

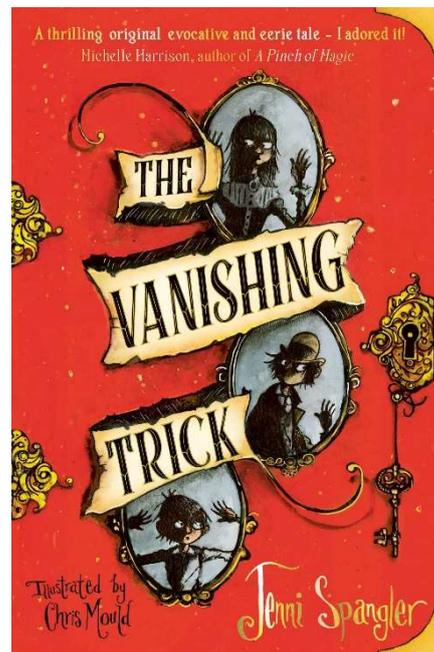
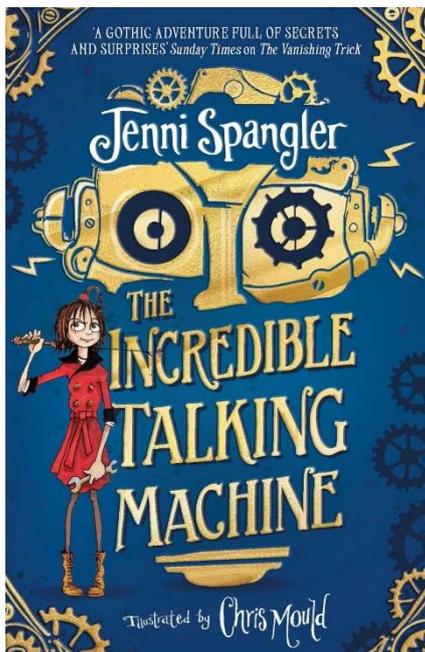
Jenni Spangler, Writer in Residence

The Magpie Project

Author visits generate excitement for books, give insight into careers in the arts and inspire amazing writing. A writer-in-residence takes this further, continuing the buzz for a whole term and nurturing children's creative abilities.

Suitable for years 5 and 6, the residency features a series of playful workshops which build a toolkit of writing techniques. Students will discover the amazing creative voices they already possess and build the confidence and ability to express them.

Over the course of the term, students will produce their own 'magpie book' – a personal collection of ideas and information which becomes a resource for future writing. They'll also become members of the Creative Arts and Writing Society, officially recognising them as fellow artists and writers.



The Workshops

Workshops take 90 minutes including time for questions and trying new techniques. All workshops are interactive with quizzes and games, writing, drawing, and lots of nerdy facts. They're fast paced, fun and often loud!

Thinking like an artist

I'll introduce myself, my work, and how I came to be an author. I'll share insider info about how books are made and explore some common misconceptions about authors and artists. We'll discover how incredibly creative our brains are, and begin building our magpie books together.

How to photograph a ghost

This session is all about finding inspiration. I'll share my excitement for weird history and how I turn them into stories. Together we'll learn a simple technique to generate ideas from photos, facts and prompts and begin gathering a collection of inspiring ideas we can draw from again and again.

The Worst Guy for the Job

Good stories start with a great character. We'll look at how characters are created, and what makes us love the hero and hate the villain. Using simple drama techniques we'll find out why being a good person is not the same as being a good character. Everyone will create an original character and consider the adventures they might have.

Lost in a book

Story structure beyond the pyramid graph. Using a modified version of the hero's journey we'll discover what makes a story work. Together we'll plot a mystery story to understand how twists and intrigue keep up turning the pages, and use our previous knowledge of character building to make a hero who drives the story forward. Everyone will have a go at planning a story for their characters.

Mind Control for Beginners

How do we trick a reader's brain into believing our stories and caring about our characters? With great descriptive writing! We'll use our senses, emotions, and personalities to write amazing descriptions. We'll also answer important questions such as: 'How hard is it to draw something you've never seen?' (very hard!) 'What did history smell like?' (very bad) and 'How many nerdy brain facts can I squeeze into one workshop?' (a lot).

Illustration workshop

We invite a guest artist to join us in this session to show us how they turn bring characters and settings to life. The exact structure of this session will vary depending on which illustrators are local and available to join us but will be interactive and give an insight into another career option in the book world.





