



## Vampirates event checklist

Justin Somper loves meeting his readers and has developed a great Vampirates event that blends lots of entertainment with a real insight into his writing process. We always get excellent feedback from the events and there is always huge demand for him to revisit schools as lots of requests from new schools.

With this in mind we wanted to put down a few tips to help you get the most out of your Vampirates events.

### Audience size

- Justin has a lot of experience of events with audiences of 250-300 and with the right planning he can handle as big an audience as you can muster.

### Age group

- Years 5, 6 and children respond particularly strongly to Justin's events and it's within this age range. In middle schools the event can also be opened up to Year 7 but otherwise it is not recommended that the events are pitched to secondary schools.

### Author Fees

- Half day £250 + VAT + travel expenses = 1 x 1-hour session including questions, followed by a signing (see signing information below.)  
Full day £400 + VAT + travel expenses = 2 x 1-hour sessions including questions, with either 1 or 2 signing sessions plus, if desired, a more informal Q&A with a smaller group, e.g. the school group in a library.  
Any additional sessions would incur extra cost and need to be discussed at the outset.

### School preparation

The more a school prepares ahead of an event the more they will get out of their visit.

- We have a variety of materials that are emailed to the bookseller coordinating the event – they should be sent on to any school thinking of participating in an event. They include an author biography, an interview with Justin and a set of discussion notes which give pointers for further activity. This is in addition to material on the website which teachers are free to download and copy.
- We also provide marketing materials to promote the events including posters & postcards. Where appropriate we can also produce bespoke fliers
- We are also happy to donate a couple of reading copies to schools taking part in an event and there are sample chapters posted on the website.
- Creating a sense of occasion in school around the event makes the day even more special. This can be done in many different ways from thinking in advance about some question to ask Justin when he visits to preparing some pirate/vampire themed work –

- we've even awarded prizes for the best shanties at one event. Dressing up on the day always adds a sense of fun to the occasion & again at his events Justin is happy to hand out a prize for the winner of the best fancy dress.
- It is always nice if a teacher or bookseller introduces Justin and says something once the event is finished.
  - Justin's sessions are very interactive and he always asks the audience for questions and feedback throughout.

### Equipment

- Justin needs a microphone, ideally radio but otherwise hand-held for groups of more than 60 kids (a fixed mic is not ideal as he moves around a lot) plus a chair, table and if possible, a music stand (for his notes). It's also useful to have a flip chart although this isn't essential for the event.
- For notes, a music stand is best as it creates less of a barrier between Justin and the audience. A podium is also fine but can be intrusive.
- In schools/venues with the technical equipment we also have a DVD loop that can play while children are being seated or during the signing session.
- A bottle of still mineral water or a jug of tap-water.
- Food – Justin is very happy to have school lunch so don't feel you have to get anything special in or take him out.

### Book Sales

- We do expect books to be on sale at events as it only disappoints children for them not to be.
- Often the best way to do this is invite a local bookshop to come in. They are always keen to get in on the act.
- Alternatively schools can set up an account with Simon and Schuster's distributor, HarperCollins and purchase books on a sale/return basis at an educational discount of 35%. To do this please contact Karen Comrie at HarperCollins on 0141 306 3100.
- It always works well if a letter has been given to the children to take home to the parents ahead of the event. It should tell them when the event is, a bit about the books that are for sale and the price.
- We will bring book plates to events to sign for those kids who don't have their money on the day so make sure the school allows some time for signing.
- Finally – we know not every kid can buy a book so we generally have a giveaway for every child – usually a bookmark or postcard.

### Timing

- The event is 1 hour including time for questions and then we normally allow another 30-45 mins per 60 children for book signing afterwards. We can reduce the length of the event to fit with the school time table down to 45 minutes if you prefer but we need to know about timing restrictions ahead of the event.
- NB Signing time can easily extend to a full hour with a 200+ event so it's a good idea to get the children in the queue to have their dedications written out on post-it notes.

### Press

- The bookseller & publicist should agree before hand who is contacting the local media. Stores with good local press contacts are probably best handling the local media themselves, again we can provide a press release for you to work with and any press images you require. However, if you prefer, we can also contact the local media.
- The bookseller will need to get permission from the school that its ok to have photographers from the local papers present.
- Justin has lots of experience with the media and is happy to do press & radio interviews if agreed with his publicist in advance.

- NB with photographers – Justin won't interrupt his event once it has started as it's not fair on the children, however he is happy to do photographs before or after an event.

For more information please contact the marketing department at Simon & Schuster at [childrensbooks@simonandschuster.co.uk](mailto:childrensbooks@simonandschuster.co.uk) or Tel: 020 7316 1979.