



For primary & secondary schools, public libraries, school library services & bookshops

Empathy Day Festival Toolkit

Calling all
Empathy
Activists!

JUMP

into someone
else's story



Supported using public funding by

**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

Empathy Lab



The 2025 Empathy Day Festival runs from 2-12 June, culminating in Empathy Day on 12 June

What is the Empathy Day Festival?

Empathy Day was launched by EmpathyLab in 2017 to draw attention to the power of reading to develop real-life empathy. Since then, it has grown massively – in 2024 over 737,000 children and young people took part in schools, libraries, community settings and homes across the UK and even other parts of the world!

Empathy Day growth



Last year's participants told us they were using Empathy Day activities across more than just one day, so we listened, and this year are expanding from one day to an exciting **10-day festival**.

How to take part

Use our flexible framework of activities and events to choose how and when YOU would like to participate

Schools, public libraries, bookshops, families, community settings – anywhere people and stories come together – can take part. You can plan activity for every day, a couple of afternoons, or just Empathy Day – it's entirely up to you. All elements are **FREE** to use or attend.

JUMP into someone else's story

Throughout the Festival, we invite you to jump into someone else's story, helping ALL young people to:

- become Empathy Activists
- learn more about empathy and develop empathy skills
- put empathy into action to make the world a better place for those around them



READ ON for a chance to win books and recognition for your setting by taking part and telling us what you think!

Eight steps to Empathy Day Festival success!

STEP 1 Save the date

The Festival runs from **2-12 June**. Empathy Day takes place on **Thursday 12 June**

STEP 2 Register for a festival planning webinar

If you haven't already, register for a webinar at 4pm on **25 March** or **7 May** to help you get the most out of the Festival and the Read for Empathy collection. [Register HERE](#).

A free webinar specifically for Library services is available via Libraries Connected on **8 April**. [Register for the libraries webinar HERE](#)

STEP 3 Plan your activity

Using the resources in this pack, in collaboration with colleagues and young people

- Choose which of the **nine Empathy Challenge** activities to try, and who will take part
- Plan which **brilliant author & illustrator pre-recorded events and assemblies** you'll watch – all will be available to watch on demand from the date they are released
- **Use our handy planner** for simple co-ordination



STEP 4 Join our **LIVE** Empathy Day author event

Book your place at our **exclusive LIVE online Empathy Day event** with **Elle McNicoll and Joseph Coelho**

- Suitable for KS2 and KS3
- All groups that wish to join must sign up to ensure safeguarding and receive the live link

[**Book your place HERE**](#)



Eight steps to Empathy Day Festival success!

STEP 5 Book a place on our expert CPD webinars

Develop your own skills and knowledge with three brand new professional development webinars in collaboration with key partners – **page 6**

- Suitable for teachers, librarian, parents – anyone working or living with children and young people
- [Sign up to receive the link to join live](#)

STEP 6 Get brilliant reading recommendations

Get inspiration for your activities using the **2025 Read for Empathy** collection to use at the heart of your activity – **page 8**

STEP 7 Get on the map

Add your Festival event(s) to our interactive map and share what you're doing. You can also search the map to find out what's happening near you and join other events!

[Add your events HERE](#)



STEP 8 Have your say!

Complete our **short evaluation** after the Festival – this helps us to improve and enables funding, to ensure the festival remains free to take part in.

Tell us what you think and receive your Empathy Badge!

All settings completing the evaluation form will receive a digital badge to celebrate participation in the Empathy Day Festival 2025.

Display the badge on your website, social media, in newsletters - anywhere you wish!

The badge shows that your setting values empathy education and is part of EmpathyLab's movement to raise an empathy-educated generation.



EMPATHY CHALLENGE

Use the Empathy Challenge to get creative, develop young peoples' empathy skills and have fun. Do as many or as few as you wish, at times to suit you!

