



Join thousands of  
children & young people  
across the nation

# Family and Caregivers' Toolkit

Calling all  
Empathy  
Activists!

# JUMP

into someone  
else's story



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

**Empathy**  
Lab

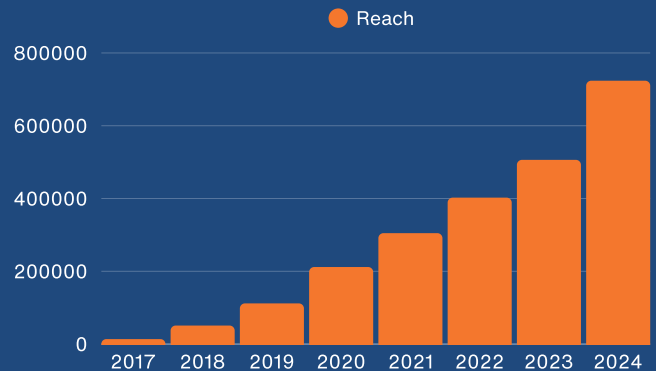


## The 2025 Empathy Day Festival runs from 2-12 June, culminating in Empathy Day on 12 June

### 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

#### *Choose how and when YOU would like to participate*

Alongside families, schools, public libraries, bookshops, community settings – anywhere people and stories come together – will be taking 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 to find out what's on offer and how your family can take part!**



# What is empathy and why is it so important?



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

Empathy is a skill that we all need to thrive. It is important for children and young people to develop empathy early as it allows them to build good friendships; to understand those different from themselves and it supports their wellbeing and happiness. Empathy enables children and young people to feel more settled at school and grow into caring, thoughtful adults who are great parents and colleagues.

Reading and sharing stories is a wonderful way to help children and young people develop empathy, which is why EmpathyLab are running a 10-day festival in June – packed full of exciting activities led by some of the UK's most inspirational children's authors and illustrators. You are invited to join in the activities at home, taking part along with schools, public libraries and other organisations supporting children.

## **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!



# Get involved!

## 1.

**Browse the full programme of activity on page 4.**

As a family, choose which short Spark Empathy episodes to watch together (available on demand). In these short films, top authors and illustrators share their books, explore empathy through their characters – and see them take the Empathy Challenge.

There's also a special empathy-themed Draw With Rob available from 5th June.

Find out more [here](#).



## 2.

**Join one of the free evening webinars for adults living and working with children and young people, featuring expert guest speakers.**

- Empathy and Book Chat – Wednesday 4 June, 6-7pm
- Reading, Empathy and Wellbeing – Thursday 5 June, 6-7pm
- Empathy and Autism – Monday 9 June – 6-7pm

Register [here](#).



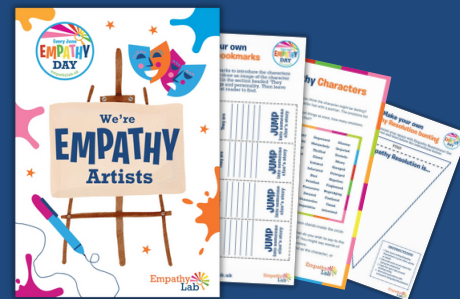
## 3.

**Take part in The Empathy Challenge as a family – see page 6.**

These nine creative activities encourage everyone to get creative, develop empathy skills and have fun. Do as many as you wish!

All you need to take part in the Challenge are pens and paper. There are templates to download and print off, but the challenge works equally well without printing anything.

Find out more [here](#).



## 4.

**Visit your local library or bookshop.**

There may be special empathy rhymetimes for little ones or empathy storytimes and events – and of course, you can borrow or buy some books to share as a family at home.

Use our online map to find an event near you [here](#).



**Have you seen our Early Years Toolkit? More ideas to build empathy with the youngest readers. Download your copy [here](#).**



# The Empathy Day Festival programme

**FULL  
DETAILS  
HERE**

## Monday 2 June

- ★ **WATCH** Empathy Day Festival Welcome with **Children's Laureate Frank Cottrell-Boyce & 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** 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** Early Years – Share a Story with Elmer  
In partnership with **Tall Stories**  
Available to watch from 3 June
- 📅 **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)
- ★ **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

- ★ **WATCH** First Time Feelings author film with Selina Brown, Phil Earle, Caryl Lewis, Nadia Shireen & Kristina Stevenson  
Available to watch from 9 June
- ★ **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, Coral Rumble and Paul Jenkins**  
Available to watch from 9 June (ages 11-14+ & teachers)

## 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 7-11)

## Thursday 12 June

- ★ **WATCH** Empathy Day Assembly with **Children's Laureate 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](#)



## 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** channel to watch or find them at [www.empathylab.uk](http://www.empathylab.uk)

