

MAD MABINOGION TALES 2013



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Merthyr Tydfil Public Library Service's School Outreach Programme 2013

This document provides details of Merthyr Library Service's Mad Mabinogion Tales 2013. This was a programme aimed at establishing close working partnerships with ten local Primary Schools in order to promote the work of the Library Service. It was delivered with funding from the Clore Duffield Foundation and with cooperation from the Education Department, Parks and Environment and Cyfarthfa Park and Museum in the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil. It took place during the months of May, June and July 2013

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Our Aims

The original project summary of Mad Mabinogion Tales proposed delivering a complex programme of literature, arts and culture to a cross section of Year 6 pupils from Merthyr Tydfil's Primary Schools across a County Borough which contains some of the worst areas of Multiple Deprivation in Wales. The project was planned to involve ten local primary schools across the Borough targeting over 300 pupils from a variety of diverse communities.

We envisioned a series of school based outreach events, class visits to the school's local library and a large showcase event which would involve all the schools gathering together for a variety of activities at the iconic local attraction; Cyfarthfa Park and Museum.

The project produced a literature, arts and culture based programme which responded to the 'Merthyr Reads, Merthyr Succeeds' strapline which corresponds to Outcome 1 of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council's 2012 – 2013 Corporate Plan:

"People in Merthyr Tydfil have the opportunity and aspiration to learn and develop their skills to maximise their potential."

The aims of the project were:

- To increase young people's awareness and understanding of Wales' literature and the local link between the Mabinogion and the Guest family.
- To promote a culture where creative writing, storytelling, artistic expression and performance skills are developed as a vehicle for self-expression.
- To increase self-esteem and confidence and to foster an increase in communication skills among the targeted age group.
- To enable children from different geographical and cultural areas around Merthyr to engage with each other.
- To foster closer working relationships with Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council's Education Department and the Borough's Primary Schools.
- To publicise and promote the work of the library services to teaching staff, pupils, the Council and the general public throughout Merthyr Tydfil County Borough.



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Our Plan

The Mad Mabinogion Tales project was divided into five separate events delivered across a variety of venues in the Borough. The plan included three school visits, a visit to a local library and a showcase event at Cyfarthfa Park & Museum.

Event #1: School Visit with Daniel Morden.

An introduction to the Fourth Branch of the Mabinogion through a storytelling session and creative writing workshop hosted by Welsh author Daniel Morden.

Event #2: School Visit by Librarians.

A graphic novel workshop hosted by librarians from the Merthyr Tydfil Public Library Service to enable children to use their imagination to create a panel of art for a collaborative class graphic novel based on the story.

Event #3: Library Visit with Ed Holden.

The children's visit to the Library would involve a quick tour of the library with the focal point of the visit being a Rap Workshop with acclaimed Welsh beat-boxer, rapper and producer Ed Holden aka Mr Phormula.

Event #4: Cyfarthfa Park & Museum.

The projects showcase event would contain a variety of elements including:

- Museum visit & talk on Charlotte Guest and the Mabinogion
- Recorded rap performance by each class.
- Archery & banner making activity
- Craft workshop
- The MabiChallenge

Event #5: School Visit by Librarians.

The final school visit by librarians was designed to give us the opportunity to show premiere the Rap DVD, present the completed graphic novel, produce a final piece of craft for display in our libraries, to receive vital feedback from pupils and teachers and to promote the 2013 Creepy House Summer Reading Challenge.

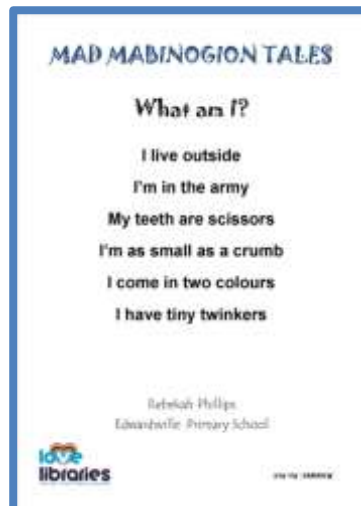


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The Mad Mabinogion Tales in Action

Event #1: School Visit with Daniel Morden.