Find handy 'how to' guides, ideas for adapting challenges for different ages and abilities and accompanying resources to download, print or photocopy, on the resource downloads page. **Remember – printing is optional! You are welcome to make your own resource using what you have to hand, or take part digitally.**



READ

Empathy Bookshelf

Which books deserve a space on our empathy bookshelves? Join in a mass sharing of ideas. Share photos/videos

Empathy Characters

Empathising with characters is powerful. In pairs/groups, use our emotions guide to consider a character's feelings. What would you like to say to them?

Empathy Artists

Use our 500-word Empathy Shorts to spark creative work to imagine someone else's life experiences. Creative writing, poetry, artwork, drama...

CONNECT

Empathy Chat

Get to know someone better by having a good chat. Use our prompts to ease into a rich conversation

Empathy Reflections

People love feeling truly understood. Use our five point guide to practice key empathy skills - listening and reflecting back what you've heard

Empathy Emotions Map

Use leading illustrator's examples to make individual or group emotions maps, tracking changing feelings across a day. Great way to understand and share feelings

ACT

Empathy Superpower Glasses

Practice seeing through others' eyes. Decorate and don our superpower glasses, designed by a leading illustrator LIZ PICHON

Empathy Post

Use our illustrated cards to send a message of empathy to someone you know, maybe include an empathy reading recommendation just for them

Empathy Resolution

Become an empathy activist! Make a resolution to put empathy into action in your home or community. Use our special bunting!

This year's **UPDATED CHALLENGE** focusses on the **FOUR** key empathy skills:

Skill	Develop language to share and understand emotions	Connect with others using empathic communication	Perspective-taking	Taking social action
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotions Maps • Empathy Characters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathy Chat • Empathy Reflections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathy Bookshelf • Superpower Glasses • Empathy Artist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathy Post • Empathy Resolutions

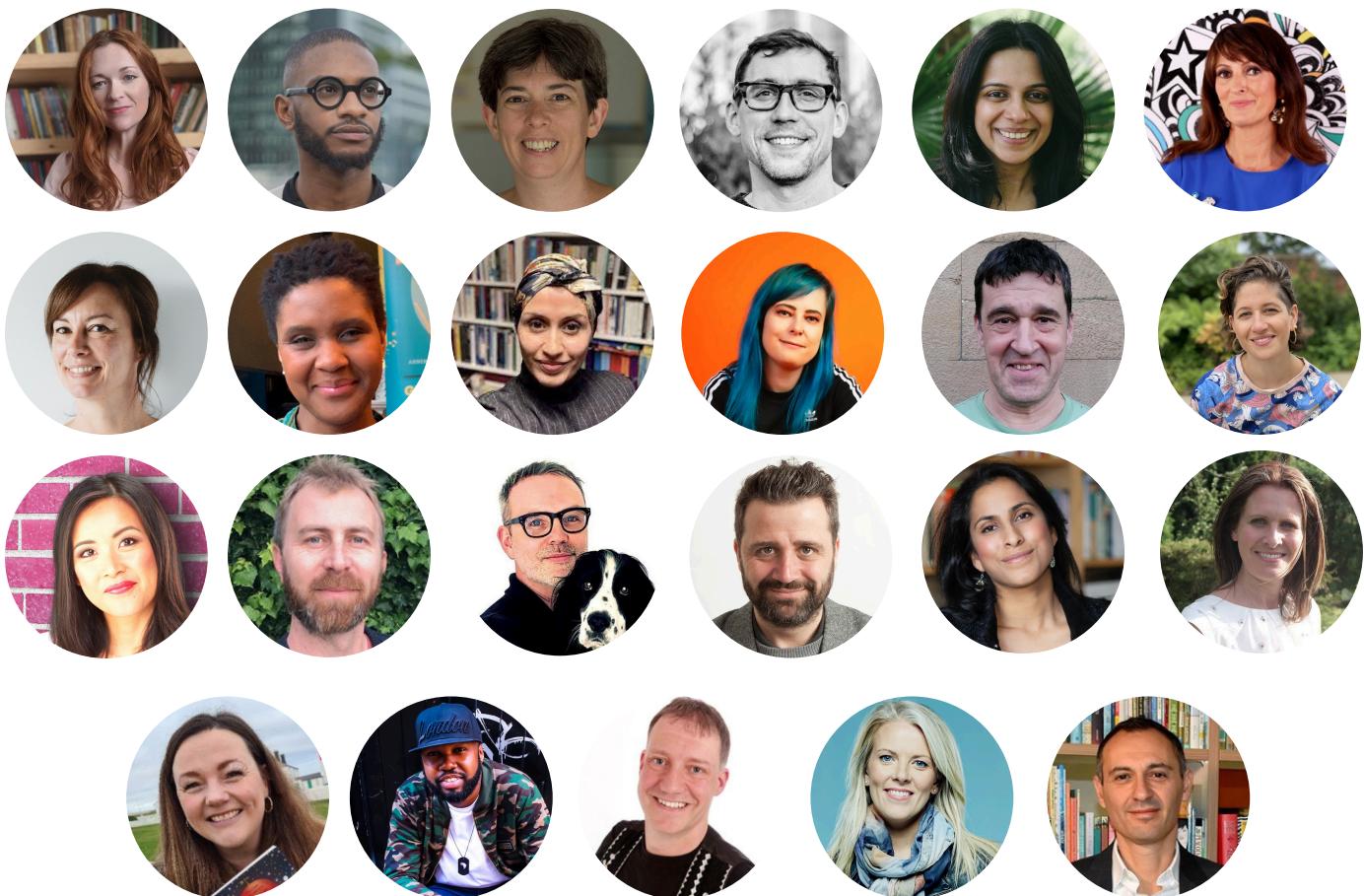
How to access the Empathy Day Festival events