## 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 children being visible, please leave your camera off.
- **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



# 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

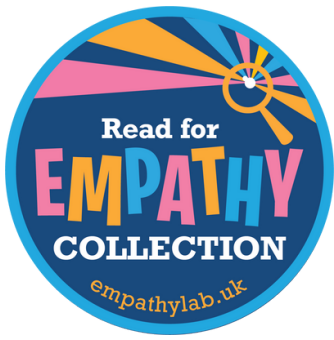
### Empathy Resolution

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"> <li>Emotions Maps</li> <li>Empathy Characters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Empathy Chat</li> <li>Empathy Reflections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Empathy Bookshelf</li> <li>Superpower Glasses</li> <li>Empathy Artist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Empathy Post</li> <li>Empathy Resolutions</li> </ul>





# TOP TIPS on reading for empathy!

1.

**Diverse stories** Share books that allow children to see their own life experiences reflected but also introduce them to books set in other countries and with characters of different races, religions and experiences. Inspire them to imagine life for people in different situations from their own

2.

**Talk about characters** Focus on the characters and their feelings, more than the plot. Remember there are no right or wrong answers! Wonder together about what the characters are thinking or feeling and what they might do next

3.

**Help recognise feelings** Use lots of different emotion words when discussing stories. This will help children understand people's feelings and why they behave in certain ways

4.

**Listen 100%** Listening is a crucial part of empathy. Listen carefully as children explore what they feel about characters

5.

**Don't forget the pictures** Illustrations are especially good for 'reading' other people – what do the pictures tell us about how the character feels?

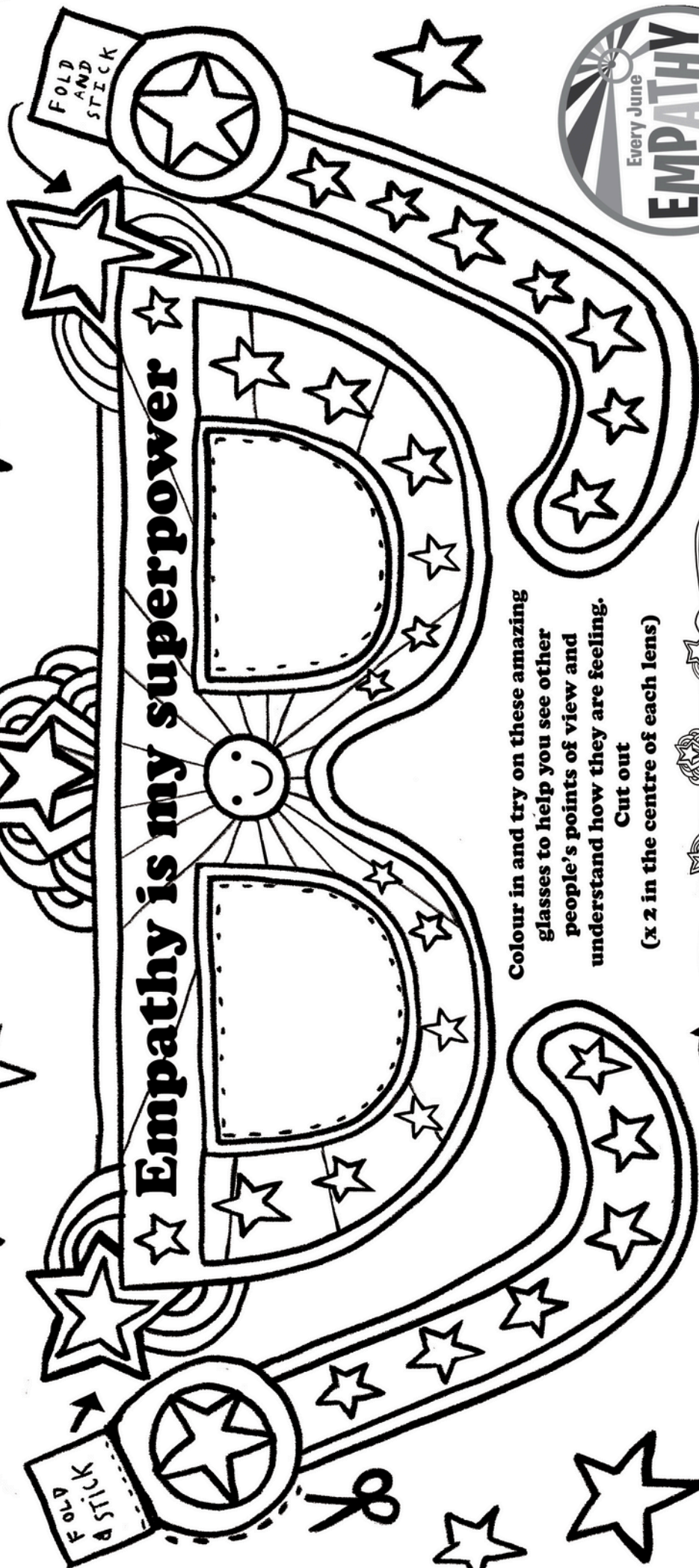
6.