Storytelling & Poetry Workshop



The Mad Mabinogion Tales project started on the 24th April 2013 with the first of the ten school visits by Daniel Morden, the winner of the Welsh Book Council's 2013 Tir na n-og English Award.

Daniel gave each of the ten schools a memorable retelling of the Fourth Branch of the Mabinogion from his newly published book *Tree of Leaf and Flame*. This story features a battle of wills between Gwydion and Arhianrhod, a married couple who want to prove who the greatest Wizard is. Madness and mayhem ensue resulting in the creation of Blodeuedd, a woman of flowers, and a dastardly plot to kill Gwydion and Arhianrhod's son, the man she was created for.

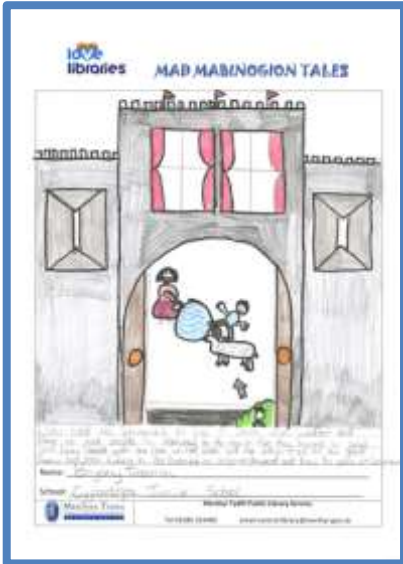
After the storytelling session, delivered to an enraptured audience, Daniel Morden worked with the children on their own piece of writing, encouraging them to write a poem, riddle or word picture based upon the story.

The children's work was collected together at the end of each visit and a selection of this work was put together in a collection which was sent to all schools, the education department, the Clore Duffield Foundation and Local Councillors.

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Event #2: School Visit by Librarians.

Graphic Novel Workshop



The second event of the Mad Mabinogion Tales programme took place in early May 2013 and saw librarians returning to the schools they had gone to on their initial visit with Daniel Morden.

Library staff followed up the author visits with sessions to produce a graphic novel based upon the story told by Daniel during the first event. Each session started with the Children recapping the story before the librarians showed examples of graphic novels from stock and explained the ways that Graphic Novels are special and different to a traditional book.

Brief instruction was then given on how to draw basic characters and the differences between speech balloons, thought bubbles and narrative boxes before children were handed a section of the story to turn into a drawing that would form part of a class graphic novel.

Throughout the session library staff were on hand to help with queries, help with the interpretation of the story section the child had been given and to provide inspiration and encouragement.

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Event #3: Library Visit with Ed Holden.

Rap Workshop



The third event of the Mad Mabinogion Tales project, and by far the most popular with the children involved was the Rap Workshop with Ed Holden, the acclaimed Welsh beat-boxer, rapper and producer also known as Mr Phormula.

Each of these sessions was delivered as a visit to the school's local library during the week leading up to the Showcase Event at Cyfarthfa Park. The three libraries; Merthyr Central, Dowlais and Treharris welcomed the children into the library with a brief tour before handing over the session to Ed Holden.

Ed worked with each of the classes to produce a rap based upon a different aspect of the forth branch of the Mabinogion based on Daniel Morden's book *Tree of Leaf and Flame*. Rap subjects included; a rap battle between Gwydion and Arhianrhod that ended up on Jeremy Kyle, the daily life of Llew's often forgotten brother and a visit by MTV's Cribs show to Llew and Blodeuedd's magical castle.

The rap was written up by Ed Holden with lines being suggested by the children. After the rap was completed, children performed the rap a couple of times, with Ed providing the backing track through his trade mark human beat-boxing.

The teachers were then handed a copy of the classes rap to be rehearsed during the build up to the Cyfarthfa Park event where they would perform the rap in front of the cameras and be recorded for prosperity.

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Event #4: Cyfarthfa Park & Museum

Mad Mabinogion Tales 2013 Showcase Event



The Mad Mabinogion Tale Showcase Event took place at the sun drenched scenic Cyfarthfa Park which proved to be a perfect day and location for the planned activities.

The day was split into two, with five schools attending the morning session and the remaining schools attending the afternoon session. As the schools themselves arranged the transport, many chose to remain behind or arrive early to take advantage of the weather and have their lunch in the sunshine.