How to watch ON DEMAND

- The Empathy Day Festival assembly with **Frank Cottrell-Boyce** is **10 minutes** long and suitable for both primary & secondary
- 'Spark Empathy With...' events are **20 minutes long** and feature two top authors and/or illustrators
- Sessions are pre-recorded and available to watch on demand from the date listed, at any time to suit you. Go to the [**EmpathyLab YouTube**](#) to watch or click the link sent to your email the morning before

How to join LIVE

- **On Empathy Day our exclusive Live event with Elle McNicoll and Joseph Coelho** will last **30 minutes**
- You **MUST** sign up in advance to receive the live link, which will be emailed the day before
- The event will be hosted on Zoom, and we recommend joining with your camera on as there will be interactive elements
- At sign-up, you will be prompted to complete media consent as images from the event may be shared on social media and on our website. If you have any concerns about students being visible, please leave your camera off, or ensure students not able to consent are not visible on screen
- **Sign up to join any of the live CPD webinar events.** These are **1 hour long** and will be held on Zoom. The link will be emailed to you the day before



The Empathy Day Festival programme

**FULL
DETAILS
HERE**

Monday 2 June

★ **WATCH** Empathy Day Festival Welcome with *Frank Cottrell-Boyce and Friends*
Available to watch from 30 May



★ **REGISTER** Welsh Assembly 1 with *Manon Steffan Ros*
9:15-9:45am - Welsh
10:00-10:30am - English
[Click here to get the links](#)

★ **WATCH** Spark Empathy with... Ep. 1 with *Annemarie Anang & Lisa Thompson*
Available to watch from 30 May (ages 4-7)

Tuesday 3 June

★ **WATCH** Spark Empathy with... Ep. 2 (in partnership with *Refugee Week*) with *A.M. Dassu & Sita Brahmachari*
Available to watch from 2 June (ages 7-11)

Wednesday 4 June

★ **WATCH** Early Years – Share a Story with Elmer In partnership with *Tall Stories*
Available to watch from 3 June

★ **WATCH** Spark Empathy with... Ep. 3 with *Sarah Hagger-Holt & Ashley Hickson-Lovence*
Available to watch from 3 June (ages 11-14)