**Put empathy into action** Could a book help inspire children to take action to help others?



# EMPATHY SUPERPOWER GLASSES

[www.empathylab.uk](http://www.empathylab.uk)



Colour in and try on these amazing glasses to help you see other people's points of view and understand how they are feeling.

Cut out

(x 2 in the centre of each lens)



This is what your glasses will look like!

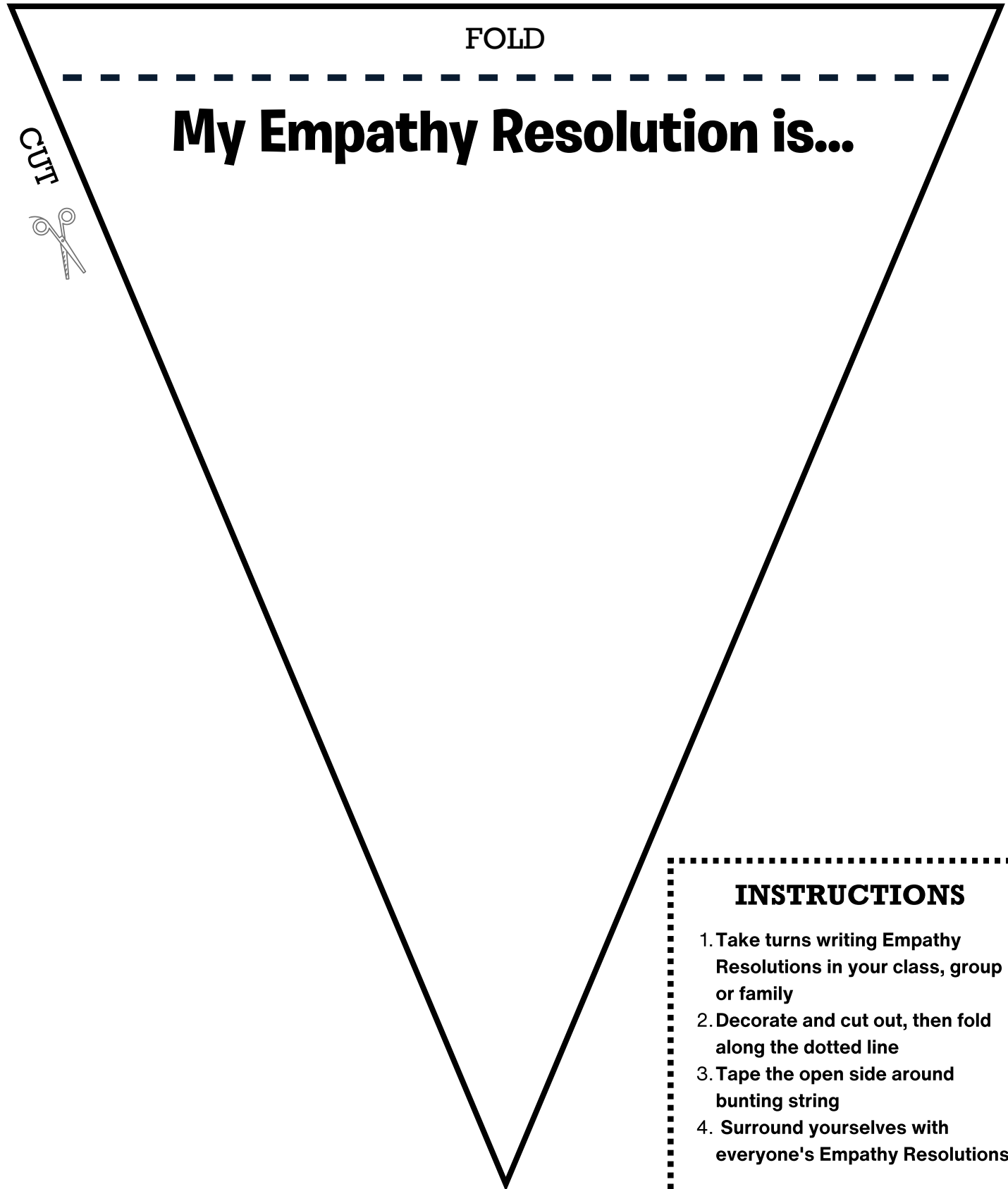
Illustration © Liz Pichon



# Make your own Empathy Resolution bunting



Use our bunting to decorate your space with Empathy Resolutions! Get students to write them out and then follow the instructions below.



