

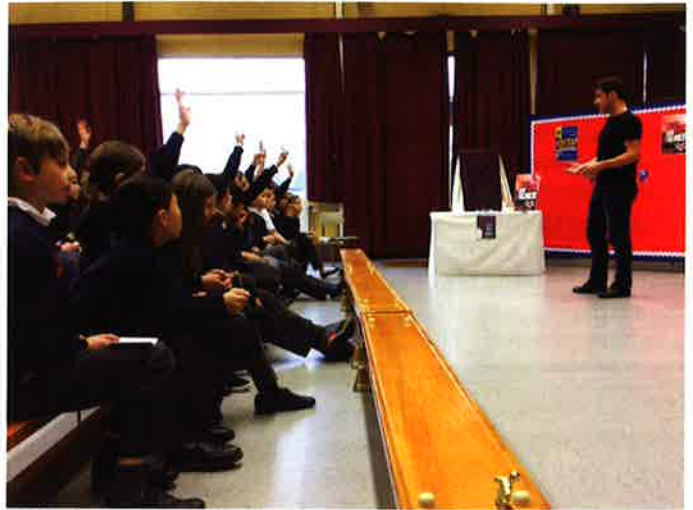
Sparking reading with visiting author, Tom Palmer

Written by Kristie MacLean, Canadian Section librarian

“I didn't like to read for pleasure when I was younger; it was a struggle for me to read. My mum got me reading. She gave me sports articles. This is how I became a better reader and she started my love of reading.” This is the message that Tom Palmer, British author, shared with British and Canadian students during his visit to SHAPE in January.

Fostering conversations around books helps to create lifelong readers. Activities such as book talks and literature circles help to develop a community of readers. These types of activities happen in classrooms every day. Thanks to the support of SHAPE International School, the British and Canadian Section added an author visit to building student literacy skills. Students need to learn about how writers get their ideas and turn those ideas into books. Author visits help make those connections visible for students.

The two school sections welcomed Tom Palmer in January. Mr. Palmer writes books connected to football (or is that soccer?), rugby, and other sports. Titles like Football Academy, Foul Play, and The Squad are among his collection. He is passionate about encouraging non-readers to fall in love with reading through sharing his own struggles with reading and writing as a child.



△UK students eagerly answer Tom Palmer's sports quiz questions

Tom conducted a writer's workshop with six grade 5-8 students at the Canadian Section. Each student brought a piece of their writing to discuss and Tom gave guidance on where to take their writing next. Students who participated in this workshop all wanted more time with Tom. What an enriching experience for our students!

The author visit is also the starting point for Literacy Month at the Canadian Section after the winter break. The goal for literacy in our section is to encourage and support literacy through speaking, listening, reading, and writing in a variety of authentic ways. This year's literacy theme is Battle of the Books. We want to motivate and challenge students to partake in friendly literacy battles throughout the month. For example, students will be challenged to read enough books to create a 'Pile-o-Books' to reach from the floor to ceiling in the library.

Tom Palmer's enthusiasm for talking with the students about literacy was clear. Students are still talking about the visit and are excited to read more of his books. In the quest to build capable readers, promoting the self-selection of reading materials is a key. Creating ravenous, lifelong readers doesn't just happen. It takes a schoolwide culture to help reach that goal. We appreciate Tom Palmer's time at SHAPE International School to help us in this quest.

If you would like to find out more about Tom Palmer's books, visit <http://tompalmer.co.uk/>



△Colin and Joseph (Canadian Section) talk writing with Tom.

Tom talked with students about what it was like to be a boy who did not like to read for pleasure and how he overcame those challenges to become a successful author. The students connected with his stories and enjoyed hearing about how Tom now gets his inspiration for writing his own books.

Tom's visit included more than just a chance to meet an author; he had students participate in his own reading game. The Reading Game is a sports quiz followed by a penalty-kicking competition with a trophy for the winner. Students who correctly answered questions took penalty-shots against school principals, Rowley Bucknill (UK) and Heather Mace (Canada). Each shoot-out winner won a reading trophy and there were winners from both sections. Students were very engaged and excited to be part of this game.

Students had time to ask questions. Many asked about how to write and how long it would take to write and publish books, or where the idea for a book starts. Tom Palmer also signed books for those who chose to buy them. We may have some future authors among us!



△Amelia (Canadian Section) has her book signed by Tom Palmer.

Photos by Heather Mace