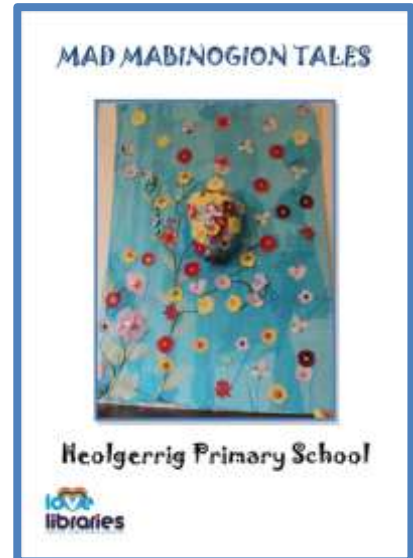
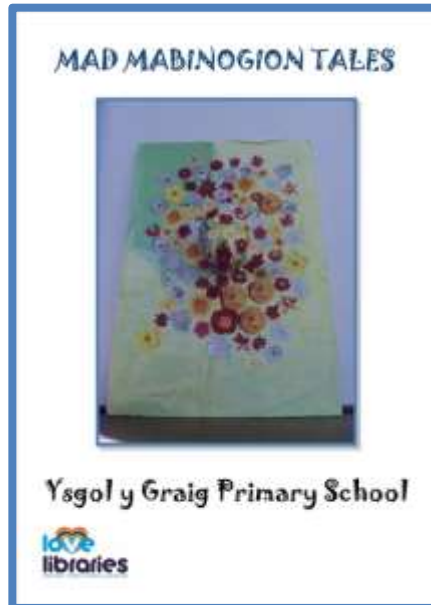
The day was an enormous success with the two groups of just over 150 children each taking part in a variety of events including performing their rap in front of the camera, an archery session run by the local Scout Group, working with a local artist to produce banners, working with library staff to produce flower masks and the MabiChallenge; a combination of physical challenges, quizzes and games of skill.

The event also included a short visit to the Cyfarthfa Museum for a talk by museum staff on Lady Charlotte Guest, the wife of a Merthyr-based Iron Master who first published a translation of the Mabinogion from the original Welsh language text into English in the 19th Century.

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Event #5: School Visit by Librarians.

Craft Workshop, Presentation of Work & Feedback



As the programme of events for the Mad Mabinogion tales, and the Summer Term drew to a close, library staff visited the ten schools involved in the project one final time.

Each of these sessions was centred on a craft activity which produced a piece of artwork that could be displayed in each of the libraries for future class visits and the general public to enjoy.

The sessions also provided the library service with an opportunity to premiere the Rap film that formed part of the Cyfarthfa Park event, to deliver the classes' graphic novel and to receive important feedback from the children and teachers about how the event had been received.

In many cases this final session also incorporated a visit to the School Assemblies to hand the work to the Head Teacher in front of the school to show how proud they were of the children's work.

One other important aspect of the visits was the opportunity to speak to Year 6 and the rest of the school and promote the 2013 Creepy House Summer Reading Challenge and the *Kids Take Over Libraries* events, and other events throughout the summer holidays that were taking place in the three Merthyr Libraries.

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Finances

The completed project cost a total of £7583.39.

We were able to secure £7,000 of funding from the Clore Duffield Foundation and the £583 .39 overspend was absorbed from our own budget.

The bulk of the funding was spent on our two featured artists; Daniel Morden and Ed Holden. Both Daniel Morden and Ed Holden were hired for a total of five days each costing a total of £3000.

The other main focus of the funding was on the event at the Cyfarthfa Park & Museum. For this we funded transport for each school, three marquees, our banner artist; Keith Baylis, a videographer and a variety of other resources required in order to set up and run a successful event.



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Feedback and Evaluation

The project was evaluated throughout using quantitative and qualitative methods, although the main focus of the feedback for the project was the feedback forms. In total there were three feedback forms with two being given to the children to complete and one to the teachers.

The first of the feedback forms was handed to the children when the project began and was used to establish each child's relationship to libraries, stories, reading and the Mabinogion as the project commenced.

The second feedback form was handed out during the last event of the project and was used to establish how the Mad Mabinogion Tales project was received.

The teacher's feedback form was also handed out during this session and was designed to establish their reaction to the project and to establish whether further collaboration between the Primary School and the Library Service was wanted and what form that future cooperation should take.

