF: I mean some of you have read the book already have you or...?

Aud: Yes.

JF: Yes, no, yes.

DW: Okay, well, I'm going to read a bit, so I'm, sort of, half way through the book and it's where Ben has found out that his granny is an international jewel thief and she's spread out all the jewels from all her adventures on the floor. So I'm going to stand up to do this at no extra charge!

Hours passed in what seemed like minutes as granny told her grandson how she had stolen every one of the dazzling items spread out on the living room floor. The huge tiara had belonged to the wife of the President of the United States of America, the First Lady, granny told Ben how, over 50 years earlier, she had sailed all the way to America, on a cruise liner, to steal it from the White House in Washington and that whilst sailing back home, she had robbed every rich lady of the ship of her jewels, how she was caught red handed by the captain of the ship and escaped by diving overboard and swimming the last few miles of the Atlantic Ocean back to England with all the jewellery hidden in her knickers!

Granny told Ben that the sparkling emerald earrings that had been in her little bungalow for decades were worth over a million pounds each, they had once belonged to the wife of an enormously wealthy Indian Maharaja Maharani. The old lady recounted how she had listed the help of a herd of elephants to steal them, she had coaxed the elephants to stand on top of each other to form a giant ladder so she could scale the wall of the fort in India where the earrings were kept in the Royal bed chamber.

The most amazing tale of all was how she stole the enormous deep blue diamond and sapphire brooch that sat sparkling on her warm living room carpet, she had told Ben that it had once belonged to the last Empress of Russia, who'd ruled with her husband the Czar, before the communist revolution of 1917, it had, for many years, been under bullet proof glass at the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg, guarded 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year by a platoon of fearsome Russian soldiers. This theft had required the most elaborate

plan of all, granny had hidden in an ancient suit of armour in the museum, which dated back hundreds of years to the time of Catherine the Great, each time the soldiers looked the other way, she would edge forward in the metal suit a few millimetres until she got close enough to the broach, it took her a week! What, like grannies footsteps? Said Ben. Exactly, young man, she replied, then I smashed the glass with a silver axe I was holding and grabbed the broach. How did you escape, granny? Oh, that's a good question, yeah, yeah, now, how did I escape? Granny looked flummoxed, I'm sorry it's my age, boy, I forget things. Ben smiled supportively, that's okay granny. Soon, the old lady's memory seemed to come back into focus, oh yes, I remember, she continued, I ran outside into the courtyard of the museum, leapt in the barrel of a huge cannon and then fired myself to safety. Ben pictured this for a moment, his granny in deepest, darkest Russian, flying through the air in an ancient suit of armour, it was hard to believe! But how else could this little old lady come to have such an astonishing collection of priceless gems?

Ben loved granny's daring tales, at home, Ben would never have stories read or told to him, his parents always just switched on the television and slumped down on the sofa when they got home from work. Hearing the old lady talk was so exciting, Ben wished he could move in with her, he could listen to granny all day! There can't be a jewel in the world you haven't stolen! Said Ben. Oh yes there is, young man, hang on, what's that? What's what? Said Ben. Granny was pointing behind Ben's head an expression of horror on her face, it's...it's...what, said Ben? Not daring to turn around and see what she was pointing at, a shiver ran down his spine. Whatever you do, said granny, don't turn around. Would you like another chapter?

Aud: Yes!

DW: Yeah! Ben couldn't help himself and his eyes darted towards the window! For a brief moment, he saw a dark figure wearing a strange hat peer through the dirty glass and then quickly disappear out of view. There was a man peering in at the window, said Ben breathlessly. I know, said granny, I told you not to look! Shall I go out and see who it was, said Ben, trying to hide the fact that he was more than a little frightened, really, he wanted granny to go out and see who it was. I'll bet it was my nosey neighbour, Mr Parker, he lives at number seven, he always wears a pork pie hat and he keeps spying on me! Why? Asked Ben. Granny shrugged, I don't know, I imagine he has a rather cold head, or something. What? Said Ben, no, not his hat, I mean, why does he keep spying on you? He's a retired major and now he runs the Neighbourhood Watch scheme in Grey Close. What's Neighbourhood Watch? Asked Ben. Oh, it's a group of local

people who keep an eye out for burglars and Mr Parker just uses it as an excuse for spy on everyone, the nosey old git! I often come back from the supermarket, with my bag of cabbages, and see he's hiding behind his net curtains spying on me with a pair of binoculars! Is he suspicious about you? Said Ben, more than a little panicked, he didn't want to be thrown in jail for aiding and abetting a criminal, he didn't really know what abetting meant actually, but he knew it was a crime and he knew he was too young for prison. Oh, he's suspicious about everybody, we have to keep an eye out for him, young lad, the man is a menace.

