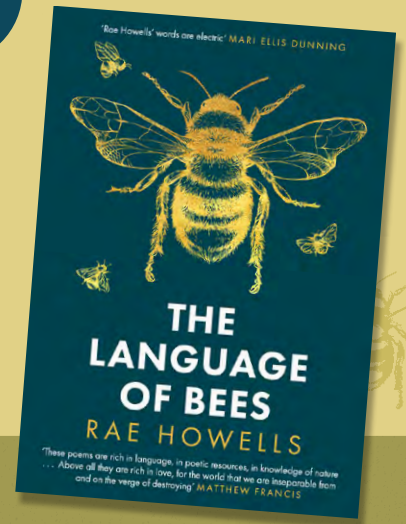




Each month we will focus on an inspiring author based in or writing about Wales! You'll have an introduction to their latest book, what inspires them to write, and any advice they have for young writers!

Get to know



Rae Howells



Summary:

With a forensic eye, Howells takes us on a journey through ordinary human lives and the extraordinary natural world we are in danger of losing. The carder bee carries the story of a colony, a species, and, ultimately, the fate of all life on earth.

The mermaid weaves an almost beautiful tale of a tragic miscarriage. The magpie writes yearning letters to her lost lover. The brilliant kingfisher flits through the mind of a woman with dementia. Through each exacting portrait, we begin to understand something special, a language of bees, and discover for ourselves how intimately we are all connected and what the natural world is trying to tell us.

What do you hope readers will take away after reading your poetry collection *The language of bees*?

I hope readers will be inspired to go outside and really pay attention to the small details, to take time to properly look and listen to what's around them. I think we sometimes have a tendency to overlook the small unexciting creatures, the bees, ants and spiders, the sparrows and starlings, pigeons and magpies. Weeds, also, are seen as a nuisance and untidy, rather than as highly adapted plant species that are excellent at exploiting the environment they have evolved into, and which often provide essential food sources for bugs and small animals. I'd like to think people will read my work and remember to appreciate them all. Nature has been very helpful to me at sad times in my life, and I think there is a special solace and comfort to be found in the way life springs up from the smallest crack in the concrete.

Do you have suggestions of how to encourage children and young people to read more for pleasure?

My mum opened the door to books for me, and through her I found a way to escape to these wonderful imaginary worlds. But more than that, nothing was off the table – *Sweet Valley Twins*, *Mills and Boon* and *Women's Weekly* magazine were just as valid a reading choice as *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*

or *Charlotte's Web*. She showed me that there's no room for snobbery in reading. Read what you love. Find the thing that lights you up, that sparks up the fire inside you, and just read that.

In what way have libraries influenced you during your lifetime?

I come from a family of keen readers, so I remember trips to the local library in Mumbles being a bit like going to the sweet shop, with so many exciting possibilities to choose from and my mum hauling out a bag full of the latest hardbacks for my housebound grandmother to read. She was very particular about what she liked – family sagas were her favourite – so it would always take a long time to select her allotted six titles. Inevitably at least three of them would be tossed aside when we got home! As for me, I've used libraries to read in, to write in, to borrow DVDs from, to study in, to meet mentors in, to research in, and I've made friends in them through groups like rhyme time when my children came along. Librarians, too, have been key to those experiences, particularly the librarians in Port Talbot central library, who genuinely are the hub of the community and couldn't do enough to help me when I was a journalist there, and also with my PhD research into the town's newspapers. Really the best thing about libraries is that they bring together wonderful books and lovely people.

Rae Howells is a poet, journalist, academic and lavender farmer from Swansea. She's won both the Welsh International and Rialto Nature and Place poetry competitions. *The language of bees* is her new poetry collection published by Parthian Books in April 2022.

www.iambapoet.com/rae-howells
raehowells.co.uk



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... more Q&As
on the website libraries.wales