

Running reading groups and events in your school

An introduction to running book-based events, groups and social networks

Age 5 to 16

CFE Levels First to Senior Phase

Resource created by Scottish Book Trust

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About this resource

This resource will take you through social networks, events or groups you can set up with children – either in your school or through your library or community group. The resource is split into the following sections:

- Getting confident with books
- Book groups
- Wider events or celebrations

Getting confident with books

The following activities are a great way to start exploring books together, including with children who are new to reading or are still developing a sense of their preferences and how to talk about them.

Book tasting

Take the books from your class, or school, library and lay a selection out on a table. Give pupils time to go through the books and keep a note of any they would be interested in reading.

The idea behind this is it creates focused time to look at the books you already own, and is a great way to stop them becoming background furniture. Once you're done, consider allowing your pupils to shelve them in a way that makes sense to them –

whether that's by genre, topic or colour. They're more likely to pick up books if they can find them easily.

Book speed dating

This is a great activity for allowing pupils to sample a variety of different books in a short space of time, and to help you get an indication of the books that pupils' enjoy reading. Set out a number of different book stations and ask pupils to pick a book and spend a few minutes reading, before moving onto the next station. Pupils jot down their first impressions of the book as they go, and whether they would like to keep reading.

First lines

Pick some first lines from books and either read them aloud or display them on your whiteboard. Ask pupils to rate the first line of novels from one to five; five being 'I would read on', and one being 'I would put this book down and move onto something else'. Make sure you include a variety of genres and reading levels to help you get a better indication of pupils' preferences. Use the pupil response as a guide for reading recommendations.

Extreme reading

This is a challenge where the aim is to take a picture of yourself reading in the most extreme place possible! This [TES article](#) looks at how extreme reading can transform reluctant readers' engagement with literature. Get everyone involved – teachers, staff or librarians should also share their extreme reading too!

Blind date with a book

Wrap books in plain paper, writing a couple key bullet points about the books plot or themes on the cover and allow pupils to pick one to read. This is great for making books a bit more intriguing or mysterious. It's okay if someone ends up not liking

their choice – that’s a great opportunity to explore reading preferences!

Book Jenga

Transform a game of Jenga into an incredible (and fun!) tool for Book Talk. Book Jenga was a game brought to the attention of Scottish Book Trust by secondary school librarian Deena Wren, winner of our Scottish Book Trust Learning Professional Award.

All you will need to create book Jenga is a set of Jenga blocks, a biro or fine liner pen, and your chosen questions! See the end of this resource for some question ideas.

You play book Jenga by building your tower and taking it in turns to pull out a block and answer the question on it. You can play either by answering the question yourself, or by asking everyone in the group to answer the question before moving on to the next one. The used block is then placed on top of the tower. Gradually the tower builds and becomes less stable. As with all Jenga, the aim is not to topple the tower. The game ends when the tower falls!

Book groups

Book groups can take a lot of forms. Firstly, not everyone has to have read the same book! Instead, your book group can be a place to come together to share a book you’ve enjoyed recently and pick up recommendations for further ideas.

Themed book groups

Run your group with a specific theme or genre of book. This could include:

- Science fiction or fantasy
- Manga, comics or graphic novels
- LGBT+, books written by women, or anti-racism book group

- Books made into films, splitting your time between reading and watching the adaptation

Book Bistro or Café

Run your book group at lunch time so everyone can bring their own lunch. Or provide drinks and snacks. For children who arrive earlier to school you could also host a Book Breakfast where there's a space for them to read before school starts.

Read Scottish Teen Books

For teenagers you can also use our [Read Scottish Teen Books guide](#) to read young adult fiction created in Scotland. Each book comes with discussion questions you can use to shape your discussion.

Read Woke South Ayrshire

[Read Woke](#) is a reading guide focussing on reading to develop learner's understanding of social justice and challenge the social norm. You could use their selected titles to structure a book group, and use our [Read Woke resources](#) to deliver cross-curricular activities to engage and reflect on some of the specific books.

Wider events and celebrations

There are loads of national celebrations for reading and books including [Book Week Scotland](#), [National Poetry Day](#) and [World Book Day](#). You can also tie reading into other events, national awareness days or celebrations from reading about the environment on World Earth Day to sharing spooky stories at Hallowe'en!

Bring-and-buy book sales

If your school also holds any days to raise money for charity, you can also tie reading into this. Hold a bring-and-buy sale where pupils can bring books to sell and buy to raise money.

Readathon

Get rid of the desks from a classroom and turn it into an all-day reading room. If you're raising money for charity, pupils can gain sponsorship for time spent reading or pages read.

Empathy Day

Empathy Day is a national celebration every June from Empathy Lab, whose work focuses on promoting empathy through reading contemporary children's literature. Find resources, videos and inspiration for celebrating [on the Empathy Lab website](#). You can also use their annual [Read for Empathy guides](#) to structure a book group.

Further resources

- Find more activities to explore books and reading on the [learning resources section of our website](#)
- Learn more about [building a reading culture in your school with our webinar and resource](#)
- Read [our article on motivating teenagers to read and reading for pleasure in your school](#)

Book Jenga Questions

The following are questions you could use when playing Book Jenga. Feel free to adapt them or create your own!

- Fiction or non-fiction?
- What is your least favourite word?
- What's a book you couldn't finish?
- Reading with music or in silence?
- What film would you like to see adapted into a film?
- What's the funniest book you've ever read?
- Who is your favourite author?
- What is your favourite book cover?
- Reading in bed or on the sofa?
- What's a genre you don't like?
- Reading a book or listening to the audiobook?
- If you had one book to take on a desert island, what would it be and why?
- Have you ever met an author?
- Who is your least favourite book character?
- What is the saddest book you've ever read?
- Do you have a favourite bookshop?
- What is the best TV series based on a book?
- What is the scariest book you've ever read?
- Do you have a favourite poet?
- Newspapers or magazines?
- Bookmark or dog eared pages?
- What is your favourite song lyric?