Ben went over to the window and peer out, he couldn't see anyone. Bring! Ben's heart missed a beat, it was only the door bell, but if they let Mr Parker inside, he would see all the evidence the police would need to send Ben and his granny straight to prison. Don't answer it, said Ben, as he ran to the middle of the room and started stuffing all the jewels back into the tin as quickly as he could. What do you mean, don't answer it? He knows I'm at home, he just saw us through the window! You answer the door and I will hold the jewels, I will hide the jewels. Me? Yes, you, hurry! Bring! This ring was more insistent, Mr Parker had left his finger on the buzzer for even longer! Ben took a deep breath and walked calmly through the hall to the front door, he opened it, outside stood a man in a very silly hat. Yes? Said Ben in a squeaky high voice, can I help you? Mr Parker put his foot inside the bungalow so the front door couldn't be closed on him, who are you? He barked nasally, he had a very big nose, which made him seem even nosier than he was and he already seemed extremely nosey. Because he had a very big nose, he also had a very nasal voice, which made everything he said however serious seem a little bit absurd, but his eyes shone red like a demon. I'm, erm, I'm, err, I'm granny's friend, spluttered Ben, why did I say that? He thought, in truth he was in a terrible panic and his tongue was running away with him. Friend, snarled Mr Parker, pushing open the front door, he was stronger than Ben and soon forced his way inside. I mean, erm, grandson, Mr Parker, sir, said Ben, retreating back towards the living room. Why are you lying to me? He said, taking several paces forward as Ben took several paces back, it was as if they were dancing the tango! I...I...I'm not lying, cried Ben. They reached the living room door, you...you can't go in there, yelled Ben, thinking of the jewels still scattered all over the carpet. Why not? Erm, erm, because granny is doing her naked yoga!

Aud: Euew!

DW: Ben needed a dramatic excuse to stop Mr Parker barging through the front door and seeing the jewels, he was pretty sure he had hit the jackpot as Mr Parker paused and furrowed his brow. Sadly the nosey neighbour was not convinced,

naked yoga, a likely story! I need to talk to your grandmother right away, now, get out of my way, you nasty little worm of a boy, he said, as he shoved the boy aside and opened the living room door. Granny must have heard Ben through the door, because when Mr Parker burst into the room, she was standing in her bra and knickers in tree pose! Mr Parker, do you mind! Said granny, in mock horror that he had seen her in a state of undress. Mr Parker's eyes spun around the room, he didn't know where to look, so he fixed his glare on the now bare carpet. Excuse me, madam, but I need to ask you, where are those jewels I saw a moment ago. Ben spied the Silver Jubilee biscuit tin poking out from behind the sofa, surreptitiously, he edged it out of view with his foot. What jewels, Mr Parker, have you been spying on me again? Demanded granny, still in her underwear. Well, I, err...err...err...he spluttered, I have good reason, I was suspicious when I saw a young gentleman enter your property and I thought he might be a burglar! I let him in through the front door. He might have been a very charming burglar, he might have weaselled his way into your confidence. He's my grandson, he stays every Friday night. Ah, said Mr Parker triumphantly, but it's not Friday night, so you can see why my suspicions were raised and as head of Grey Close Neighbourhood Watch, I must report anything suspicious I see to the police. I've got a good mind to report you to the police Mr Parker, said Ben. Granny looked at him curiously, whatever for? Said the man, his eyes narrowed, they were now so red it was like there was a fire in his brain. For spying on old ladies in their underwear, said Ben triumphantly. Granny winked at Ben. She was fully clothed when I looked through the window, protested Mr Parker. That's what they all say! Said granny, now get out of my house, before you're arrested for being a peeping Tom. You've not heard the last of me, good day, said Mr Parker, with that, he spun on his heels and left the room, granny and Ben heard the front door slam behind him and they run over to the window and watched him scuttle back to his bungalow. Oh, I think we've frightened him off, said Ben. But he'll be back, said granny, we have to be very careful. Yes, said Ben, more than a little alarmed, we'd better hide this tin somewhere else, granny thought for a moment, yes, I'll put it under the floorboards. Okay, said Ben, but first...yes Ben? You might want to get dressed! There we are!

JF: Thank you! Fantastic, thank you.

DW: Oh, thank you!