Feedback from the teachers was overwhelmingly positive, with 9 out of 10 of the teachers responding with "Excellent" when asked "What has been your overall impression of the Mad Mabinogion Tales?"

When asked for comments or suggestions one teacher expressed their wish for us to run a project such as this annually, while another teacher stated that the project had been an "excellent way of engaging with Year 6 pupils."

The feedback from the children was equally positive.

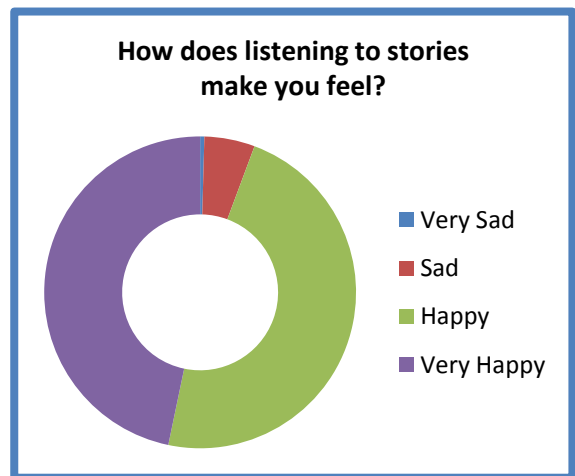
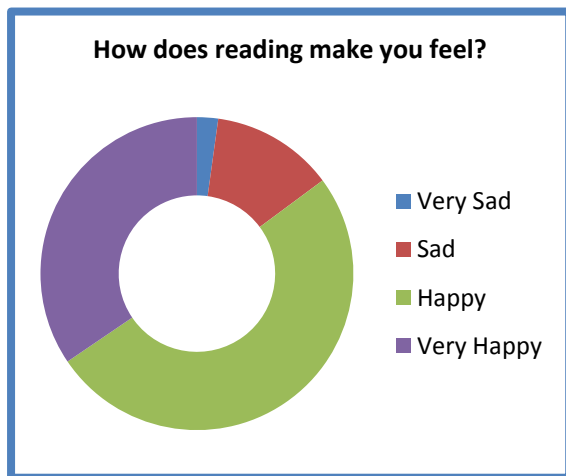
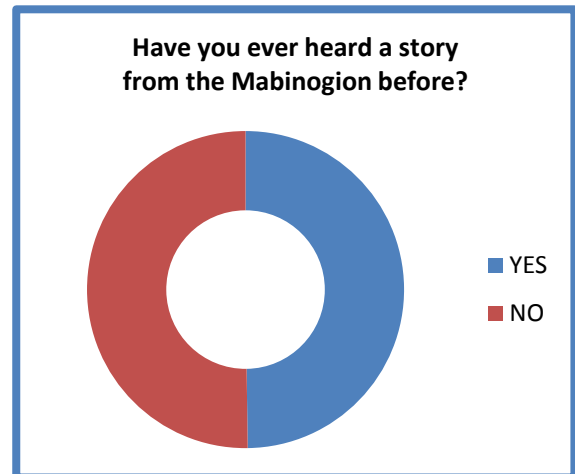
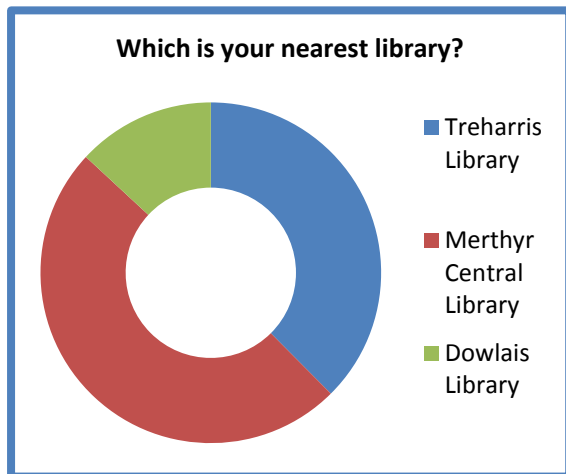
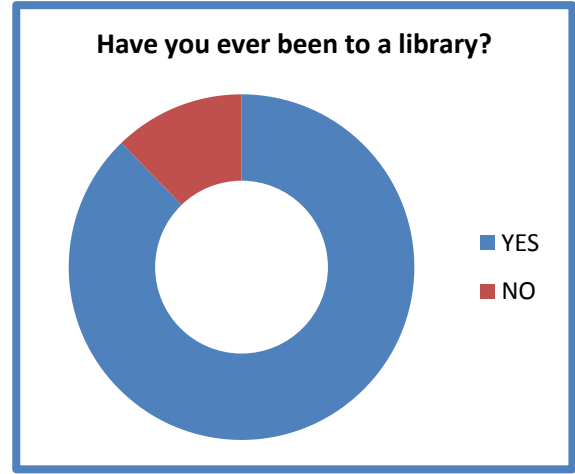
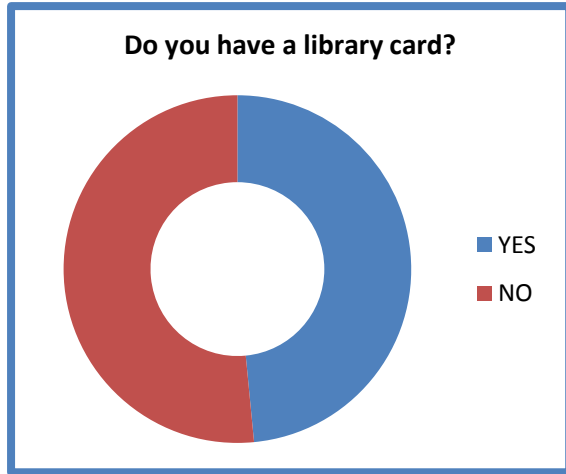
- 90% stated that they had enjoyed their visit to the library
- 88% stated that they would be interested in reading more tales from the Mabinogion
- 91% stated that taking part in the project either made them Happy or Very Happy

