

Kids' Lit Quiz -

The Sport of Reading



I have recently had the privilege of being part of a reading Olympics –the *Kids' Lit Quiz*. To witness my students, aged between 11 and 13, in comfortable companionship with children from as far away as New Zealand and from every part of the United Kingdom, sitting on a double-decker bus enroute to a cruise on the Forth of Firth, with their noses so far buried in books that they were completely oblivious to a city they had never visited before, is a rare sight today. When they came up for air, it was only to swap recently purchased books, despite the obvious excitement growing around them in Edinburgh— Festival City.

Are they simply nerds with virtual centimetre thick glasses perched on their noses? Surely this was not 'normal'? No mobile phones were evident nor iPods and ear buds. Their thumbs were still, holding back pages of a book, whilst their ears were listening to the music of words on a page. These were real kids in real time who happen to love reading and whose enthusiasm for their *sport* was encouraged by dedicated librarians and teachers in their respective schools. These were kids about to defend their school's honour as they competed in the 2010 Finals of the *Kids' Lit Quiz* at the Stewart's Melville School, Edinburgh.

For six days our team lived, laughed, played, explored and competed. We were feted at a gala dinner. We met Alan Gibbons, who is leading a campaign to keep British public libraries open and better funded. We were entertained by the Lord Provost at a civic

Bev Schultz, Media Librarian from the Ridge School, Johannesburg in South Africa, recently attended the finals of the international Kids' Lit Quiz in Edinburgh with her team of 1 girl and 4 boys. This is her impression of the event.

How often are children awarded prizes or receive accolades at school prize givings for their reading prowess and enthusiasm?

Not often enough, as Wayne Mills, Senior Lecturer in Children's Literature, Faculty of Education, University of Auckland, decided back in 1991.

In pursuit of a solution, Mills set up the *Kids' Lit Quiz* [<http://www.kidslitquiz.com/>] to make reading for pleasure 'cool'. Nearly twenty years down the line, the Quiz is now international and growing. The **sport of reading** is a global reality!

reception, and attended presentations by various authors at the Edinburgh Book Fair, including Garth Nix and Gill Aburthnot. The Edinburgh Festival was in full swing – Andy Griffith's *Just MacBeth*, Michael Morpurgo's *Farm Boy* and a one hander of Orwell's *Animal Farm* were some of the presentations we were lucky to catch. We walked from one end of the city to the other, toured haunted vaults, and in a graveyard we were told spine tingling stories of Edinburgh's history.

The day of the *Kid's Lit Quiz* was a grand affair, complete with a Piper escorting the teams in. Mills, in his Quiz Master's black outfit and top hat, opened proceedings. The competition comprised of ten categories with seven questions in each. And this is where the extensive reading knowledge of these