JF: And, of course, now when we read Gangsta Granny, we're going to hear that voice loud and clear in our heads, it's fantastic! Now, as I say, we've got lots of questions that have come from people watching out there and we're going to have three questions from three children who are with us today, so if you wait for

the microphone to come for you, the first one is from a young lady over here and the microphone will come down to you I think, it's coming down, and you can say your name and what school you're from and what your question is, here she is standing up helpfully in the second row.

DW: Ah, hello.

JF: Thank you, brilliant!

Girl 1: I'm Sinead from Our Lady of Lourdes School and I would like to know who inspired you to become an author?

DW: Oh, that's a very good question, who inspired me to become an author? Well, the writer that I absolutely adored when I was probably your age, how old are you?

Girl 1: Eight.

DW: Eight, okay. Well, the author I loved was Roald Dahl, you've probably read some of his books.

JF: I heard a, ah!

DW Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, The Twits, Matilda, the list goes on and they're all classics and he was really the first writer that I really loved, because reading books can seem like a bit of a chore sometimes, you know, when there's so many other things you could be doing, like, watching films or playing video games or out playing with your friends, reading a book can sometimes seem quiet boring, but it never does with Roald Dahl, because, for me, he's, like, the greatest children's author. So I read all his books when I was a kid and before I attempted to write a story of my own, I reread all his books and all the books that I really loved when I was a kid, other ones too, like, Alice in Wonderland and Peter Pan and so that inspired me, I mean, you can never be as good as Roald Dahl, but you can still take inspiration from him.

JF: Thank you and thank you for your question, Sinead.

DW: Thank you very much.

JF: And our next question I think comes from over here somewhere, it's Mathew, maybe Mathew can wave his hand and we can bring the microphone to him...Hi Mathew, good waving and the microphone is coming along to you.

DW: Hello there!

JF: And Mathew is from Churchfields Junior School, Mathew, what is your question for David?

Boy 1: Are you making another book?

DW: I am making another book, in my kitchen! No, I'm writing another book! And I actually got inspired by one of the contestants on Britain's Got Talent.

JF: Ooh!

DW: Because there was a man came on and they didn't really show him on TV, he ate live cockroaches!

JF: Oh!

DW: And I thought, one thing I haven't really had in my books yet is a really, really evil villain. I don't know if you've ever seen a film called Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, have you ever seen that?

Aud: Yeah.

DW: The child catcher in that, well, actually it was originally a story by Ian Flemming who created James Bond, but Roald Dahl actually wrote the screen play and he created a character, the child catcher and I've always thought, I would love to have a really, really evil scary villain, so he has given me some inspiration, so I'm writing that story at the moment and you'll be glad to know, or tell your mum and dad it'll be out just in time for Christmas!

JF: Fantastic, thank you very much Mathew. And our final question from here comes from Zamera from Northwold Primary, Zamera wave your hand, she's doing it already, she knows the drill!

Girl 2: What is your favourite children's book?

DW: Well, that's a good question, because there's so many great ones, aren't there? I've spoken about Roald Dahl and how much I love him and probably Charlie and the Chocolate Factory was the one I loved most as a kid, because there was so many things that I loved, chocolate being the main one! But I think a book, and I don't know if you've read it, you may have seen the film that was more recently made, Alice in Wonderland, I mean, that's really...I'm not an historian, but it seems to me like one of the first children's books and it's very, very strange and very hard to completely understand and I think books like that are sometimes the ones you go back to again and again and Alice in Wonderland has had more editions and more illustrators than anybody else, probably more adaptations than

any other children's book you can think of and I still think that somehow that seemed to start off the idea of a children's book being taken seriously by, you know, critics and everybody, I mean it really is...it's a work of art Alice in Wonderland and it's a hard one to read, but it's got everything in there and it always surprises me that book, so if you haven't read Alice in Wonderland, you should read it, because the film that was recently made, Tim Burton film, actually isn't the same story, so it's really worth going back to the original one and there are beautiful illustrations and so many different editions you can get.

JF: And I think the great joy of the books that you've mentioned there, Alice in Wonderland and Roald Dahl is that you can enjoy them now, but the best of those books, the great joy is you can go back to them again and again, can't you, as you grow up?

DW: Mm.

JF: So you could just keep repeating that great joy and finding new things in them I think too.

DW: Yeah. It's a real treat actually to read a children's book as an adult, because they actually tend to be a lot more imaginative than books for adults.

JF: Yeah.

DW: Books for adults tend to be, you know, often set in the real world and, you know, they can be, kind of, predictable and quite generic and this one is a thriller, you know, this one is a romance, but children's books seem to be able to go anywhere.

