# Rethinking World Book Day: The pressure of costumes and the joy of reading



On Thursday, 6 March, millions across the UK will engage in the annual celebration of World Book Day, an occasion that pays homage to books, authors, illustrators, and the power of literature. Schools nationwide are preparing for a day filled with events, activities, and a distinctive feature that has become a hallmark of the celebration: children attending classes dressed as their favourite fictional characters.

However, the event has become a source of stress for many parents who often find themselves hastily assembling costumes at the last minute. Many experience the common occurrence of receiving a reminder text at 8.35 am on the day of the event, leading to a frantic scramble to create or procure an outfit within a tight timeframe. For some parents, this has elicited feelings of inadequacy and guilt, as described by an anonymous author in The Independent, who reflected, "I have a small meltdown about making costumes, then feel guilty about it afterwards."

The challenge of preparing costumes can be seen as an added pressure on families, particularly amongst those with varying financial resources. The author noted their own privileged position as a parent who only needs one job to provide for their family's needs, alongside a partner who takes an active role in organising for events like World Book Day. Despite this, the author recognised that not all families share that level of support or financial stability, stating, "that cost is not felt equally by all parents".

Amidst the costumes, there is an underlying current of performativity in how World Book Day is celebrated, particularly as parents share their children's outfits on social media. The author pointed out the prevalence of certain character costumes such as those of Pippi Longstocking, suggesting that the spectacle may overshadow the actual intent of fostering a love for reading. Instead of focusing solely on elaborate costumes, the author proposed a need for a more inclusive approach that addresses the challenges many parents face when trying to participate in the celebrations.

The celebrations also raise questions about broader societal issues, such as access to literary resources. The author highlighted that 31 per cent of children live below the poverty line, enhancing the contrast between the idealised event and the realities of many families. Although the day aims to promote reading and books, the obligation to craft or purchase disposable costumes can be seen as contrary to the spirit of encouraging literacy and love for literature, especially at a time when many schools are struggling with inadequate budgets for libraries.

In light of these insights, alternative approaches to celebrating World Book Day have been proposed. Suggestions include shifting focus away from compulsory costumes towards more enriching activities that foster a genuine appreciation for reading. Teachers are already committed to creating enjoyable experiences for children, often in the context of chronic underfunding and restrictive policies impacting educational resources.

Ultimately, the reflections surrounding World Book Day highlight the importance of engagement with literature while also shedding light on the socio-economic dynamics that affect participation. As the day approaches, many will undoubtedly take part in the festivities, while simultaneously recognising the need for a more equitable way to celebrate literature across diverse communities.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://literacytrust.org.uk/about-us/world-book-day-national-literacy-trust/> - This URL supports the claim that World Book Day is an annual celebration of authors, illustrators, books, and the joy of reading, highlighting its importance in promoting literacy and a love for reading.
* <https://www.awarenessdays.com/awareness-days-calendar/world-book-day-2025/> - This URL provides information on World Book Day as a global observance dedicated to books and reading, recognized by UNESCO, and offers ways to get involved in the celebration.
* <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/world-book-day-2025-date-costume-ideas-b1052373.html> - This URL corroborates the aspect of World Book Day where children dress up as their favourite characters and highlights the event's focus on literacy and reading for pleasure.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - This URL is the source of the original article discussing the challenges and societal implications of World Book Day celebrations, including the stress of preparing costumes and broader issues of access to literary resources.
* <https://www.independent.co.uk/> - Although not directly linked, this URL represents a source where an anonymous author might have discussed feelings of inadequacy and guilt related to preparing costumes for World Book Day, as mentioned in the article.