

The Brilliant Club Case Study



Tutor Name:
Billie-Gina Thomason

PhD Thesis Title:
Gender passing in nineteenth century Britain

PhD University:
Liverpool John Moores University

Tutor since: July 2019

Brilliant Club Programme:
The Scholars Programme



Which schools have you taught at?

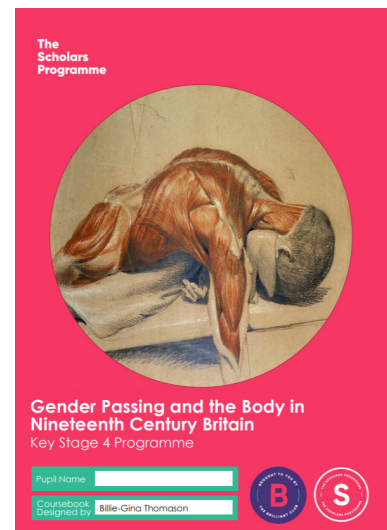
The Sutton Academy, St Julie's Catholic High School. I am due to start two autumn placements at Cardinal Heenan High School and Childwall Sports and Science Academy.

What is your Scholars Programme course title?

Gender Passing and the Body in Nineteenth Century Britain.

What made you want to apply to be a Scholars Programme tutor?

I had been toying with the idea of becoming a tutor for a year or two before I decided to apply. I have always enjoyed teaching and wanted the opportunity to devise my own course for students. I was apprehensive at first because my research explores historic gender nonconformity and we talk about trans identity and how the individuals in my research lived and identified as men despite them being biologically female. As such I did not know if schools would be interested in this type of research and how it would sit within their school ethos. However, with the recent change in curriculum stating that LGB&T+ history, lives, and existence needed to be taught in schools I thought it was a perfect opportunity. I also thought my research would add a different perspective to LGB&T+ teaching as it explores the history of gender nonconformity and its existence in the nineteenth century.



What has been the most rewarding moment of your Scholars Programme placements so far?

Teaching the students has been the most rewarding. Meeting new students who are focused and engaged in their studies is really rewarding. I also look forward to reading and marking their homework. I ask students to write a street ballad on gender passing towards the end of the course and I have been so impressed with their responses that I actually included a couple in the appendix of my PhD when I submitted it this year.

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Tell me about being a Scholars Programme tutor. How has it helped in your development as a research student?

Being a Scholars Programme Tutor has helped me to adapt more in classes. When I teach students at TBC conversations can go off in a tangent at times. Being quite strict and rigid in my teaching I would typically try and steer students onto the path I want to them to be on. However, it is useful to make the classroom an open and safe space where students feel that they can ask questions that they may not have felt comfortable doing so before. Due to the nature of my research a lot of discussions result in trans rights and activism and these conversations are essential in this increasingly toxic world.



What have you gained from being part of the Scholars Programme community of researchers?

I have gained confidence in my teaching ability and how I communicate with others. I have also gained close relationships with tutors that are in my university and we have supported each other through placements. I have also relied on support from other researchers and asked for guidance when I have been unsure about things as well as my line manager.

How has the Scholars Programme affected the way you approach undergraduate teaching?

Being a Scholars Programme tutor, I must be willing to adapt, go with the flow more and run with what the students want (within reason). I have also needed to create engaging and stimulating seminars to keep students focussed and engaged but also challenged. These skills have also been useful in my undergraduate teaching and are something that I am continuing to use as we approach the increasing likelihood of online learning for university students.

How do you think you have made a difference to pupils as a Scholars Programme tutor?

I would like to think that I have inspired pupils to continue to work hard and reach their fullest potential. I would like every student I have worked with to go forward and apply to university and be successful in their careers. The students I have worked with have been a credit to themselves and their school. I would also like to think that I have encouraged them to think outside the box when it comes to research. I would like them to know that history does not just mean World War I and World War II, it does not just mean the monarchy but it means individuals and minorities and it is these people that are crucial to how we can see change in the world.

Do you have any advice for someone looking to apply to work as a Scholars Programme tutor?

I won an award in July 2020 as an Outstanding PGR Communicator after my work with The Brilliant Club and other public events throughout my PhD and I spoke to a group of students about the different things I had done. The first thing I said was that if anyone was interested in teaching then The Scholars Programme is for them because it allows you to be in control of your own course. You can communicate with a new generation of people about your area of expertise. The students are always so engaged and interested in learning something different to their typical lessons, so they are as enthusiastic as you. It also tests you as a researcher to be able to make your research accessible to a non-academic or non-specialist audience and although this can be a challenge you learn more about your own research and ability to communicate.

To find out more about how you could become a Scholars Programme tutor, please visit our website at www.thebrilliantclub.org