JF: Well, I suppose that's what we started off saying that, I think a lot of people as they get older and a bit more boring, they lose that imagination, but you guys have got it and you should hang on to it, both in terms of reading and writing.

DW: Mm, definitely!

JF: I'm putting on my Gangsta Granny glasses and I do smell faintly of cabbage as well!

DW: She doesn't!

JF: I do actually, it's quite nifty up here! Can I just first of all say, apologies in the limited amount of time we have, we cannot ask all of your questions, because we would be here for hours and hours and hours, so we can't do that, but some of these questions have been asked over and over again by people. So here's the

first one, which comes all the way from Grangemouth, David, Primary 6M, Murray Primary School in Grangemouth, hello! And the question comes from Gail and she says, what was harder, swimming The Thames or writing a book?

DW: Swimming The Thames is harder! I mean, I'd like to write another book, but I don't want to swim The Thames again, but it was...that was eight days and I was swimming, like, 20 miles a day and it was great, because lots of people came out and saw me and waved and encouraged and obviously I was doing it all for charity, for Sport Relief, you probably did things in your school for Sport Relief too, but, no, I have no desire to do that again and I'm still, kind of, suffering!

JF: But it fuelled some of the passages in this book presumably?

DW: Yes, because I was training at the time, in The Thames, you know, for about nine months before I actually did it and it was on my mind and in the book, Granny and Ben crossed The River Thames to go to the Tower of London to steal the jewels.

JF: That's very exciting!

DW: So, yeah, I was definitely...you know, you're often inspired by things in your own life.

JF: Yeah. And that's another lesson. Now this actually...this isn't from a child, but I liked this and I thought you might, it's from Mrs Sellers, and I love it, who is a librarian in Worrell Community School who says, David, when we have an author visit our library, we always provide a school lunch for them, what was your favourite school dinner and why?!

DW: Oh! Well, I like fish and chips, do you like fish and chips?

Aud: Yeah!

DW: Do you have it on Fridays?

Aud: Yeah.

DW: Because often it's on Friday, the end of the week and it's a nice treat isn't it, fish and chips? So really anything with chips, not vegetables or fruit, its chips!

JF: Right, not spam fritters?!

DW: We had a boy at our school, my junior school, who had a letter from his mum saying he couldn't eat any vegetables of fruit other than chips! Where do you get

a letter like that?! So I liked all the bad things, there was no Jamie Oliver in my day, luckily, so we ate all the bad food!

JF: Okay, thank you for that. This comes from Sir William Stanier Community School in Crewe and the questions are from the SWS reading group, this one from Joseph, Hi Joseph.

DW: Hello Joseph!

JF: How do you feel in the moment when you've just finished writing a new story?

DW: Oh! Well, its weird because it's like you've given birth to a book and then this book is going to have its own life and, you know, people are going to feed it milk...no, no, they're going to read it and so it doesn't really belong to you anymore, it belongs to other people, so it's quite a strange feeling. It's, like, you know, it's like having a butterfly trapped in your home and you open the window and it flies off, so you're, sort of, sad to see it go really and now it's in the hands of, you know, the toughest critics, which are, you know, the kids who read your books, so it's actually...the most exciting thing is when the book is published and you actually hold it in your hand and you go, wow, I wrote that! It's a really lovely feeling, so I think that's the best feeling when I actually get the book, because I keep on looking at it and actually my favourite bit of the books is the illustrations, because I don't do those.

JF: I was going to say the illustrations are fantastic aren't they?

DW: And so when I see those it really brings it to life for me.

JF: Yeah, now we've got the picture of granny and we've now got the David Walliams voice in our head, it's all complete! From Newborough Primary School, this is John, hello John.

DW: Hello John!

JF: Here's John's question, if you could be any of your book characters who would you be?

DW: Oh that's good, that's a good question isn't it?

JF: It is a good one.

DW: I'd quite like to be Mr Stink, I don't know if you know that story, but he comes into this family's life and he, kind of, heals all the problems in the family, even though he's the most unlikely person to do that and also he's very funny and loveable so I'm actually adapting that at the moment for TV, for this Christmas, but I won't

play Mr Stink, because I'm too young and I'm not smelly enough! So we're looking for a very old smelly actor, so let me know, when I'm doing the signing, if you know any!

JF: Fantastic, thank you. This is from St Columbus Junior School in Kilmacolm, hello Rory, who is asking this question, David, where do you like to write your books and do you have a special place for writing?