A full representation of the survey results are presented on the following pages.



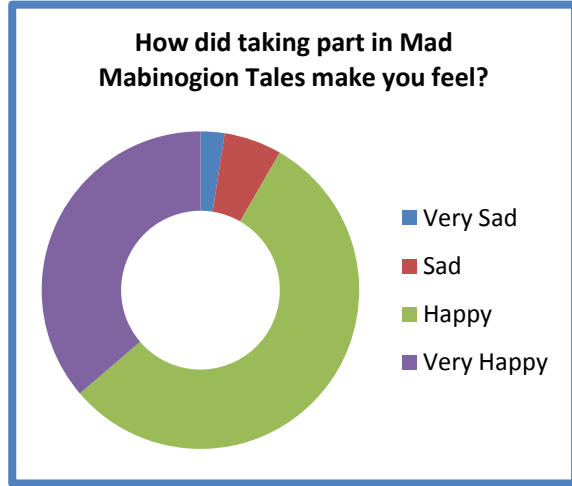
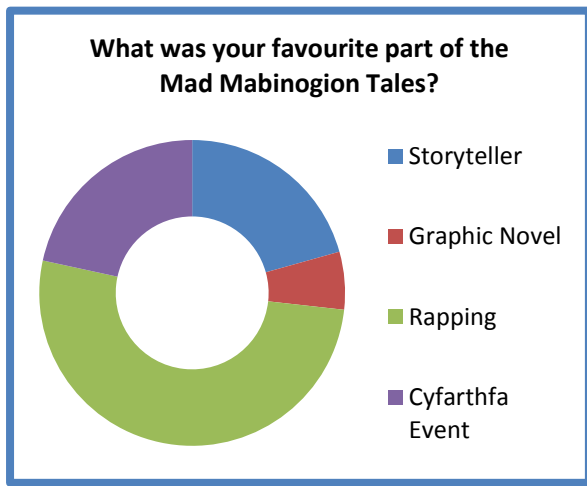
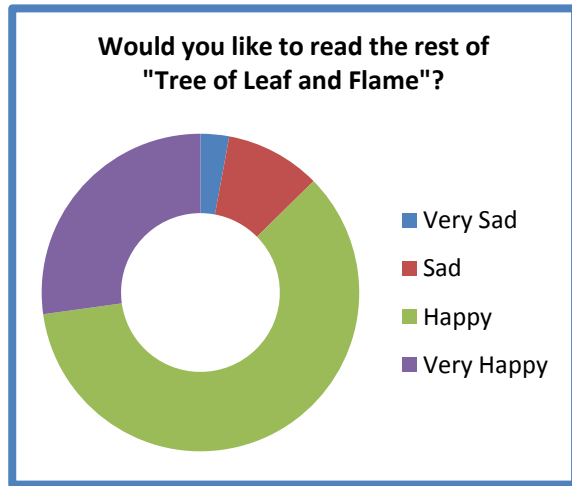
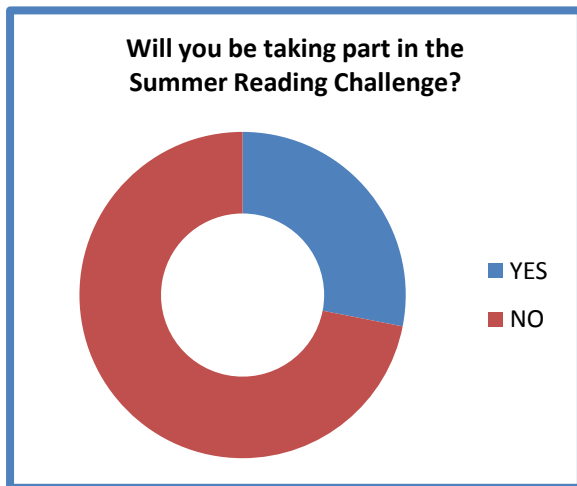
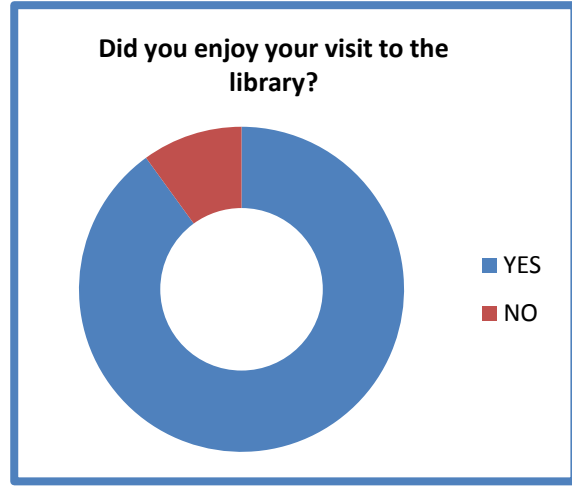
