

## 5. **Easy as ABC?**



Michael Morpurgo explores how the seminal experience of learning to read has changed over the last 70 years.

In June 2012, all Year One children in English primary schools will sit a compulsory new "Phonics Screening Check".

Meanwhile, authoritative studies show British ten year olds performing less well and expressing less enthusiasm for reading than many of their international peers.

Michael Morpurgo - hugely popular children's author, former Children's Laureate and passionate advocate for children's reading - explores how the experience of learning to read has changed since the 1944 Butler Education Act. Michael's starting point is a passionate interest in the subject, forged over decades as a father, grandfather, teacher and writer.

### 1. Easy as ABC?

In the first of two programmes, Michael finds out just what Systematic Synthetic Phonics are and why some, not least Nick Gibb, the Minister for Schools in the Coalition Government, are so keen on them - while others, in the educational establishment and the world of children's books, are less enthusiastic.

He talks to the Minister, and to phonics expert Ruth Miskin, and hears from writers Philip Pullman, Michael Rosen and Julia Donaldson. He visits a primary school in South London, rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted, which has embraced the new system, and talks with pupils and teachers.

Ultimately, Michael Morpurgo tries to square the circle between getting children reading and getting them to love reading - not only because this is a widely recognised prerequisite for success in secondary education, but also because of the pleasure and fulfilment it brings children everywhere.

Producer : Beaty Rubens.

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