

Marilyn Girndt & Ian McEwan

Hot Topic

RESPONDING TO “THE HIDDEN POWERS OF THE LIBRARIAN”

Foreword by Diana Maliszewski

received this email after Volume 19, Issue 3 of *The Teaching Librarian* came out. The editorial board asked Marilyn for permission to reprint her letter, and invited the author, Ian McEwan, to reply. Here are their words.

The Hidden Powers of the Librarian

A PERSONAL ACCOUNT

7:45 AM

The phrase Power @ Your Library is fresh in my mind on a Monday morning. I spot the regular group of students waiting for me as I walk up the ramp to the school library. I am immediately hit with the usual barrage of questions mixed with spontaneous revelations and unsolicited information. We have, after all, not seen each other for two weeks.

“Mr. M! Were you hoping for a snow day too?”

“I finished all those books in the first three days of the holidays and then I had nothing to read.”

“Did Volume seven of *Naruto* come back yet?”

As I pull out my keys, they encroach tighter around me, pressuring to get in.

“Teachers don’t wish for snow days, Michelle. Jess, I told you. I would let you check out more than five books for the holidays, and I don’t know Jarrett, I don’t have the whereabouts of everything in the entire collection memorized.”

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7:46 AM

The phone is already ringing as I flick on the lights and drop my lunch on the desk.

“Library, Mr. M speaking.” I’m guessing it’s the first desperate call of the day, hoping to squeeze into the library at the last minute.

“Sorry there’s a big class booked in period one. They’re researching the Great Depression. Tomorrow? Nope, Stevenson is in here with his P.E. class because the gyms are closed for the basketball tournament. Wednesday? Yes, that’ll work...solar system...yeah I remember the project from last year...see you then.”

7:50 AM

I open my email and stare at the twenty-seven requests from teachers looking for research time before exams begin in a few weeks. I’ll have to call them individually when I have a moment because there is already a line up at the circulation desk.

7:55 AM

Michelle is back with an armload of thick novels. I am forced

By Ian McEwan



to raise an eyebrow. “Haven’t you read this entire series already Michelle?”

“I thought so. Can I suggest something else for you?”

“No? Fine. You owe me 40 cents by the way.” She’ll pay later... always does.

8:05 AM

The next five minutes are spent shoeing students to homeroom before the announcements start. The “get moving to class” music starts, and as usual this kick-starts a series of crises.

“Mr. M, there’s no paper in the printer.”

“It’s behind the desk, you can load it yourself.” She’s a senior student, she’ll figure out how to load it.

Next, “I need to make 25 photocopies for my presentation. Can you help me?”

“One sided or two sided?” I ask.

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Ian McEwan’s feature in *The Teaching Librarian* 19.3, “The Hidden Powers of the Librarian: A Personal Account”