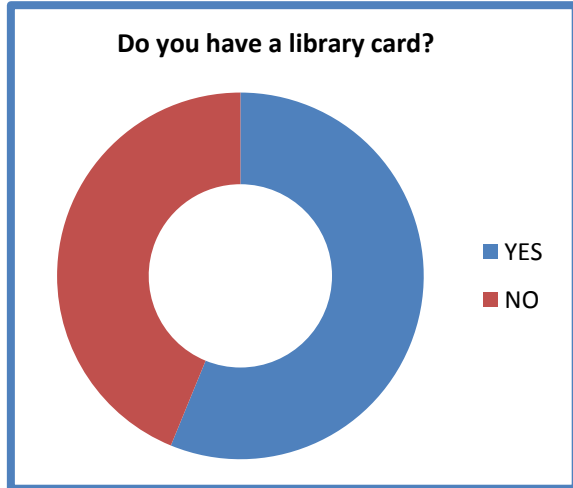
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Pre Mad Mabinogion Tales Questionnaire



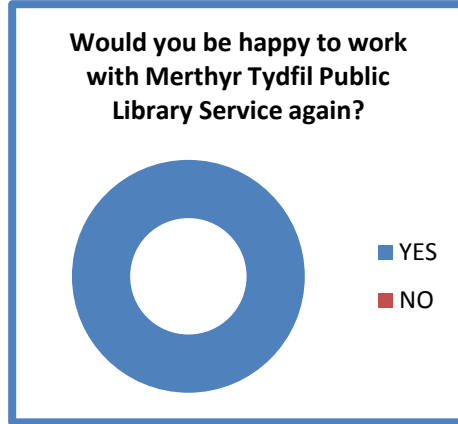
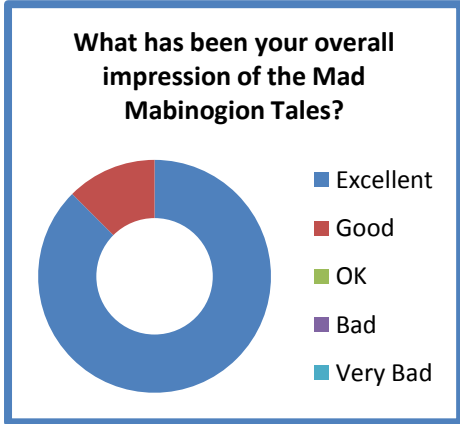
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Post Mad Mabinogion Tales Questionnaire