Creative Arts and Writing Society (the magpie club)

Everyone who takes part receives a membership card officially declaring them writers and artists. They'll be in the same club as a number of published children's authors and illustrators whose names they might recognise from the school library! We discuss how even the most famous authors and illustrators are always learning, and often don't get it right first time. The membership card is permission to experiment, create, make mistakes and to proudly call themselves creators.

The magpie motto: **Work Hard, Be Kind, Stay Weird!**

- **Work Hard** – we focus on perseverance, practice, and chasing your goals. I try to dispel the myth that it's all about talent, and reveal my own mistakes and setbacks during the long journey to publication.
- **Be Kind** – making books is a team sport! I talk about my team; friends, family, agents, editors, authors and illustrators who help me. I prompt classes to be a team too – to celebrate each other's successes and support each other's struggles. Creativity thrives when we are free to get things wrong without judgement. I emphasise being kind to yourself and your peers, so everyone feels safe to explore and take creative risks.
- **Stay Weird** – We all have different experiences, different interests and different brains. Rather than worrying about what they 'should' write, I push students to write the stories that only they could tell. Though we all like to fit in, it's the ways we stand out which make us interesting. I invite pupils to embrace their inner "weirdness" and to value it in others. Literature and art are full of people who did exactly that.



Magpie Books

A magpie book is an artist's notebook - a place to store shiny snippets of ideas and inspiration for later use

Because they are intended to be used frequently, both to work in and refer back to, I provide each child (and their teachers) with a hardcover, professional sketchbook which can cope with heavy use. These are branded with the magpie logo in gold to make them feel extra special.

The book will be used in workshops for brainstorming, notes, and exercises. I'll email reminder sheets explaining the techniques we use which can be stuck into books as reference.

Between sessions they should use the books often as a place to collect ideas and experiment with writing and drawing. For example, they could write down character names, quotes from books, jokes, interesting facts, vocabulary words and their own stories. They should be allowed to doodle, draw, and stick things into the books, use coloured pens or messy layouts, and make it their own, even if it looks like chaos!

Adults should take an interest in the books but resist correcting spelling/grammar or limiting what topics they can explore. The idea is to have a completely free creative space to play without any pressure of having to do it 'right'.



By the end of our time together these will be a goldmine of inspiration, and physical proof of their wonderful creative brains at work.

Expansion Activities

Each session will include some activities and techniques which could be expanded on in classwork or homework if desired. In addition to the workshops I will email an optional creative challenge or prompt and a reading recommendation for your group once a week for the whole term.

Once the project is complete, I will send a short personal note of encouraging feedback to each student.

You might wish to celebrate the class' achievements at the end of the programme by having them write stories using their new knowledge, and printing these into a class anthology as a keepsake. Alternatively each student could make and print their own mini book to keep and to share in the school library.

A display board showing some of their ideas in progress, character designs and illustrations and short extracts of their work can be a great way to share what they are proudest of – this could even be arranged as an exhibition for parents and/or other classes to attend, with children explaining their own plans and designs.

About me

I am a children's author specialising in stories for 8-12 year olds which combine real places and historical events with magic and mystery. My first novel, *The Vanishing Trick*, was Waterstones Book of the Month in 2020 and has been voted a 'teacher's pick' on amazon. My second, *The Incredible Talking Machine* is recently released and set in Victorian era Manchester against the backdrop of the industrial revolution.

I previously led a two-year youth drama project in Greater Manchester for 9-15 year olds, facilitating them to write, direct and perform their own original play. I'm passionate about the arts as a tool to build confidence, imagination and communication skills, and I incorporate elements of drama practice into my workshops.

As an adult with ADHD I strongly believe in helping children to find their own unique ways of working and creating. My work in schools places emphasis on 'staying weird' – embracing your own interests, skills and perspective on the world rather than trying to squeeze into other people's boxes – and celebrating and supporting the 'weird' in others, too.





Ehutch6
@Mapleexpat

...

Replying to @JenniSpangler1

Honestly, we had @JenniSpangler1 in on Wednesday and it was absolutely fantastic!!! The kids were eating out of her hands. You will not regret for a second getting involved in what Jenni does - funny, intelligent and utterly engaging!!! That will be one lucky class!!!! X

12:27 PM · Jul 16, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone



Laura Whittaker @laurabwhittaker · Dec 2

...

What an incredible time we've had with Jenni! Definitely inspired my gorgeous class! 🥰

