



ARE YOU SITTING COMFORTABLY....? FAIRY TALES STILL CRUCIAL TO CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT

- **May is National Share-A-Story month**
- **Fairy Tales are still a crucial part of a child's language development**

With May being National Share-A-Story month (supported by the Federation of Children's Book Groups), new figures show that even in a highly technological, multi-screen world the role of the fairy tale and story-telling is still crucial for children's development in 2016.

A poll by family attraction 'Shrek's Adventure, London' noted that 83% of parents said they still read fairy tales each week, shunning newer technology platforms such as e-books, apps or tablets for the good old fashioned book.

Child language experts and authors of a new book to be published this August entitled **Building Language Using LEGO® Bricks: A Practical Guide**, Jacqui Rochester and Dawn Ralph, support the findings with further research highlighting the importance of reading and listening to fairy tales including classics such as Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty and Rumpelstiltskin.

Co-author Jacqui Rochester states: "The ability to use narrative (a story or a description of a series of events) is a vital life skill that children need to develop to enhance literacy skills, thinking skills, social development and language proficiency."

Paediatric Clinical Specialist Speech and Language Therapist and co-author Dawn Ralph adds: "Good story telling offers children access to a wealth of knowledge and experiences they may otherwise never be exposed to. This builds up their semantic understanding of the world. It helps expand their knowledge of familiar words and experiences by offering different perspectives and links between things they already know and things that are new and exciting."

Fairy tales have also had a resurgence in the world of film and entertainment, with recent blockbuster live-action films being made of Cinderella, Hansel and Gretel (Witch Hunters) and Snow White (and The Huntsman). One of London's newest visitor attractions opened by Merlin Entertainments in conjunction with DreamWorks is Shrek's Adventure! London. Characters such as Cinderella, Rumpelstiltskin, Sleeping Beauty, The Gingerbread Man, Pinocchio and Puss in Boots have been brought to life in a walk-through immersive experience created to bring the fairy tales to life through live actors and storytelling.

General Manager of **DreamWorks Tours Shrek's Adventure! London** Helen Bull highlights: "Many of the children visiting our attraction are aware of the fairy tales from reading the books with their parents but we're able to add a new dimension of live interactive story-telling, giving them a modern twist on the tales and actually making them part of the story."

Author Dawn Ralph concludes: "Stories and fairy tales can offer children the experience of trying out different social solutions to see how effective they are in a safe and non-threatening way. Good storytelling includes active social interaction such as questioning, discussions and turn taking which

can further enhance learning. This interaction cannot be obtained from watching a TV screen or other technological devices.”

Jacqui Rochester and Dawn Ralph are available for further interviews on request. For further information, high resolution images or to arrange a press visit please contact the Shrek’s Adventure! London press office on 0870 443 6001 or SAL.PressOffice@merlinentertainments.biz

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Notes to Editors

Jacqui Rochester – Autism Practitioner (BPhil SpEd Autism (Children))

Dawn Ralph – Paediatric Clinical Specialist Speech and Language Therapist (BSC Speech Pathology and Therapy MRCSLT Reg HCPC)

Jacqui and Dawn deliver training on an intervention they have developed to improve language and communication skills in children and young people with speech, language and communication needs. They have trained hundreds of parents and professionals in this approach and were invited to deliver workshops at the Autism Show in London last year. They will be opening the Priory Group Conference in November 2016 and have been booked to appear at many different venues nationally.

Their book, Building Language Using LEGO Bricks – A Practical Guide is due to be published in August 2016.

DREAMWORKS TOURS SHREK’S ADVENTURE! LONDON

Shrek’s Adventure! London is the capital’s newest family attraction, combining live action, stunning iconic sets and exclusive DreamWorks animation. Guests of all ages are whisked away on a 4D magic bus tour with Donkey as their driver before crash-landing in Shrek’s swamp where a fantastic, immersive adventure awaits. Familiar characters from the Shrek franchise greet guests along the way before everyone’s favourite ogre welcomes them back to London alongside the rest of the DreamWorks gang including characters from *How to Train your Dragon* and *Madagascar*. Costume characters, such as King Julien and Mort, will be available at various times throughout the day.

MERLIN ENTERTAINMENTS plc

MERLIN ENTERTAINMENTS plc is the leading name in location-based, family entertainment. Europe’s Number 1 and the world’s second-largest visitor attraction operator, Merlin now operates 109 attractions, 12 hotels/4 holiday villages in 23 countries and across 4 continents. The company aims to deliver memorable and rewarding experiences to its almost 63 million visitors worldwide, through its iconic global and local brands, and the commitment and passion of its managers and c26,000 employees (peak season).

Among Merlin’s attractions are - SEA LIFE, Madame Tussauds, LEGOLAND, The London Eye, Dungeons, Gardaland, LEGOLAND Discovery Centres, Alton Towers Resort, Warwick Castle, THORPE PARK Resort, Blackpool Tower, Heide Park Resort, Sydney Tower Eye and SKYWALK. All of these brands are distinctive, challenging and innovative and have great potential for growth in the future. Visit www.merlinentertainments.biz for more information.

DreamWorks Animation

DreamWorks Animation creates high-quality entertainment, including CG animated feature films, television specials and series and live entertainment properties, meant for audiences around the world. The company has world-class creative talent, a strong and experienced management team and advanced filmmaking technology and techniques. DreamWorks Animation has been named one of the “100 Best Companies to Work For” by FORTUNE® Magazine for five consecutive years. In 2013, DreamWorks Animation ranked #12 on the list. All of DreamWorks Animation’s feature films are produced in 3D. The Company has theatrically released a total of 30 animated feature films, including the franchise properties of Shrek, Madagascar, Kung Fu Panda, How to Train Your Dragon, Puss In Boots and The Croods.