

Crowdfunder notes - The Lost Words

Rob Bushby, March 2018

Notes from a few months of watching various Crowdfunder and similar campaigns emerge to source public support to provide copies of *The Lost Words* for schools and community groups. Notes are personal reflections, and aren't intended to be exhaustive, or didactic.

General points

- These initiatives are universally very well intentioned.
- Backing of Robert Macfarlane and Jackie Morris should be secured before going public!
- Think about avoiding what might be called 'the U2 free album scenario' i.e. not everyone automatically responds well to such good intentions, or shares your motivations and understanding/awareness of *The Lost Words*. Consider what might be done to ensure the initiative is as inclusive and informed as possible.
- Aim to make sure the book is welcomed and understood when it reaches its recipients i.e. teachers/school staff (who have a multitude of things landing on them on a daily basis and may well think 'what's this?').
- Think beyond Primary Schools. Whilst this may be a sensible initial target, consider Secondary and Special Schools, outdoor centres, youth groups, care homes... Take care in your pr not to limit perceptions of the potential of the book to reach wider audiences. See [Explorer's Guide](#) Introduction p4 and Curriculum Context p30.
- Consider promoting as part of a wider literacy and nature agenda.
- Make use of free resources, hosted at www.johnmuirtrust/thelostwords - Explorer's Guide by Eva John, posters, Literacy & Nature Resource Guide.
- Browse and make use of [#TheLostWords](#).
- Have a bigger goal in mind e.g. an overall aim: to revitalise word usage so that it reboots the Oxford Illustrated Junior Dictionary algorithms.

Consideration might be given to **3 key areas**, beyond creating something that is solely a fundraising campaign. Success is more than reaching a target, it's making a difference to the intended recipients.

Crowdfunding

- Be clear on audience/recipients; that there is a need and desire for the book; and anticipated benefits of the campaign being successful.
- Sort out finances e.g. clarify cost per book, distribution costs, book sourcing, storage/security and delivery if large numbers.
- Consider tactics, especially communications. Create a draft plan and timetable of suggestions for messaging e.g. milestones reached, news items, support resources, local use/examples etc.
- Have a 'stretch' target e.g. of secondary and special schools, and community groups/care homes.
- Research good practice for making a success of Crowdfunders; look at some successful ones.
- Use social media effectively – thank people, engage with backers, use backers to do your pr work.
- If Rob/Jackie actively supporting, make effective use of this.

- Consider how to incorporate additional contributions towards target NB Crowdfunder pledges are not released if target not met.

Distribution

- Who will receive it? e.g. school head, library, English teacher, janitor, reception...? Who do you need to target to ensure the book gets put to use?

(Personal experience – I was part of a project to share class sets of 24x graphic novels to all Scottish Primary Schools, free. Distribution was delegated; boxes arrived at schools which didn't then know what to do with them. We know there are boxes gathering dust on shelves rather than being put to use).

- How will you get it to them? Mail? Personally? What is most suitable for the recipient/school? Can you use an 'agency' e.g. Council internal mail; National Park doing outreach work...

- How will they receive it? Consider writing a cover letter (see context points below). Email to head teacher in advance, hard copy with the book?

- Consider 'personal' touches as part of distribution/receipt e.g. [Suffolk Wildlife Trust](#) bookplate and bookmark.

- Note that only one book per school may limit its use e.g. with large class sizes. Consider multiple copies per school; signpost towards [3x free posters](#) of Otter, Kingfisher, Dandelion poems. Can digital resources help?

Context

- The more meaningful the context you can help to set, the better (i.e. look at the initiative beyond a singular fundraising exercise).

- Find collaborative angles if possible.

- Consider relevant endorsements e.g. Council, education department (to confirm value in relation to curriculum/learning outcomes), Book Trust, teacher, pupil etc. – both for a cover letter and via their own pr channels.

- Encourage receipt and use from perspectives that are as wide as possible e.g. avoid it being seen as just a children's book, just a 'conservation' thing.

- Leave open opportunities for folk to use and interpret in terms of literacy, attainment, art, music, discussion, RME (values & principles, contemplation), observation, citizen science, family engagement, educator/teacher training etc.

- Tie in with external initiatives and agencies if/where possible e.g. The Wildlife Trust's #30DaysWild, Outdoor Classroom Day, International Book Day, #InternationalHappinessDay, #WildflowerHour, Year of Nature 2019, Year of Young People 2018, John Muir Award etc.

- Encourage Inclusivity! Avoid giving the impression that 'you need to come to a reserve/particular nature location' and 'you need an expert to help'. Be as open and inclusive as possible.

- Don't underestimate the potential of family and older group benefits/interactions.

- Consider self-created exhibitions, for additional sharing and wider influence.

- Consider tie-ins with teacher/educator workshops on literacy & nature, including ways of using the book and resources, word-related trails, possibly an app, wider community group engagement etc.

- Download and use the Explorer's Guide, and the 3 posters, which are handy for promotion and noticeboards.