⌚ **REGISTER** EmpathyLab x World Book Day webinar *Book Chat: Building Community, Inspiring Young Readers* with expert speakers & authors
[Sign up to receive the link, 6pm](#)

Thursday 5 June

★ **Empathy Rhyme Time** in libraries

★ **WATCH** Spark Empathy with... Ep. 4 with *Smriti Halls & Andy Day*
Available to watch from 4 June (ages 4 - 7)

⌚ **REGISTER** EmpathyLab x Place2Be webinar *Reading, empathy and wellbeing* with expert speakers & authors
[Sign up to receive the link, 6pm](#)

Friday 6 June

★ **REGISTER** Puffin Schools Virtual Visit with *Lisette Auton*
Follow Puffin Schools on Facebook to get the latest updates & registration link, 11am

★ **WATCH** Spark Empathy with... Ep. 5 with *Sue Cheung & Alex Latimer*
Available to watch from 5 June (ages 7-11)

Friday 6 June

★ **WATCH** DRAW WITH ROB with *Rob Biddulph*
Available to watch from 5 June (all ages)

Saturday 7 & Sunday 8 June

★ **Family weekend** Visit your local bookshop or library
See our map to find an event near you
Download the *Empathy Day Family Toolkit*

Monday 9 June

★ **WATCH** Spark Empathy with... Ep. 6 with *Phil Earle & Sarah Crossan*
Available to watch from 6 June (ages 11-14)

⌚ **REGISTER** EmpathyLab x Auticon webinar *Empathy and autism* with expert speakers & authors
[Sign up to receive the link, 6pm](#)

Tuesday 10 June

★ **Empathy Rhyme Time** in libraries

★ **WATCH** Spark Empathy with... Ep. 7 with *Hannah Gold & Tom Palmer*
Available to watch from 9 June (ages 7-11)

★ **WATCH** Poetry Unslammed with *Jion Sheibani, Karl Nova and other special guests, hosted by Paul Jenkins*
Available to watch from 9 June
For ages 11-14+ & teachers, schools to register

Wednesday 11 June

⌚ **REGISTER** Welsh Assembly 2 with *Manon Steffan Ros*
9:15-9:45am - Welsh, 10:00-10:30am - English
[Click here to get the links](#)

★ **WATCH** Spark Empathy with... Ep. 8 with *Rashmi Sirdeshpande & Tom Percival*
Available to watch from 10 June (ages 4-7)

Thursday 12 June

★ **WATCH** Empathy Day Assembly with *Frank Cottrell-Boyce*
Available to watch from 11 June (ages 4-16)

★ **WATCH** THE BIG SHARE Author, *Rashmi Sirdeshpande* shares your work Available to watch from 11 June

★ **REGISTER** Empathy Day LIVE event with *Elle McNicoll & Joseph Coelho* (ages 7-14)
[Sign-up to receive the link, 2:00-2:30pm](#)



What is empathy and why is it so important?



**is our ability to experience and understand
someone else's feelings**

Children and young peoples' wellbeing is in decline, impacted by multiple factors. The latest Children's Society report shows that our 15-year-olds have the lowest life satisfaction in Europe, and charity Mind has found that 1 in 5 school-age children has a mental health difficulty.

Developing empathy and being able to use that understanding to act in the interests of others is one of the very best of our human qualities, and nurturing it in our children and young people is a powerful way to invest in a better future.

JUMP into someone else's story

Our theme this year is **JUMP INTO SOMEONE ELSE'S STORY**. When children jump into a book, they identify with the characters and learn to see things from another person's point of view, starting to develop their empathy skills.

- Developing empathy strategies are a hugely important part of the solution to combatting hatred and division, as they are fundamental to developing the positive relationships children need to thrive.
- Our approach to empathy education is based on scientific research which shows that **empathy is learnable**. Empathy is a skill, not a trait.
- Having **empathy-rich books** woven into children and young people's reading for pleasure activity is a very practical, and hopeful thing we can all do.