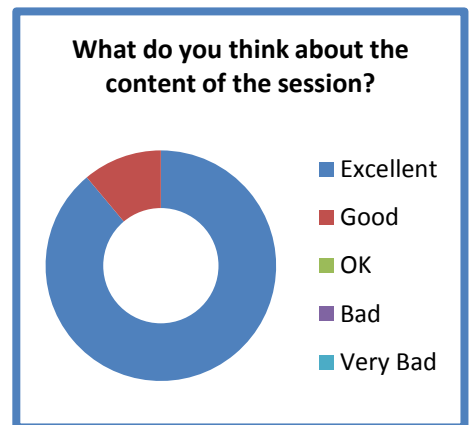
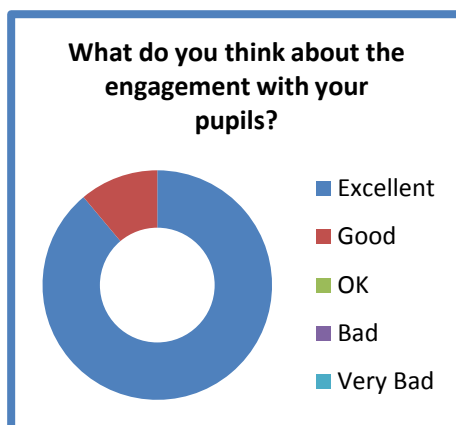
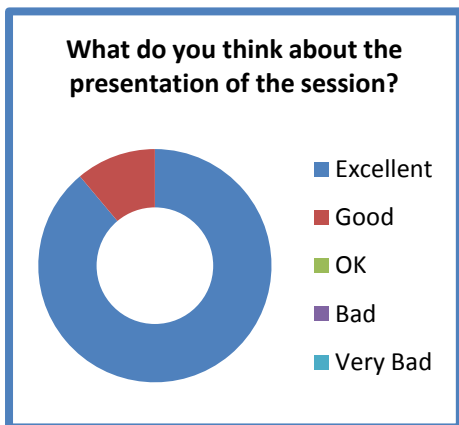


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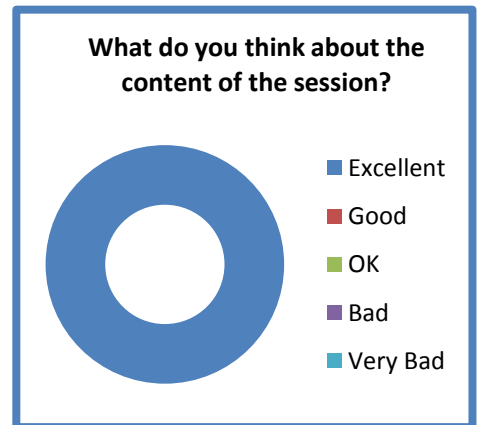
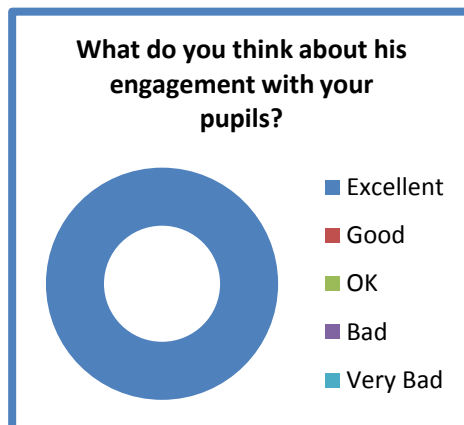
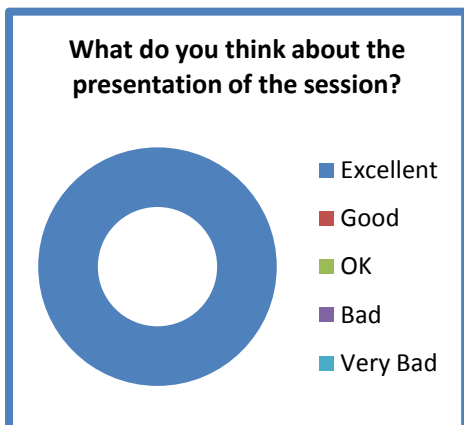
Teacher Feedback Questionnaire