DW: Well, I wish I had a good answer to this, because I recently went to the Roald Dahl Museum in Missenden and I saw the hut that he wrote his stories in and that they've, kind of, moved and recreated there and it's really magical, it's like stepping inside his brain, because there's all bits and pieces from his life there and obviously he really liked to be cocooned and just alone with his thoughts, but my answer is I write it in my study at home, but what I do is, because it's quite hard writing to concentrate and when you're at home, there's a million other things you could be doing, I go, okay, you're not having a biscuit until you finish this chapter, that's what I say to myself! And then I become more desperate, right, you're not going to the loo until you finish this chapter! Because otherwise, you know, you'll go and you'll switch on Loose Women and you'll got to the fridge and have some cheese and then, you know, suddenly, you're not writing anymore!

JF: And you're not distracted by the internet or anything like that?

DW: Well, the good thing is, it makes it easier if you need to do any research, because in Gangsta Granny, there's lots of stuff about the Crown Jewels and although I visited the Crown Jewels, it's quite a complex thing to get your head around, so I actually could do a little bit of research, which was helpful.

JF: Yeah, okay. This comes from Primary seven St Ninians Primary School in Dumfries and this question is from Callum who is 12, Hi Callum.

DW: Hello!

JF: And he says, will you include Simon Cowell as a character in any of your books?

DW: Well, I'd like to, but I think the problem is if you do an illustration of him, his teeth would actually blind you when you open the book! Because they're so dazzling! I'd like to, but sometimes people are so...they're such extraordinary characters in real life that it would be hard to make them anymore absurd than they are! So...no, I love Simon, have you been watching Britain's Got Talent?

Aud: Yeah!

DW: Who would you like to win?

Aud: Pudsey.

JF: Pudsey!

DW: Pudsey, anyone else?

Aud: Sam Kelly.

DW: Sam Kelly, he was very good, wasn't he? Who do you think?

Aud: Fish on percussion.

DW: Fish on percussion, he didn't get through!

JF: He's out, he's out!

DW: He's out already, but there's a wild card isn't there? There's still a wild card, so we could get him. So maybe one day Simon might be in one of my books, but I'll have to wait until I'm fired from Britain's Got Talent and then I can write whatever I like, can't I?!

JF: Let me ask you a final one here, because lots of people have asked about the character of Raj and asking if he's based on someone you know, this one in particular comes from Rachel in Lakenheath Primary School in Suffolk, hi Rachel.

DW: Hello Rachel, the answer is, yes, it is, in my local area, the newsagent shop is run by Raj, I haven't told him he's in the book!

JF: Really?

DW: Because I think if I did that he might start being really funny! But he's not exactly like he is in the book, but he's similar and the shop is very, very messy and chaotic, but he's a very, very funny, quite absurd man and so, yeah, it was one of those lucky things where something from real life, you could put it straight into a story.

JF: And do you like Raj?

Aud: Yeah.

JF: Yeah. It's amazing the number of questions we've had about Raj.

DW: Yeah. Well, he's the character that's in all the books, so I like...what is useful about him as a character is, he's not a parent and he's not a teacher.

JF: Yeah.

DW: So, therefore, he's not really like a responsible adult, you know, he doesn't ever tell the kids off, he just gives them good advice from the heart and he's also just a fun character to spend time with, so he, kind of, connects the books to make them all part of the same world.

JF: Yeah, fantastic! Well, unfortunately, guess what? You know what I'm going to say, that's all the time we have for questions.

Aud: Ah!

JF: I know! Thank you David very much.

DW: Thank you, thank you very much!

JF: A huge round of applause please for David Walliams.

Aud: [Clapping]

DW: Thank you.

JF: I've got more stuff to tell you and you can do more clapping at the end. This is the end of this event, but lots for you to do, because you can have a look at the learning resources based on Gangsta Granny and Billionaire Boy on the Scottish Book Trust website.

Our next event will be with the hugely talented artist and picture book author Oliver Jeffers, that's on Thursday the 14th of June at 11 o'clock, details of how to register to watch that at the website, which is Scottishbooktrust.com/authorslive, in the meantime, don't forget, you can watch all of this, this event all over again along with the previous ones with the likes of Michael Rosen and Julia Donaldson, Eoin Colfer, Jacqueline Wilson and Michael Morpurgo, they're all great events, on the BBC Scotland Learning and the Scottish Book Trust websites and don't forget all of those events are free to watch and the classroom resources are free to download, which is brilliant too. So enjoy your reading and enjoy your writing, because I know there's some brilliant writers out there. For now it's goodbye from me and it's goodbye from the fabulous Mr David Walliams!

DW: Goodbye, thank you very much, thank you!

Aud: [Claps and cheers]