During the Festival, inspire children and young people to become Empathy Activists by joining our 'Spark empathy with' online events led by top authors and illustrators.

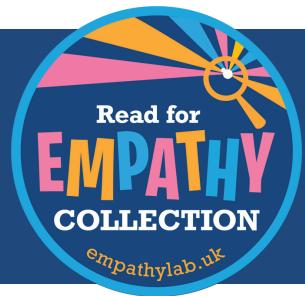


WHAT IS AN EMPATHY ACTIVIST?

EMPATHY ACTIVISTS are inspired by the stories they read to take real-world action in their school, local community or more globally!

Looking for great empathy-boosting books?

JUMP into someone else's story



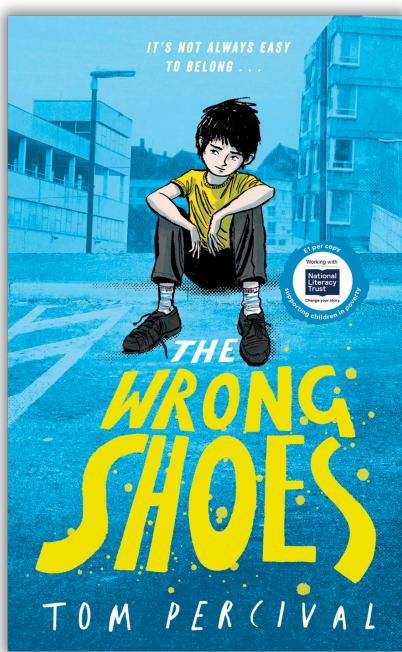
Discover the 2025 Read for Empathy collection



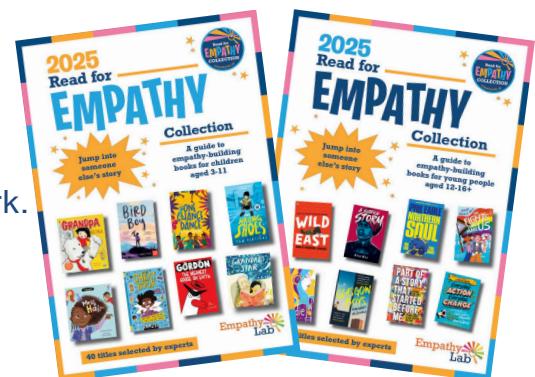
The Read for Empathy collection is 70 books selected by a panel of expert judges. Titles cover a wide range of genres for ages 3-16+. Rich and diverse, the collection reflects different ways of seeing the world – critical for empathy understanding and ideal to use alongside your empathy work.

Themes include understanding emotions, experiencing poverty, empathy for the environment, friends, family and relationships, prejudice and racism, identity and the experience of being a young person in the 21st century.

What is an empathy-boosting book?



- High quality, authentic writing
- Carefully crafted characters
- Challenges tribal thinking
- Tackles contemporary empathy issues
- Insight into challenging life-circumstance



Download your FREE Guides



TIP

Use the titles from this year's – or previous collections – as inspiration for your Empathy Day Festival activities:

- In displays
- For families to share
- Reading aloud
- Classroom starters
- Book of the week
- Tutor time reading

The Empathy Day Festival in your setting

You can use the activities and events we provide in any ways you wish – they are yours to adapt, inspire, or follow.

Over the next pages you'll find specific tips for making the most of the Empathy Day Festival in different settings. So, whether you're taking part in a school, school library, bookshop, public library, or other community setting, there are loads of ideas to help you.



We'd love to see YOUR Empathy Day Festival!

Share what you do, make, create and discuss with us at EmpathyLab! Share on social media tagging
@EmpathyLabUK
#EmpathyDayFestival

Examples from across the festival will be shared on Empathy Day, during THE BIG SHARE with Rashmi Sirdeshpande

We will also choose our favourites and send books to the young people featured, to say thank you for participating!