What do you think about the Storyteller Daniel Morden?



What do you think about the Rapper: Ed Holden?



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The Legacy

Our intentions during the planning stage were for this project to provide a foundation that we could build upon in order to encourage schools and other child focused community groups to work with the library service to ensure an increase in effective promotion of library services, use of libraries and the literary heritage of Wales amongst the children of Merthyr Tydfil.

The project has forged stronger links with local schools and indeed, in some cases, provided the first form of contact between the Library Service and the Primary School. Understanding of how the Library service can engage and support schools and children the County Borough has been increased within the Education Department and has resulted in Primary and Secondary schools not involved in the Mad Mabinogion Tales project contacting us to discuss opportunities for partnership working.

Within the Library Service, the successful delivery of the event has increased staffs confidence and ability to further participate and run a programme of high quality events for the library service in the future and many members of staff who were involved in delivering the programme have gained new skills.

The greatest legacy however is the positive experience of the young people involved in the project, best summed up by a young participant, who now visits the Library weekly and who told a Summer Reading Challenge volunteer:

'I am so sad the Mad Mab has finished, we all loved it in school. I am going to come to the Library now every week and I am reading the whole of the Mabinogion because I didn't know it was such a great story. I thought all old books were boring'.

As promised, our young customer has appeared like clockwork at least once a week, bringing with her a number of her friends who weren't involved with the project, but who have now all borrowed the title by Daniel Morden 'The Tree of Leaf and Flame' and continue to use their local library to this day.

The success of the project, which has already enabled us to establish close interdepartmental ties within Merthyr Tydfil Council Borough Council, has resulted in a period of consultation with Merthyr Tydfil's Biodiversity Officer to explore feasibility of a project involving the library service, local schools and showcasing the rich wildlife and diverse flora discussed in the tales. The result is of this is the Mad Mabinogion Tales 2014 project.



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The Future: Mad Mabinogion Tales 2014

The 2014 project, based around the Third Branch of the Mabinogion as told by Daniel Morden from his book *Tree of Leaf and Flame*, builds on the success of its predecessor and is collaboration between Merthyr Tydfil Public Library Service, The Biodiversity Officer, local Primary Schools, the Education Department and the Parks and Environment Team.

As the funding available for 2014 is a fraction of that provided in 2013 by Clore Duffield, the proposal is to work with Year 6 Children from three local primary schools, roughly 90 to 100 children in total. However, the range of events and workshops for the children involved remains extensive and provides a programme designed to deliver a variety of literature, culture and artistic elements.

Having responded to feedback from teachers concerning the timing of the Mad Mabinogion Tales 2013 events, we plan to deliver the programme during the months of April and May 2014.

Mad Mabinogion 2014 Launch Event: Cyfarthfa Park

- Daniel Morden's Poetry Workshop
- Nature Trail & Orienteering
- Willow Craft
- Daniel Morden's Storytelling Session

Mad Mabinogion 2014 School Visit #1: Poetry Workshop with Librarians

Mad Mabinogion 2014 School Visit #2: Fantasy Map Workshop with Librarians

Mad Mabinogion 2014 School Visit #3: Nature Workshop with Merthyr Tydfil's Biodiversity Officer

Mad Mabinogion 2014 School Visit #4: Collage Workshop with Librarians

Mad Mabinogion 2014 Closing Ceremony:

A ceremony featuring His Worship the Mayor of Merthyr Tydfil and other dignitaries that will provide an opportunity for parents, children and teachers to see examples of the children's work produced during Mad Mabinogion Tales 2014.

At the event each child will be presented with a certificate and a special presentation pack to celebrate their involvement with the project.