# Create an Empathy Emotions Map!

Make a list of emotions to start you off (e.g. excited, anxious, etc.), then create a mind map to write/draw your emotions throughout the day. Visit the Illustration Gallery for inspiration! At the end of the day, share and discuss your maps safely, without names.



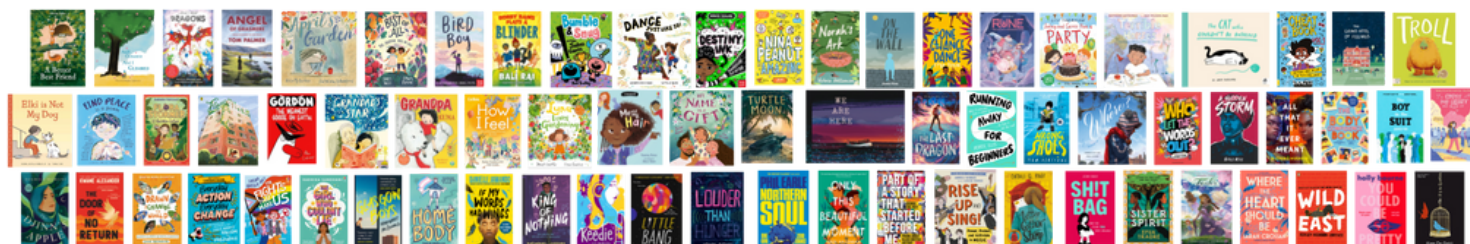
# Looking for great empathy-boosting books?

Available from  
your local  
bookshop,  
library or  
[bookshop.org](http://bookshop.org)

# JUMP into someone else's story

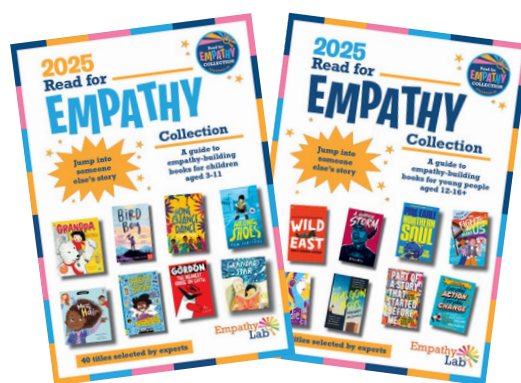


## Discover the 2025 Read for Empathy collection



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.



[Download your FREE Guides](#)

## 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



# FREE RESOURCES TO DOWNLOAD

## CLICK HERE TO GET YOUR RESOURCES



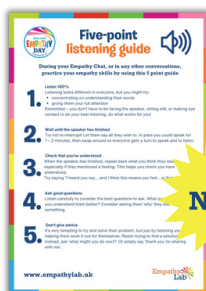
NEW

Empathy Superpower glasses by LIZ PICHON



NEW

Empathy Post cards



Empathy Reflections listening guide

NEW



Read for Empathy ticklist

NEW

Empathy Day Festival Planner



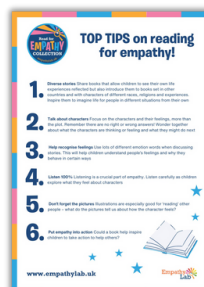
NEW

Empathy Resolution posters and bunting



Posters

NEW



Empathy reading tips

NEW

Empathy Artist poster

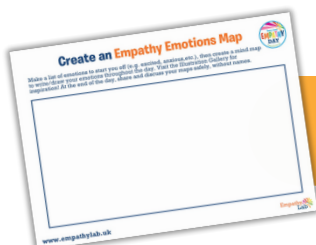


NEW

Empathy Characters emotions guide



NEW

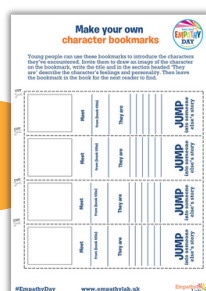


Empathy Emotions Map template



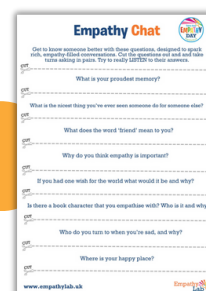
Empathy Bookshelf template and header

Character bookmarks



NEW

Empathy Chat discussion prompts





# Thank you for taking part!



**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!

## ★ 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...

## ★ We've Got ★ ★ This! ★

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**



**BUY HERE**



**Thanks to our  
Festival patron**





# 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](http://booksellers.org.uk/bookshopsearch)
- Order online via **EmpathyLab's Bookshop.org** page: [uk.bookshop.org/shop/empathy-lab](http://uk.bookshop.org/shop/empathy-lab)
- 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](http://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.