Here is some inspiration from previous years...

Community activity

'We wove Empathy Day activities into our community provision, with empathy-focused Baby Bounce and Rhyme and Storytime sessions, empathy-themed Chatterbooks reading groups and a puppet show run by the children's team'

Bromley Libraries

Mix it up

'On Empathy Day, we have mixed year groups for the day, sharing empathy reads and doing the Empathy Challenge activities'

Llanelli Primary School

Involve parents

'On Empathy Day, we invited parents into school for the last 20 minutes of the afternoon, to watch one of EmpathyLab's author events. Using Empathy Day to reach out more widely and involve parents meant they had a better understanding of how we teach empathy and what that means, and they were able to have those conversations then at home as well'

Beckfoot Heaton Primary Academy

Involve the WHOLE school

'Our Empathy Day was an interdisciplinary effort, with departments across the school getting involved to reinforce the empathy message with subject-specific content. This complemented the extra-curricular library activities, which we wanted to be fun, memorable and to leave a positive impact. The library was rearranged for the week, with pupil librarians manning "resolution stations" set up with all the Empathy Challenge activities for students to rotate through, promoting reflection and discussion'

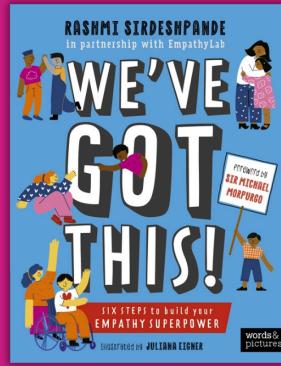
The High School of Glasgow

★ Empathy Shorts ★

A range of brilliant FREE empathy-rich 500-word short stories from some of your favourite writers. Suitable for KS1-3. [Read them HERE](#)



From authors including E.L.Norry, Nizrana Farook, Joseph Coelho and Sam Copeland...



[BUY HERE](#)

An amazing resource for every classroom. Build empathy in SIX easy steps with this essential empathy handbook for 7+



Written by Rashmi Sirdeshpande in collaboration with EmpathyLab

Make the most of the festival in your setting

The Empathy Day Festival is suitable for **ALL** school settings: primary, secondary, SEND/ALN and PRUs. For top tips to make the most of it in your setting, click on the headings below to get your PDF:

[Primary Schools](#)

[Public Libraries](#)

[Secondary Schools](#)

[Bookshops](#)

[School Library Services](#)

[SEND/ALN](#)

Thanks to our
Festival patron



Peters

Your Empathy Day Festival Checklist



Use this checklist to keep your Empathy Festival plans on track

1. ADD key dates to the school calendar
2. TALK to all staff about Empathy Day, COLLABORATE on plans and ideas
3. PHOTOCOPY/PRINT resources and decide which you want to use
4. ADD your event(s) to the interactive Empathy Day Festival map
5. NOTE which 'Spark Empathy With' author events you'll watch
6. SIGN UP for the LIVE online Empathy Day event with Elle McNicoll and Joseph Coelho
7. SIGN UP for any Festival CPD webinars
8. SHOW young people the 2025 Read for Empathy collection, discuss which titles they would like to read
9. COMPLETE the Empathy Day Festival evaluation survey
10. DISPLAY your Empathy Badge with pride!



What's next?

Join us in our mission to raise an empathy-educated generation, inspired to build a better world for everyone. Help us reach and benefit 1 MILLION children & young people a year by 2026.

For all latest news and updates, join our newsletter



How to order the Read for Empathy collection

- Find your **local independent bookshop**: booksellers.org.uk/bookshopsearch
- Order online via **EmpathyLab's Bookshop.org page**: uk.bookshop.org/shop/empathy-lab
- Order via your **usual supplier**
- Borrow the books from your **local library**



Empathy Action Month

- Throughout November, focus on small steps to make a difference, by putting empathy into action and reflecting on the Resolutions made for Empathy Day. Join us for:
 - Brand new author material
 - Free resource guides
 - Reading recommendations
 - Very exciting Read for Good news!



Professional development training

We offer year-round online training for anyone living or working with children and young people. Webinars cover different aspects of empathy education, with practical ways to apply learning in your setting. Find out more [HERE](#)

SAVE THE DATE

**Raising Generation Empathy?
The power of reading in social and emotional development**

Be part of our major conference on **27 November**, exploring the latest research on reading for empathy, as we create a manifesto for change to take empathy education mainstream.

Watch out for further details at www.empathylab.uk

SUPPORT US

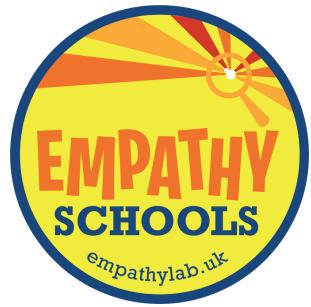
EmpathyLab is a small not-for-profit social enterprise with no regular funding.

If you believe raising an empathy educated generation matters, please consider donating via our website. Every donation, however small, helps us reach more children and young people.

[DONATE](#)

Want even greater, long term impact?

If your school or Trust would like to develop a sustained culture of empathy across your communities, take a look at our Schools Programme.



Includes teacher CPD training and support, digital resources and year-round live online author events, to develop and embed empathy education for long-term impact in your Primary or Secondary setting.

As well as developing empathy, the programme:

- encourages a culture of reading for pleasure, supports oracy, reading and writing
- delivers PSHE curriculum outcomes
- fosters wellbeing and emotional intelligence, supports behaviour management
- nurtures and inspires child-led social action for a kinder community

Because reading is a ubiquitous part of school life, our programme delivers long-term outcomes that can be woven into your curricula, rather than a bolt-on approach to social and emotional learning.

For more information on joining in for academic year 25/26 see [Empathy Schools – EmpathyLabUK](#)

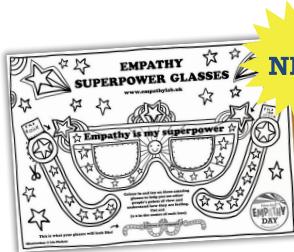
We really value the impact that EmpathyLab has on academic outcomes, the influence it has on relationships throughout the school and the development of pro-social skills

Headteacher,
The Spinney
School



FREE RESOURCES TO DOWNLOAD

CLICK HERE TO GET YOUR RESOURCES



NEW

Empathy Superpower glasses by **LIZ PICHON**



NEW

Empathy Post cards



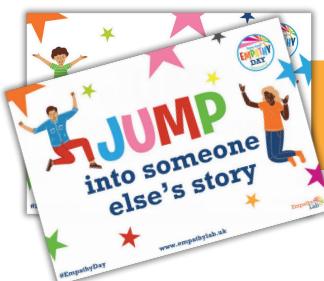
Empathy Reflections listening guide

NEW

Empathy Day Festival Planner



NEW



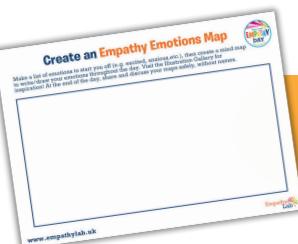
Posters

NEW

Empathy Artist poster

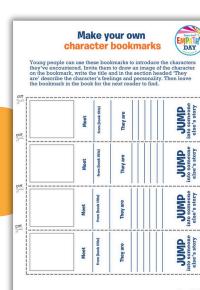


NEW



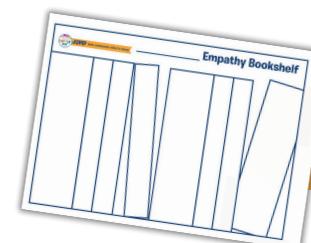
Empathy Emotions Map template

Character bookmarks



NEW

Empathy Chat discussion prompts



Empathy Bookshelf template and header

